

Peer transition programs: Run by students for students

- Overview of programs at the two institutions:
 - *University of Newcastle*
 - *James Cook University*
- The 'Hows' and 'Whys' of peer transition
- Benefits
- Reflections



The University of Newcastle, Australia - Where are we?



The University of Newcastle-Profile

- Three domestic campuses and one campus located in Singapore
- Approx 40% students aged 25 and over
- Highest numbers of students nationally from identified equity group of low SES (27.5% - 2007/2008)
- High proportion of students first in their families to attend University
- Very similar profile at James Cook University

Ourimbah Campus

- Integrated Campus of The University of Newcastle and Hunter Institute of Technology
- Approximately 2,500 University students, studying in 4 main Schools (Humanities, Science, Business and Information Technology)



“HOW...” was UNISTART implemented at UoN?

- Based on a similar program (Kickstart) offered at James Cook University
- Applied in 2006 for HEESP (Higher Education Equity Support Program) funding
- Training provided in November 2006
- Develop the program: by students for students
- 2007 – first year offered at Ourimbah Campus, UoN

“HOW”...is UNISTART evaluated?

- Participant - evaluation form
- Facilitator & Assistants– written evaluation and focus group



- Informs developments and refinement of program
- Report completed by Project Officer and provided for Manager, Transition and Retention Unit
 - Also provided to PVC / Director Ourimbah Campus
 - Included in Annual Report on Orientation

“WHY...” Results from evaluating UNISTART

- 2009 – 119 students registered their attendance, 101 actually attended.
- The 101 participants were commencing in 14 Undergraduate Programs
- 96% of participants ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ that all aspects of UNISTART were of benefit to their transition into university studies

“WHY...” Other benefits of peer transition programs such as UNISTART

These are cost-effective programs.

Peer transition programs provide:

- A true student perspective grounded in the experiences of current students.
- A way to normalise fears and concerns in a non-threatening environment.
- Facilitators and Assistants benefit personally and professionally



JCU Peer Transition Programs

- Peer Transition Programs at JCU are faculty specific
- On Cairns campus we have 3-day programs
 - Kickstart (FAESS)
 - Freshstart (FLBCA)
 - Scistart (FSE)
 - Healthstart (FMHMS)
- On Townsville campus all are badged as Unistart which is a 5-day program



Attendance by Faculty 2009

Study Period 1

Arts, Education, Social Sciences	51
Law Business and Creative Arts	35
Medicine, Health and Molecular Sciences	47
Science and Engineering	14
Total	147

Study Period 2 – we expect half this number

Origins and Aims

- Student-driven initiative in response to a perceived need of new students
- Aims – to introduce new students to:
 - services
 - academics
 - peers
 - skills
- Facilitators/Program



A Cairns Case Study: Tracking 29 participants from Kickstart 2009

- Facilitator tracked participants throughout semester 1, 2009 via E-mail, breakfast meetings & “Kickers Club” that was formed for social, support & recreational activities
- 23 mature age, 6 school leavers
- 2 withdrew, 4 deferred due to external factors such as health, family and financial pressures
- 5 reduced their workloads
- 8 made changes to their degrees
- Work/life balance & time management has been biggest challenge in first semester
- Significant improvement in retention of Kickstart participants compared to overall faculty retention rate

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Questions/Comments/Discussion?

Thank you