



Student Success

A journal exploring the experiences of students in tertiary education

ISSN: 2205-0795

Volume 6, Issue 2, pp. i-iii

August 2015

Editorial

From our perspective, 2015 has been a year of change in the reporting of the learning experiences of tertiary students. For the past five years, *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education (Int J FYHE)* has published scholarly research and good practice that focused almost exclusively on the experiences of commencing students, particularly undergraduates. The annual *STARS Conference* was launched in July this year in Melbourne, Australia. It has a broader focus on student learning experiences across the student life cycle in the tertiary sector and beyond through the themes of *Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention, and Success*, and has provided an opportunity to relaunch the *Int J FYHE* as a more broadly based journal that we have named *Student Success*. To emphasise the continuity between the *Int J FYHE* and *Student Success*, this issue is *Volume 6, Issue 2*. The five STARS themes will shape the focus of the Journal and promote, foster and inspire the publication of research and initiatives that explore and develop good practice in tertiary curriculum, programs, practice and culture.

As has occurred over the last five years, *Student Success* will work in accord with the *STARS Conference* to “support our consideration of how our institutions are creating environments that enable students, in all their diversity, to realise their potential through higher education” (Nelson & Field, 2015, p. 1). This issue is dedicated to the inaugural *STARS Conference* and publishes the top five research papers selected via a peer review process which complies with the Australian HERDC processes for C1 publications. The Conference also introduced a new category of submissions called *New Ideas and Emerging Initiatives* and these presentations were a way of sharing information about

particular initiatives that could be transferred or utilised in other institutions. The top five initiatives were selected by the Conference Committee and are published in this issue as well. All of the authors in this particular issue are from Australian institutions but we actively encourage submissions from international authors.

The *STARS Conference* exemplified the genuine and sustained commitment to the student experience of both professional and academic staff working in tertiary education. This journal provides an opportunity to disseminate current research and innovative good practices about students’ tertiary learning experiences aligned with the STARS ethos. Researchers, tertiary teachers and professional staff who are advancing student learning, success and retention in the tertiary sector are encouraged to submit to future issues.

As we make this exciting transition with a new title and broader publishing foci, we acknowledge the continued support of our dedicated editorial team, Advisory Board and peer reviewers.

Feature

The concluding formal session of the *STARS Conference* was a panel discussion, chaired by Ron Oliver, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and International) and Professor of *e-learning* at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. The Panel members—James Arvanitakis, Professor of Humanities and Head of The Academy, University of Western Sydney; Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) The Australian National University; Sally Kift, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) James Cook University; Karen

Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Students) University of the Sunshine Coast and Beverly Oliver, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Deakin University each focussed on one of the STARS themes. Conference delegates posed questions to the panel and the session is summarised in this issue's Feature.

Articles

From the University of Western Sydney, Betty Gill reports on an institution-wide strategy to improve first year assessment practices. At the centre of the student learning is assessment and Gill provides several good practice strategies such as scheduling early low-risk assessment, consistent marking criteria and assessment mapping across courses.

Four of the five articles tackle transition into tertiary education from quite diverse perspectives:

Jeannette Stirling and Celeste Rossetto from Wollongong University discuss a first year transition program designed to facilitate academic participation in a higher education environment. The program relies on various multimedia technologies and blended learning models. The authors challenge some of the unresolved tensions between the complex transitional experiences of first year students from diverse backgrounds and differentiated entry capabilities.

The experiences of students entering university via a vocational education and training (VET) pathway are captured as part of a wider strategy by the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) to support VET students transitioning into higher education. Tracy Barber and colleagues from the Equity and Diversity Unit at UTS will continue to explore the student feedback that should provide a deeper conceptual understanding of the transition process.

Ben Bullock from Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne shares a study involving students studying psychology. It explores how high and low mood and energy traits provide information on a novel predictor of academic engagement and performance.

Finally, transition is explored by Robert Whannell and Patricia Whannell from the University of New England in regional Armidale who present an alternative approach to explain the attrition phenomenon. Identity theory is used as the basis to develop a theoretical framework that is intended to assist educators supporting students to develop and sustain their academic and scholarly identity.

New Ideas and Emerging Initiatives

Masha Smallhorn and her co-authors from Flinders University in Adelaide profile an initiative with their first year biology cohort incorporating guided inquiry with student teams to improve the engagement and learning outcomes of students attending weekly laboratory sessions. Their results indicate improvements in students' satisfaction and learning outcomes.

Also from Flinders University, Elizabeth Abery, Claire Drummond and Nadia Bevan seek to prompt student perceptions of placement expectations prior to, during and after the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experience by exploring what resources are required to ensure a positive WIL experience, regardless of degree major and future professional aspirations.

Marcus O'Donnell and colleagues from the University of Wollongong detail their institution's Curriculum Transformation Project (CTP) which focuses on transition as a whole-of-curriculum design principle. It extends the concept of "transition pedagogy" developed by Sally Kift and colleagues (2010) showing how it has been used to inform a larger project of curriculum renewal.

From the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, David Fleischman and Oscar Imaz-Marial utilise practices originated from the medical profession to inform their Deskside Manner Framework aimed at improving the tertiary student transition experience by offering a straightforward pathway to more mindful student-educator experiences.

Finally, Murray Lane and Victoria Menzies from Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane undertake an analysis of engagement activity in Facebook collaborative learning groups which had been established for students to share their knowledge and seek advice at a course-based scale. The authors recognise and respond to the need to analyse the real-time data, rather than seeking a reflective student voice through surveys.

Karen Nelson
Editor-in-chief

John Clarke
Rachael Field
Sally Kift
Editorial Team

Tracy Creagh
Journal Manager

Student Success

References

- Kift, S., Nelson, K., & Clarke, J. (2010). Transition pedagogy: A third generation approach to FYE. A case study of policy and practice for the higher education sector. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 1(1), 1-20. doi:10.5204/intjfyhe.v1i1.13
- Nelson, K. & Field, R. (2015). *Welcome. STARS Conference Proceedings*. Retrieved from <http://unistars.org/proceedings/>

Please cite this Editorial as:

Creagh, T., Clarke, J., & Nelson, K. (2015). Editorial. *Student Success*, 6(2), i-iii. doi: 10.5204/ssj.v6i2.300

Student Success: A journal exploring the experiences of students in tertiary education



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). As an open access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings. ISSN: 2205-0795