The next, great, first year challenge: Sustaining, coordinating and embedding coherent institution-wide approaches to enact the FYE as “everybody’s business”.

Professor Sally Kift
ALTC (Carrick) Senior Fellow
QUT, Australia
Overview

• Lot going on – research and initiative-wise – but is it making a real difference to the FYE?
  – “piecemeal in the main” (Krause et al, 2005)

• *How to* take our FYE work to the next level
  – To bring together a whole that is greater than the sum of its many parts

• Top-down bottom-up (middle out?)
  – Of ducks, carrots and things
  – A model for institutional action
  – A Director, some resourcing and 5 QUT projects
First year support efforts have tended to be piecemeal in the main, developed and sustained by individuals or small groups who champion the cause of first year transition. We have now reached the stage where universities must recognise the need for institution-wide approaches to enhancing the first year experience.

Krause et al, 2005, at 8.8.6
The prompts for this… (2)

Student retention is one of the most widely studied areas in higher education…The result has been an ever more sophisticated understanding of the complex web of events that shape student leaving and persistence… But for all that, **substantial gains in student retention have been hard to come by**… More importantly, there is **much that we have not yet done to translate our research and theory into effective practice**.

Tinto (2006-7, 1-2)
The Australian, HES, 25/06/08

Uni of Wollongong study reports up to 80% of undergraduate teaching load carried by sessional teachers: few systematic whole-of-campus approaches to this cohort.

CSU VC, Prof Ian Goulter says investment in T&L over past 4 years has come at cost of curriculum renewal: are we “teaching well” the “best material”?

Prof Geoff Scott, UWS, ALTC study on academic leadership capabilities nec to manage change.
What do you think?

- Where do you think your institution is on a FYE scale of 1 to 10?
- Are you “piecemeal” or “institution-wide”?
- Have you translated your “research and theory” into “effective practice” such that “substantial gains” have been made?
- Are all your approaches (e.g., sessional staff, teaching, support, curriculum renewal, leadership) joined-up/ “institution-wide”?

What do you think needs to happen?
Vincent Tinto:  
(2002;4)  

The more students learn, the more value they find in their learning, the more likely they are to stay and graduate. This is particularly true for more able and motivated students who seek out learning and are, in turn, more likely to respond to perceived shortcomings in the quality of learning they experience on campus. *Least we forget the purpose of higher education is not merely that students are retained, but that they are educated.* In the final analysis, **student learning drives student retention.** [Emphasis added]
Some themes from FYE literature? (1)

- Much activity & research (eg 40 years in US), including audits of practice esp to identify successes & areas for improvement
- Focus on coordinated, sustainable, whole-of-institution approaches
  - Including institutional policy making; institutional home for FYE; x-institutional collaboration; institutional spaces
  - US NSSE has shown student engagement varies more within than between institutions.
- Awareness of institutional difference – need own data
- Managing/ adapting (NZ) for diversity
  - includes supporting all students not just “at risk”
- Enhanced monitoring of student engagement & progression to enable timely intervention & support
Some themes from FYE literature? (2)

• Commonality of focus on “induction, transition, integration & coherence of provision” (Scottish QAA)
  – Esp longitudinal approach to induction;
  – Pre-entry support, preparation, expectations & program choice
  – Commitment to “acculturating” students to both HE institutions and to their new discipline (includes mediating expectations)
• Emphasis on intentional curriculum design & “good teaching”
  – Esp to embed transition support & re importance of formative assess
  – Harnessing technology affordances for seamless engagement
• Use of peer-to-peer systems /social integration
• Staff development, support, reward & recognition
• Commitment to evaluating [and disseminating] practice

Sally Kift, QUT
Why do our FY students leave?

Lots of reasons, many of them similar across sector

Most recently

- Yorke & Longden (2008, HEA, UK Phase 2): the major influences on non-continuation (very similar to 1997 UK work):
  - poor choice of programme;
  - lack of personal commitment to study;
  - teaching quality;
  - lack of contact with academic staff (hints that this becoming more significant);
  - inadequate academic progress; and
  - finance.

NB Many return eventually
Why do they dis-engage [in FY]?

- Many reasons (eg family difficulties, location, equity, work-life balance) but major factors: Yorke (1999, 2006)
  - Quality & organisation of teaching
  - Program difficulty & lack of preparedness to cope with it;
  - Poor choice of program, including lack of vocational relevance
    - More students know about their institutions & courses before enrolling, less likely they will withdraw (40% cf 25%)
  - Worry over financing their studies (2006)

“Complex inter-relationship between course dissatisfaction, course preference, limited engagement, and student perceptions of academic staff and of the quality of teaching”

(Krause et al, 2005, at 64)
AUSSE: Australasian Survey of Student Engagement

- Asks students “what they do” via the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ)
- “Engagement”: “students’ involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high quality learning” (at vi)
- Data collected
  - “details the time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities and provides insights into students’ perceptions of the quality of aspects of their university experience” (at vii)
- An interesting AUSSE finding re paid work –
  - Students who work between 1 and 30 hours “tend to report higher levels of engagement than students who do not work and those who work for more than 30 hours a week” (at ix)
  - cf Australian University Student Finances 2006 (James et al, 2007)
    - 40% F/T and 54% P/T said work adversely affecting their study
AUSSE  See http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse/resources.html

In 2007 25 Aust and NZ institutions took part

**Six engagement-focused scales**

- Academic Challenge  45.1%→47.7%
- Active Learning  33.1%→38.1%
- Student and Staff Interactions  18.3%→23.9%
- Enriching Educational Experiences  23.4%→27.9%
- Supportive Learning Environment  51.2%→49.9%
- Work Integrated Learning (AUSSE)  39.3%→49.8%

**Six outcomes-focused measures**

- Higher-order Thinking
- General Learning Outcomes
- General Development Outcomes
- Average Overall Grade
- Retention Intention
- Overall Satisfaction

Australasian survey of student engagement

Sally Kift, QUT
Something (else) to ponder: Non-academic support

- AUSSE (pp 17-18) has shown up a deficit re support to cope with non-academic challenges & to help socialise
  - 56.6% of students report that institutions provide academic support “quite a bit” or “very much”
  
  **BUT**
  
  - Only 15.7% say this for non-academic support (49.7% never supported; 34.6% sometimes supported);
  
  - 21% say support provided to socialise (37.6% never supported; 41.4% sometimes supported).

The best aspects of my university in engaging students to learn is having someone you can speak to if you need help with anything

First year primary education student
Changing patterns of student engagement

A Vision of Students Today

Today's child is bewildered when he enters the 19th century environment that still characterizes the educational establishment where information is scarce but ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns subjects, and schedules.

- Marshall McLuhan 1967

YouTube video
A Vision of Students Today
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGCJ46vyR9o

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What are some change challenges? (1)

- Enacting coordinated institutional approaches
  - Leadership and governance structures
  - McInnis (2003, p.13) “bridging the gaps between academic, administrative and support programs [is] a substantial challenge”
  - How to use data (and what we know) to identify and deploy institutional action that – gives them “good reasons to stay beyond FY” (Krause, 2006); helps them “stay and succeed” (Tinto, 2006-7).

- Getting agreement that retention (education) is a priority
  - Generally and esp amongst teachers
  - Tinto (2006-7) teachers “typically do not see retaining students as their job. Given what many [teachers] believe to be the root causes of attrition, namely the lack of skills and motivation, they might observe that they would not have a retention ‘problem’ if the admission office only admitted more qualified students”.
  - “We need to teach the students we recruit, not the ones we would have liked to recruit” (NAO, 2007, p.30)
What are some change challenges? (2)

- **Curriculum design** – a transition pedagogy
  - We do a lot of work around the curriculum, or in aid of it, but now need to come in from the periphery and focus on articulating and implementing a "transition pedagogy" – what would that look like?
  - THEN – **sustain** enactments of that intentional curriculum design
- Conceptualising a comprehensive, integrated, coordinated **orientation process** (over time)
- **Staff development** – academic and professional
- **Data** (and the use of it) for evidence-based quality enhancement
- **The engagement** aspect of transition pedagogy (AUSSE)
QUT research re digital culture
(Nelson, Kift, Harper 2005)

• Used to extend and complement face-to-face
  – Students want a balance
• Convenient and efficient for info transfer and communication
• But want holistic view of their institutional (IT) engagement – need help re
  – Not knowing about [admin and acad processes]
  – Not knowing what [eg support available]
  – Not knowing how [to use institutional online system]

How to harness e-admin and e-learning for engagement?
**What institutional approaches?**

Most recently, Yorke & Longden (2008) identified a number of **broad areas of institutional activity** through which the chances of student success can be enhanced:

- an institutional commitment to student learning, and hence to student engagement
- proactive management of student transition
- treating the **curriculum** as an academic milieu, and also one in which social engagement is fostered
- choosing **curricular structures** that increase the chances of student success
- placing emphasis and resourcing on the FYE
- systematically monitoring and evaluating student achievement, and acting on the evidence thereby collected
- academic leadership.
But how to enact IT??

Top down
Middle out
Bottom up
Institutional T&L Change Process
(adapted from Diamond, 2005)

- What is [Uni X’s] agreed “vision” for the FYE/ student experience?
- Is the focus student learning, development and engagement?
- Do all areas’ “plans” and “activities” support that “vision”?
- Is the vision’s implementation research-led & evidence-based?
- What is the governance structure? Is L&T “leadership for change” effectively integrated throughout [Uni X] with clarity about roles? Includes visionary high-level leadership and distributed professional and academic leadership.
- Is reward and recognition aligned with the “vision”?
- Is implementation continuously monitored, evaluated and refined?
- Is professional and academic staff development aligned to support?
- Are institutional leaders working collaboratively across silos to explore new structures, processes and practices?
- Does a “willingness to test all previous assumptions” exist?
- Is there a commitment to change at all levels of [Uni X]?
Of ducks and carrots

Action
Data analysis
What is good teaching & support
What is a good student exp
Leadership & governance across silos
Area plans
Top level plan(s)
Vision

Reward & recognition
Staff development
Promotion criteria
Probation
KPIs
PP&R

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Some simple steps.

1. Identify and then coordinate individual dispersed FYE efforts
   • Is respectful of those efforts; allows for new initiatives
   • Addresses Kuh’s (2007) NSSE warning that FYE may vary more within than between institutions
   • Allows for leveraging to upscale and make visible

2. Building on this ground-up approach, promote and enact a model for institutional action –
   • Leadership and governance across silos
   • Create institutional structures, polices and practices for whole-of-institution approaches in a climate of “readiness for change” (Southwell et al)
Leading to... What we (QUT) did

Already had “vision”/ blueprint / framework
- The FYE must engage new learners in their learning and mediate support for that learning. Assisted by:
  - awareness of and timely access to support services
  - creating a sense of belonging through involvement, engagement and connectedness with their university experiences.

Already had lots of “things”

Appointed Academic Director, FYE
- To lead development of coherent organisation context
- To bridge academic, administrative and support silos (McInnis, 2003)
- To build stakeholder consensus
- Bring the “things” together and identify gaps
- To pursue five projects for early FYE policy and program gains
- Underpinned by development of QUT specific data collections

Resourced ongoing operationalisation (Large T&L Project)
As per Tinto (2006-7, 7)

We have genuinely sought to
…connect specific programs and practices for students to institutional actions that provide support for the faculty and staff directing those programs and practices.
No single FYE – “the” FYE is complex

The first year experience is not a homogeneous experience but a multiplicity of experiences contingent on type of institution and student characteristics… Furthermore, the first year experience evolves and changes both temporally and culturally. Issues facing students when they first arrive are not the same as issues half way through the first year or towards the end:

Harvey et al (2006) at vii
Requires some mapping

• An “end to end” process view (including feedback loops, responsibilities & roles) for the student experience.

• We have already had a first attempt and now are going again.

• 2008 work of the operationalising project under the new Director, AssProf Karen Nelson.
QUT Enhancing Transition Project

Student-Centred Timeline for Managed Learning Environment

- Early skills development
- Student Expectations Survey
- International Student Services Partnerships
- Welcome Mentoring
- Exam Skills
- At-Risk Cohort Orientation
- Monitoring student engagement (e.g. virtual, assessment, face-to-face, attendance)
- Specific teamwork training and support (includes conflict resolution for later in semester)
- Discipline specific academic integrity training

Sally Kift, QUT
## RMIT’s Draft Student Transition Plan 2007-2010

### Sample initiatives to support transition into new learning environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Program induction</th>
<th>Early intervention</th>
<th>Progressing learning</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Post-assessment and adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome and program induction</td>
<td>Student Orientation</td>
<td>International Student Mentoring and Feedback</td>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>Exam preparation</td>
<td>Preparations for semester orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course guides and explanation of expectations</td>
<td>Orientation to campus tours</td>
<td>In-program learning activities</td>
<td>Course evaluation</td>
<td>Course evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT skills and introduction to IT systems</td>
<td>Student Orientation and workshops</td>
<td>Group learning activities</td>
<td>Equitable assessment</td>
<td>Equitable assessment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Language development activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Special consideration</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Version 4: August, 2007**
## Deakin’s Timeline of activities/issues around transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networks/ belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>itinerary</td>
<td>personal transition plan including 5-week essentials sent out</td>
<td>DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contact</td>
<td>C-week guides make personal contact to arrange day 1 meeting and answer preliminary questions</td>
<td>DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DI/DRC</td>
<td>international enrolment and disability client orientation</td>
<td>DSL/DRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>welcome</td>
<td>initial host meetings and outline of 0-week challenge- engagement opportunities</td>
<td>DSL - input from lib, ITSD, Facs, DSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social networking</td>
<td>structured activities around meeting people across a range of formats</td>
<td>DUSA/DUS/faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid-semester check up</td>
<td>informal check in by first year host/course adviser or infoflow questionnaire on 'how are you going'</td>
<td>DUSL/faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revision groups</td>
<td>catch up, review, get ready for exams,</td>
<td>faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overview</td>
<td>welcome to university, faculty, school, course</td>
<td>executive, faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;R</td>
<td>what to expect and what we expect (first lectures week)</td>
<td>faculties, DUSA, Infoflow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&amp;L</td>
<td>ways of learning at university and ways of ‘being’ at university (first futes week)</td>
<td>faculties with support from DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systems, spaces, support</td>
<td>how we do things, where we do things and where to get help</td>
<td>lib, ITSD, DSA, DUSL, DUSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study skills</td>
<td>referencing, plagiarism, assignment writing, time management, language, etc, etc</td>
<td>faculties, DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment intensives</td>
<td>drop-in/key workshops targeting those in difficulty from first assignments</td>
<td>faculties, DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exam preparation</td>
<td>handling exam questions and styles, getting ready for exams</td>
<td>faculties, DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exam tips</td>
<td>good luck email during study week with 10 top tips for exams</td>
<td>DSL thru Infoflow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course/units/career direction</td>
<td>confirming direction, changing units, graduate jobs, volunteering, expanding career options</td>
<td>faculties (course advisers), DSL (careers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At risk</td>
<td>note and respond to low attendance, first assessment failure, etc</td>
<td>faculties with support from DI, DSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>fit, financial and feeling good</td>
<td>DUSL with support from DSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key dates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>infoflow approach with clear explanations and links</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanations and definitions:**

- **transition hosts:** offering students helping first years find their feet, initial contact
- **exam period:** Fabulous finish
- **revision groups:** exam preparation, tips
- **key dates:** infoflow approach with clear explanations and links
- **fit, financial and feeling good:** DUSL with support from DSA

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**Sally Kift, QUT**
May we remind ourselves why?

Miss Teen USA 2007 - South Carolina answers a question

How a lot of our first year student responses come across to us

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0R84a7njTd0

Sally Kift, QUT
2007: Role as QUT Director, FYE

• 12 month secondment to DVC(A) as Director, FYE across QUT faculties and divisions

• 5 sub-projects –
  1. QUT FYE Vision Project
  2. First Year Teaching and Support Enabling Project
  3. Pre-Orientation, Orientation and Transition Project
  4. **First Year Curriculum Project**
  5. First Year Students Project

• Only undergraduate FYE
Functional aspects

- Project management framework
- Multiple working groups (10 in all) bringing acad and prof colleagues together to share and to build x-institutional communities, structures & practices.
- Regular progress reports submitted to Uni T&L Committee (UTLC)
- Interim Report presented to UTLC (June 2007): overview of progress, briefing on proposed action for institutional endorsement, and assessment of risks
- All Program documentation and resources collected available on a dedicated Program wiki.
- Final Report was submitted (December 2007) for the QUT community’s consideration, future action and implementation.
Therefore –

- To move from theory to action (Tinto)
- Esp to take ground-up, disparate pockets of activity and build cohesiveness around existing practice by its being
  - identified and made visible to staff and students – student-facing and consistent in presentation,
  - up-scaled,
  - recognised and validated,
  - moved into mainstream institutional practice,
  - quality assured,
  - sustainably resourced, and
  - so that future cross-institutional decision-making, sharing and planning can occur (eg policy and KPIs/ targets).

- Peer-to-peer example in paper at 9
First Year Student Experience Program

- To address the institutional priority of ensuring that QUT's organisational contexts – its structure, policies and practices, particularly its first year learning and teaching approaches and all related service delivery – are integrated, coordinated, intentional and proactive so that first year student engagement, learning and success are supported and enhanced.

- To promote an organisation-wide ethos to the FYE, with a student-centred perspective, that is embedded at all levels: strategically across the institution, tactically in the faculties and divisions, and operationally in the classroom.
To deliver an evidence-based, high-level FYE Vision that articulates a strategic institutional commitment to a positive and successful FYE for all QUT students. This statement of institutional intent aims to provide the framework aims to inform all relevant institutional policies and practices to ensure that QUT's approach to the FYE is intentional, and that cohesive, systematic strategies are developed and deployed consistently for a sustainable, whole-of-institution engagement with an agreed philosophy of the FYE at QUT.

2 First Year Teaching & Support Enabling

To set in place strategic organisational policies, structures & processes to:

- raise the status and profile of first year teaching and support among full-time academics and professional staff by aligning QUT's institutional commitment to the FYE with the incentives, workload allocation, recognition, reward and other support mechanisms necessary to ensure that organisational areas are intentional and strategic about their allocation of QUT's best teachers and professional staff to first year learning environments;

- ensure that these FY teachers and professional staff are appropriately supported by all other faculty academic and professional staff members and also cross-institutionally as required; and

- enhance staff development offerings for greater alignment to QUT's strategic priority of the FYE.
Project 2: still very much a work-in-progress

- Requires significant long term culture shift here – Tinto’s taking education/ retention seriously
- Recommendations around
  - Reaching articulated consensus about what constitutes good teaching (for appointment, probation, promotion, PP&R, etc)
  - FYE perspective in staff development for both academic & professional staff
  - Incentives for teaching and support staff (reward and recognition)
  - Drivers for managers to enact
- Some gains
  - FYE perspective into academic leadership roles
  - Staff development for academic and sessional staff has FYE perspective
  - Operationalising project has strong staff development aspect
3 Pre-Orientation, Orientation & Transition

➢ To pilot some desirable transition and orientation strategies.

➢ To recommend an integrated and coherent set of institutional processes and practices that, in an accurate, realistic and relevant way, introduces and familiarises students, and their immediate family and significant others to QUT.

➢ To ensure that QUT's transition and orientation strategies are conceptualised as a process that occurs over time; in some aspects, before the first semester commences and independently of the curriculum, and in other aspects embedded in curriculum design.
QUT Orientation (1)

1. Good practice, discipline-based approach.
   - By 2007: FYE Program Coordinator had in place quality assured O Week approaches at Faculty level
     - more student-friendly and social in the discipline context (informal, semi-structured interactions between commencing & later-year students); and
     - Purposely limited amount of “talking head” information provided formally in large group lectures by faculty & divisional staff.
   - Staff and student feedback response that
     - students better prepared than previous cohorts; and
     - experiencing less confusion around administrative matters
   - Through mailouts and other encouragement, O Week attendance rates were pleasingly high

Sally Kift, QUT
2. Refreshed 2007 O Week survey feedback: largely happy with discipline events but we weren’t meeting students’ holistic O Week expectations – lack of buzz, excitement & activity over the 4 campuses

- Therefore (realistic response) in 2008: campus-specific O week days to ensure critical mass of students on given campus, and centrally organised “Big Top” event at mid-day for all to share.

- Result: higher again attendance rates; less double degree orientation clashes and positive data (see paper at 13)
QUT Orientation (3)

3. Conceptualisation of O Week as one part of a larger transition process over time
   - Another area for policy enhancement, leveraging off the *FYE Policy* already approved (Project 1).
   - UTLC has approved a new QUT *Orientation and Transition Policy*, accompanied by a set of guidelines for faculty and divisional implementation.
   - An agreed statement of *Orientation Good Practice Principles* (see paper p 14).
   - An agreed definition of “Orientation” …see next.

All a considerable partnership achievement for QUT.
QUT’s Orientation and Transition Policy

“QUT conceptualises student Orientation as a process that occurs over time; in some aspects, independently of the curriculum (from the letter of offer through to Week 4 of first semester) and, in other aspects, embedded in the curriculum. This will be achieved through:

– a process of academic and social integration to facilitate learning engagement; and
– just-in-time information provision and timely access to support services.

...

QUT supports commencing students in a number of ways and with a particular focus on critical time periods. One of these critical time periods is Orientation Week (“O Week”).”
To promote an intentional first year or transition pedagogy for adoption in aid of FY curriculum design and enhancement: that is, to promote FY curriculum which, amongst other things (after STAR, 2005):

- is relevant to and informs students' vocational aspirations early on in their course;
- assists students' transition from their previous educational experience to studying at tertiary level, as well as addressing the different learning needs and skills required relevant to their new discipline of study;
- provides students with formative assessments of their work early in their program or program component; and
- facilitates quality, authentic learning experiences, promotes student involvement in their learning and provides students with "good reasons to stay beyond the first year“ (Krause, 2006)
A “Scoping” note.

- Undergraduate (cf postgrad) curriculum
- First year curriculum (and co-curriculum)
  - First year students very diverse and can enter the curriculum at multiple entry points
    - We need to attend to them
    - Take care about advance standing and bridging courses
  - The focus here is the curriculum (rather than the experience of commencing students)
  - Diverse nature of student progression also means that non-first year students may enrol in first year units of study.
Supporting Miss Teen South Carolina in her learning

Jimmy Kimmel Explains what Miss Teen said

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR75L08SBHo

Through the provision of

• Academic skills support – oral communication; and
• Timely and individualised feedback.

Sally Kift, QUT
Why a *transition* pedagogy?

- **Because of what we know about our students**
  - We know so much – who they are, what their legitimate expectations are, what their issues are likely to be, who is likely at risk *etc etc*
  - Negligent not to facilitate re what we know

- **Lack of primary student identity**
  - No play & study through uni together like most of us did (McInnis, 2003)
  - No time to make all the necessary accommodations

- **Because this *not* solely about discipline content** –
  - These are all qualified students
  - Is about the academic, admin & or support systems and processes that wrap around the (easy/ hard) content
However

Tinto cautions (2002, 8):

…universities must provide [teachers] with the pedagogical and assessment skills they need to establish conditions in their classrooms that promote student involvement, learning, and retention…[and] we must reward faculty for effective teaching and provide incentives for faculty to innovate in their teaching and work with students.

Can we agree a principled approach?

- Is it possible to identify certain (generic) curriculum design principles that stand out as supportive of first year learning engagement, success and retention?
- First Year Curriculum Design Principles –
  - A set of interconnected organising principles to facilitate all students fully achieving desired learning outcomes that –
    - Are research-based (but move *from* theory *to* action);
    - Can help guide and inform practice;
    - Are supported by practical tips, checklists, examples & strategies for implementation (to move *from* principle *to* practice).
  - **ALTC (Carrick) Fellowship Project:** Currently developing a series of case studies in different disciplines where colleagues are analysing their practices against such principles.
An intentional transition pedagogy

- FY curriculum design *(concurrently w quality first year teaching & support)* that –
  - Aids *transition* *from* [previous educ experience] *to* nature of learning in HE and their new discipline as part of LLL
  - Acknowledges student *diversity* – broadly
    - diversity may exacerbate transition difficulties
    - can make few assumptions about existing knowledge & skills
  - Design is student-focussed, explicit and relevant providing *foundation & scaffolding* for FY learning success
  - Enacts an *engaging & involving* curriculum pedagogy
  - Aids transition to HE *assessment* & provides *early feedback*
  - Is itself *evaluated* and *monitors* for student engagement
FY Curriculum Design Project: Positives

- All QUT Faculties engaged in 2007 = whole-of-institution practice in an intentional and principled way
- Broad x-institutional community of practice
- Shared language and understanding
- Another UTLC policy approved (principles & guidelines)
  - NOW staff development for its widespread deployment
- Enabled cross-fertilisation of practice between divisional and faculty colleagues – esp
  - Harnessing an important range of institutional expertise not always influential (e.g., Academic Skills Advisors, Language & Learning Advisors, Liaison Librarians, etc).
5 First Year Students

- To enhance organisational areas' understanding of who their student cohorts are and to ensure that they are provided with the data and other resources necessary to monitor those cohorts' progression and retention, to intervene as appropriate in aid of students at risk, and to monitor the rates and causes of attrition.

- To access and respond to the student voice about the quality of their FYE and make recommendations about how FY students might be better connected to each other and to the academic and professional support services available to them.
Developed QUT specific data collections

- **FYES = First Year Experience Survey**
  - Targeted things we wanted data and feedback about as impetus for action

- Also a refreshed **Orientation Survey**

- **Program Exit Survey** – automated – collects data around
  - Factors influencing your decision to withdraw (from a list w free text also)
  - Was the program as expected?
  - Discuss withdrawal with anyone at QUT?
  - Could we have done anything to stop the withdrawal?
  - Do you plan to return to QUT in the future?
### QUT Program Exit Survey 2007 (to Nov 2007):

**What influenced yr decn to withdraw (could select more than one)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Responses: Total no</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>2007 commence responses</th>
<th>2007 % of commence responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your course of study</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the institutional culture and facilities</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodation</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transport</td>
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<td>3.7%</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isolation / loneliness</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family issues</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>health issues</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>personal issues</td>
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<td>12.8%</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your employment situation</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>your finances</strong></td>
<td><strong>308</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason…</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2914</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>1676</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Project 5 outcomes

- Got our first in family data from FYES – 2007: 39.5%
- Peer-to-peer interactions identified & coordinated and status raised through Report (& Recs) to UTLC
- Recognised necessity to systematise our approaches to monitoring for student (dis)engagement during the currency of their semester’s enrolment (in order to make proactive support interventions before final results)
  - Over 2008, this work sponsored by the new Director, FYE and taken up by Large T&L Project
  - QUT-wide Student Success Project initiative (with four active Faculties from mid-year 2008 and the final four scheduled for inclusion in 2009): see Duncan & Nelson (FYHE, 2008).
On a sombre note

• The crucial partnerships that have combined better to deliver a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated FYE remain fragile and require continued support, focus and nurturing.
• Without ongoing sponsorship (eg, well-resourced FYE Director (or like) over 2008 (and beyond)), in tandem with coherent governance structures, gains that have been made to date will easily dissipate and fragment.
• Disappointingly, if unsurprisingly, seems leadership on these issues must be academic
  – perhaps because of the centrality of learning and of learning engagement to the FYE
  – Perhaps this is the teaching cohort that needs most convincing
To conclude: Helicopter parents

Miss Teen South Carolina’s proud parents hovering in the background

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQc6oBCuDXk
Thank-you for listening

Questions and Comments