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## Intra-university partnerships improve student success in a first-year success and retention outreach initiative

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### Abstract\*

*La Trobe University faces multiple challenges in responding to attrition and providing a positive student experience among an increasingly diverse first-year cohort. As in many institutions, La Trobe has developed a transition and academic outreach program, Succeed at La Trobe, to support retention, academic preparation and sense of belonging, using an appreciative advising theoretical framework. Although similar programs exist at other universities, these initiatives are often dissociated from day-to-day academic activities and curricula, outsourced to third parties, or focused on specific subjects. Succeed at La Trobe, however, takes an integrated, partnership-based approach, and in 2017 adopted two models of practice which are contrasted here. The established model, of partnerships with individual discipline academics, successfully improved retention rates and student outcomes, with student weighted average marks increased by 3.8 points. In a fully engaged partnership model with first-year Health Science staff and other student-focused areas of the university, a whole-of-student-experience approach was possible, including a more holistic approach to the identification and contact of at-risk students. Deeper engagement and integration with academic business resulted in several benefits, including an increase in contacted students' weighted average marks of 8.5 points. This paper outlines the collaborative approach taken to develop the intervention and the resulting benefits and implications for practitioners that may apply to other institutions.*

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## Introduction

Like many universities in Australia and globally, La Trobe University (LTU) faces multiple challenges in responding to a near-universal higher education (HE) system; notably, increasing diversity in the preparedness, expectations and motivations for study of a larger student body. As a “redbrick” university, LTU faces further challenges in finding competitive advantage in a crowded HE sector, without the prestige of the “sandstone” (Group of Eight<sup>1</sup>) universities or the clear vocational focus of post-1990 universities or non-university providers. A further challenge for LTU is ensuring consistency across five suburban and regional campuses.

Despite this, according to national student surveys, LTU has one of the highest scores for student engagement of any Australian university (Social Research Centre, 2017). This may be due, in part, to the integrated transition support programs developed in recognition of the difficulties many students face in transition into HE. This support may be particularly important to those from non-traditional or first-in-family backgrounds, or those facing educational, financial or mental wellbeing issues. LTU considers providing inclusive, equitable access to HE an essential part of its mission (La Trobe University, 2017).

This case study will detail the results of LTU’s transition and academic outreach program, *Succeed at La Trobe* (S@LT), as a pedagogical model of a response to the changing HE environment. S@LT has been central to La Trobe’s *Success and Retention Strategy* for three years, and remains aligned with LTU’s new five-year Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022, with the aim of increasing student success, retention and overall satisfaction. The S@LT program, through its multiple activities and achievements, demonstrates a significant role in improving student success and retention and

a positive satisfaction impact regarding student experience at La Trobe.

The study will describe the strength of the program which relies upon its partnerships with discipline academics to provide personalised, course- and subject-specific academic support to first-year students. While interaction with academics has occurred in previous iterations of the program, it has been limited to an individual subject basis. To further expand and integrate the program in 2017 we developed a different approach to identify and outreach to students in the health sciences. We will discuss this particularly successful partnership that has been created between S@LT and first-year health science academics which has resulted in compounded benefits for students accessing S@LT. We further discuss the benefits of this type of academic engagement and outreach model including the key outcomes of the intervention and recommendations for practitioners.

## Theoretical Framework

S@LT is grounded in appreciative advising (Hutson, 2010) and transition pedagogy (Kift, 2009) as its primary theoretical frameworks. Appreciative advising is a strengths-based approach to student development intended to enhance self-efficacy (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008; Grogan, 2011; Hutson, 2010). Hutson’s (2010) model involves: 1) use of positive, active listening and questioning techniques to build rapport; 2) uncovering of students’ interests and abilities; 3) encouraging of students’ stories; 4) co-construction of action plans; 5) recommending supports for students as they carry out their plans, and; 6) challenging the students to perform and reach their goals. Appreciative advising models encompass the notion of ‘scaffolding’ (Vygotsky, 1979) students development alongside encouraging a mindset that recognises strengths and

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<sup>1</sup> The Group of Eight (Go8) is a coalition of leading research intensive Australian universities

empowers students (Grogan, 2011; MacDonald, 2000).

This type of direct, proactive approach is also associated with intrusive advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Molina & Abelman, 2000; Vander Schee, 2007) and developmental advising (Crookston, 1972; Gordan, 1994) which S@LT advisors also draw upon in daily interactions with students. All these approaches share a strong student wellbeing, success and retention focus and seek to uncover the student's strengths rather than (merely) highlighting limitations and problems. While identification of what is causing difficulty and recommending appropriate supports is an aspect of these approaches by fostering an "appreciative mindset" advisers are more likely to avoid a common pitfall and communicate a "deficit thinking" (Valencia, 2010) or "fixed mindset" (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). These approaches also rely on building student self-efficacy, understanding of university support systems, and a sense of belonging to achieve positive outcomes.

Appreciative advising operates at the level of individual interactions between students and university staff. In contrast, S@LT's transition pedagogy operates at a higher, program, or strategic level, by ensuring S@LT is embedded in a cohesive network of university-wide relationships. S@LT endeavours to ground itself in transition pedagogy as well as draw upon best practice principles for first-year engagement and retention (Dumbrigue, Moxley, & Najor-Durack, 2013; Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005; Lizzio, 2011; Yorke & Longden, 2004). A key challenge in transition pedagogy is the provision of support that is integrated into regular learning and teaching practices and spans the first-year experience (FYE) (Nelson, Duncan & Clarke, 2009). Kift (2009) describes this approach as a "third generation" transition pedagogy, which moves beyond the merely co-curricular and curricular aspects of the FYE and looks toward integrated, whole-of-institution

transformation to support the diverse range of commencing students.

Kift (2009) also describes the requirement for sustainable partnerships between academic and professional staff, and university leaders, to enable this model. The value of sustainable partnerships between professional and academic staff in enabling student transition success and retention has been documented in the UK (Parkes, Blackwell-Young, Cleaver, & Archibald, 2014), the US (Banta & Kuh, 1998) and Australia. As highlighted by Banta and Kuh (1998), for any institution to improve the quality of the FYE, the collaboration between the two groups that have the most interaction with students must be established. These partnerships, which cross organisational boundaries, have the potential to bring together aspects of an institution that may have been fragmented previously to enhance the student experience (Parkes et al., 2014). While S@LT has always had input from academic staff to obtain subject-specific information, the approach described in this paper involved more extensive collaboration to enable a more holistic intervention and support for students, with demonstrated benefits for students' success and retention (as detailed below).

## Operational design

Before 2016, S@LT was implemented by an external consultancy using Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funds. Following a thorough review of the program in 2015, LTU ended the contract and established an internal professional contact centre based at LTU's Bendigo campus. Bringing the program "in-house" provided the opportunity to partner with academics and other discipline experts to rigorously identify students having academic difficulties, and develop personalised, course and subject-specific advice for contacted students. Other benefits included: 1) a reduction in costs; 2) higher contact rate; 3) expanded student reach; 4) flexible campaigns; 5) increased data

capture, and; 6) streamlined referrals. Customisation of the inbound customer relationship manager (CRM) has also enabled the capture of call outcomes and retrieval of subject-specific data. This data includes student feedback which is provided to subject coordinators for future subject improvement.

S@LT operates on a calendar of campaigns that align with the student lifecycle and provides proactive outreach that takes the initiative to contact students identified as “at-risk”. Two major types of campaign are undertaken: subject-based campaigns, which are undertaken early and late in each semester (at specific times determined in partnership with the subject coordinator, and with subject-specific messages for students), and; additional early intervention campaigns which are course, not subject, based. These include outreach to commencing undergraduate students to provide “welcome” calls. These calls are prioritised by high attrition courses and demographic factors such as low socioeconomic status (SES), first in family (FIF) and low ATAR<sup>2</sup>. As with subject-based campaigns, S@LT collaborates closely with academics to include course-specific information such as relevant orientation sessions, academic advice days and the core first-year (CFY) professional mentoring program. The calls also open up dialogue to assist with early course and career planning, including information on course transfers where necessary.

While S@LT uses several communications modes, including email and SMS, the primary method of contact is via personalised phone calls. The use of proactive phone-based outreach has shown to be effective in promoting academic success and retention (Nelson et al., 2009; Simpson, 2006). This type of proactive outreach is particularly important as it can reach students who may not make contact with student support services otherwise and are

more likely to ‘drop-out’ (Simpson, 2006). The primary indicators used by S@LT are those shown to be related to student drop-out including non-submission of assessment items, failure of assessments or non-attendance (Hudson, 2005; Nelson et al., 2009). All campaigns are designed to provide students with critical just-in-time information, advice and referral to support and enhance their university experience. As with similar proactive interventions the objective is to use these indicators and outreach to students before they fail subjects, especially in their first semester of study. There is evidence that the impact of this type of intervention on student persistence may be sustained for at least 12 months (Nelson, Quinn, Marrington & Clarke, 2012).

To identify students across the first-year who may be at-risk these types of intervention are usually embedded into large first-year subjects. By embedding to large core subjects, the aim is to capture students who may be at-risk in at least one subject. Embedding into core units of study has been shown to be effective across several universities with Barnes, Macalpine and Munro (2015) focusing on four units of study with noted plans to expand into other disciplines due to positive results. Similarly, Potter and Parkinson (2010) after focusing initially on one first-year subject expanded into six subjects in two faculties due to increases in pass rates and other measures of success. Nelson et al. (2009) also focused on individual units, initially looking at five first-year units in one faculty then extending into large core first-year units in all faculties with positive impact. The S@LT program has been embedded in 12 subjects per semester since it was bought in-house, with subjects selected that have large enrolments and also span across the five regional campuses. As with the interventions described above, embedding support into individual subjects have yielded positive results at La Trobe but due to the course design in

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<sup>2</sup> The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is the primary criterion for entry into most undergraduate-entry university programs in Australia

health science and the partnership established we were able to triangulate outreach (both regarding data collection and advice to students).

The program employs professional staff to initiate proactive, personalised contact, which differs from similar programs that utilise trained peers to provide the outreach (Nelson et al., 2009; Wilson, Oostergo, Idewa & Lizzio, 2015) The decision to utilise professional staff to make contact has been articulated previously (Stephenson & Cox, 2017) and has resulted in numerous benefits including a highly dedicated outreach team with in-depth knowledge and partnerships throughout the university, increased visibility and professionalisation of advising, and increased program sustainability. Initial proactive outreach training was delivered by experienced staff from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and has since been supplemented by training in administrative process (enabling staff to address student administrative enquiries), mental health first aid, as well as specific training in appreciative and intrusive advising.

Although S@LT maintains partnerships with academics across LTU, arguably the strongest relationship is with the health science CFY, which provides the foundation for 35 courses across 17 health science and allied health disciplines. The CFY model was developed to confront a number of internal and external challenges faced by LTU (Naylor, 2017). Curriculum refresh provided an opportunity to develop a comprehensive transition pedagogy incorporating S@LT (among other programs), alongside an authentic, multidisciplinary, and inquiry-based curriculum.

Alongside their formal curricula, CFY students are also supported by a year-long transition and academic support program based on the idea of “transition as becoming” (Gale & Parker, 2014; Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010)—in this case, explicitly becoming a junior colleague and professional, rather than a “student” per se. This

program was successively introduced during the second half of 2016 (at the same time as S@LT was brought in-house) and into 2017. The transition program involves traditional academic skills and content support, but also includes student self-reflection on their aspirations and conceptions of success at university; interviews with students to normalise help-seeking behaviour, answer questions and create a sense of cohort; and explicating LTU's expectations for students (framed with the university as a proxy for the profession, rather than as an end in itself). The re-positioning of students as colleagues occurs in all official correspondence from LTU for this cohort, beginning with the letter of congratulations students receive from the college Pro-Vice Chancellor upon accepting the offer to study.

S@LT forms an important part of the co-curricular support offered to CFY students, and the program manager meets on a monthly basis with subject coordinators, library and academic skills staff to discuss any issues arising. This enables immediate proactive responses to any trends or issues raised by students with previous research suggesting that early actions performed by an institution can enhance or constrain students' persistence and engagement (Thomas, 2012; Tinto, 2009). The integrated nature of the CFY and collaboration with academics has also meant that S@LT can provide more holistic advice and information to this cohort. For example, advisers were provided with all the assessment information across the CFY which enabled more holistic conversations regarding student's academic progress rather than focusing on an individual subject.

## Methods

### *Experimental design and data collection*

As S@LT successfully contacted approximately 50% of at-risk students, this provides a natural experiment for evaluating the effect of S@LT on student outcomes by comparing the two groups (contacted and uncontacted students). There were no significant demographic differences between the two groups, suggesting that any differences seen between the groups may be due to the impact of the S@LT program, rather than confounding factors.

All student contact made by S@LT was recorded using the CRM with students recorded as *call attempt reached* or *call attempt not reached* (including no answer and left message). Where phone numbers were invalid, they were not recorded as attempted and excluded from the dataset. In addition to recording call outcomes (contacted or uncontacted) and call rates

(percentage of students successfully contacted), key data fields were recorded for each call including student receptivity and referrals made.

To calculate any academic improvement from S@LT, weighted average marks (WAMs) were matched with student IDs from students contacted in the early and late assessment campaigns using the Student Information System. Retention data was calculated based on enrolment status past the census date. Demographic data were obtained from LTU's Planning and Institutional Performance Unit using student IDs to identify equity group membership. Ethics approval for this study was provided by the College of Science, Health and Engineering ethics committee. To compare the more integrated approach adopted for health sciences with the single subject model the data for this cohort was analysed separately.

**Table 1**

***Equity group membership of identified at-risk students***

Category	N (2017 cohort)	% (S@LT) total
Low SES	1743	34.4
- <i>Low SES and rural/remote</i>	840	16.6
- <i>Low SES and disability</i>	159	3.1
- <i>Low SES and indigenous</i>	34	0.7
- <i>Low SES and non-English speaking background</i>	87	1.7
- <i>Low SES and women in non-traditional areas</i>	286	5.6
Low ATAR (<60)	2291	45.3
First in family	3768	74.4
Non-English speaking background	282	5.6
Indigenous	103	2.0
Total	5062	-

Note: Table 1 summarises equity group counts, not individual students. Individual students may be counted in multiple groups.

## Findings

### *Overview of S@LT program in 2017*

During 2017, S@LT placed nearly 12,600 calls to 14,700 flagged students identified as at-risk through its subject-based and early intervention campaigns. Note that because calls to students may be triggered in multiple campaigns, these may not represent 14,700 individuals. Contact was made with over 5,000 students, plus over 6,000 emails were sent to “check in” and provide key information and resources to students who were unable to be contacted via phone. Equity group membership is detailed in Table I. A further 847 SMS messages were sent to students who had not logged into their email or the LMS system by the end of week 3.

### *Student responses to calls*

Staff recorded their perceptions of student receptivity for the calls for those successfully contacted. Students responded extremely positively to outreach from S@LT; 91% of students were reported as being appreciative or

very appreciative for the contact, with less than 1% reacting negatively. It is possible that politeness may have inflated these numbers, as they rely on staff perceptions of the response. Students themselves reported being slightly less, although still overwhelmingly, positive about the support provided by S@LT, with 76% being either satisfied or very satisfied, and only 2% dissatisfied according to responses to an online survey.

### *Service referrals arising from subject-based campaigns*

S@LT staff recorded the main referral made from each phone call. An unfortunate limitation of the software used was that only one referral could be noted for each case. As a result, some categories of referral noted below may be under-reported compared to the referrals made.

**Table 2**

#### ***Staff perceptions of student responsiveness to calls***

All Campaign Disposition	N (2017 cohort)	%
Very Appreciative	2526	50.4
Appreciative	2056	41.0
Neutral	389	7.8
Non-Appreciative	33	0.7
Concerned	8	0.2
Hostile/Abusive	2	0.0
Total	5014	-

**Table 3**

***Service referrals arising from subject-based campaigns***

Referred services	N (2017, subject-based cohort)	%
Online Resources	2044	45.1
College teaching staff	970	21.4
Student Development Advisor	694	15.3
Student Learning/Peer learning advisors	446	9.8
Careers & Employability	27	0.6
Counselling	23	0.5
Equity & Diversity	11	0.2
No Referral Made	319	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4534</b>	<b>-</b>

The majority of issues identified to S@LT staff were academic and administrative issues, as evidenced by the service referrals made from the subject-based campaigns below. Two-thirds (66.5%) of student referrals were to online resources or College teaching staff to assist with these issues, plus another 9.8% who were referred to Student Learning staff or peer learning advisors for academic literacy help. This is consistent with the high proportion of students contacted who were from low ATAR, FIF and low SES backgrounds, who are less likely to be academically well-prepared than other students. However, the high proportion of these referrals made suggests that many “traditional” students also had problems with these areas.

The next most common referrals were to Student Development Advisors, whose primary role is supporting students with time management skills, and acting as case managers for more complex issues. Relatively low numbers of students were referred for careers and employability development, counselling or support from the Equity and Diversity unit.

Seven percent of students were not referred to any service, although we hypothesise that contact from S@LT staff may still have improved a sense of belonging and academic motivation for these students.

***Outcomes of S@LT contact***

Building positive affect and a sense of belonging to the institution is essential in effective transition (Kift, 2009). However, for those students identified as being academically at-risk, it is also important to assess whether those students contacted acted on the advice given and whether this materially affected their academic outcomes. Responses to the online evaluation survey indicated that 63% of students accessed the services recommended to them by the program. While students who had acted on referrals may have been more likely to respond to the evaluation survey, introducing response bias, this represents a substantial increase in the number of students accessing these services. The literature suggests this may result in a sustained impact in service access beyond first-year (Nelson et al., 2012).



First to second-year retention figures were calculated for students identified as at-risk in 2017 who were contacted by S@LT. Attrition was calculated based on enrolment status, post-Census Semester 1, 2018. Students were classified as “contacted” when successfully contacted by phone or “not contacted” when unable to reach student via phone. Approximately 50% of students were contacted by the program, enabling comparison between the “contacted” and “not contacted” cohorts.

Analysis of the data demonstrated an overall retention rate for all students of 80.5% (with an attrition rate of approximately 19.5%). Those who were identified as at-risk but not able to be contacted via phone showed a retention rate of 72.65% (attrition rate of approximately 27.35%). A chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between student contact and retention, with significantly higher retention for those contacted  $\chi^2(1, N=4487) = 93.17, p < .05$ . With a retention increase of 7.85% for those successfully contacted by S@LT it can be estimated that approximately 160 students were retained that may not have been without intervention. Additionally, contact from S@LT reduced attrition to below the university average of 20.77% for domestic undergraduate students.

Students contacted by S@LT achieved weighted average marks 3.8 points higher (95% CI: 2.9-4.7,  $t(2271) = 4.02, p < 0.001$ ) than those who could not be contacted. With a difference of 3.8 points, it can be estimated that 7% more students passed that may not have otherwise.

Uncontacted students were still provided with key information via email but did not engage in conversation via phone outreach.

### *Outcomes of S@LT contact in CFY students*

As observed in other courses, students in the CFY reached by S@LT had substantially higher WAMs than those not reached by the program, with an average difference of 8.5 points between the two groups (95% CI: 5.7-11.3;  $t(752) = 3.62, p < 0.001$ ). This increase was also significantly higher than that seen in other cohorts in 2017 ( $t(1444) = 4.57, p < 0.001$ ), and in the CFY cohort in 2016, where the difference between contacted and uncontacted students was 5.3 points (95% CI: 2.5-8.1). We hypothesise that these differences are due to continuous development of the relationship between S@LT and the CFY during 2017, alongside other integrated support. Additional with an increase of 8.5 points, 17% more CFY students passed that may not have without the integrated contact.

Retention figures were calculated separately for the health science students using the same method used for the overall first-year cohort. Results demonstrated that CFY students not contacted had a retention rate of 78% (attrition rate of approximately 22%). CFY students who were contacted via phone showed a retention rate of 85.8% (attrition rate approximately 14.2%). A chi-square test of independence indicated a significant relationship between S@LT contact and retention ( $\chi^2(1, N=827) =$

**Table 4**

***Yearly retention rates all for contacted and uncontacted students, 2017***

Retained/ Progressed 2018	Not Contacted		Contacted	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
No	692	27.4	1839	72.7
Yes	299	19.5	1647	80.5*

\* $p < 0.05$

**Table 5**

***Weighted average marks for contacted and uncontacted students, 2017***

	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i> Contacted	<i>M (SD)</i> Not contacted	Difference (95% CI)
Health Science	753	52.9 (17.8)	44.4 (21.2)	8.5 (5.7-11.3)**
Not Health Science	2272	51.9 (21.4)	48.1 (23.6)	3.8 (1.9-5.7)**

\*\*  $p < 0.001$

7.93,  $p < 0.5$ ). A similar retention increase of approximately 7.8% was demonstrated for CFY students successfully contacted by S@LT although overall attrition rates were lower overall for this cohort.

More broadly, the number of students withdrawing from the course has decreased as co-curricular support has been implemented, falling from 359 in 2015, to 250 in 2016 (when S@LT was brought in-house, and additional transition support began to be incorporated into the CFY). The increased focus on support appears to have had particular benefits for those who withdrew due to unsatisfactory academic progress, with numbers falling from 33 in 2015 to 6 in 2016. Data for the 2017 cohort was not available at the time of writing. Smaller decreases were also seen in the number of students withdrawing due to dissatisfaction, financial reasons, and personal reasons, which may also be related to increased visibility of

support. More unexpectedly, the number of students transferring to other LTU courses also decreased. This may suggest that students find the courses more engaging, more supportive, or more relevant to their future prospects than previously.

These findings together suggest that the close relationship between S@LT and CFY staff allows S@LT to provide more informed advice to students. Embedding the program across an integrated year, rather than in specific subjects, allows holistic, but still specific, not subject-based advice. Together, these two factors appear to ensure better success and retention outcomes for CFY students.

**Table 6**

***Yearly retention rates all for CFY contacted and uncontacted students, 2017***

Retained/ Progressed 2018	Not Contacted		Contacted	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
No	108	22.0	48	14.2
Yes	382	78.0	289	85.8

**Table 7*****Reasons for students' withdrawal from CFY courses***

Reason for withdrawal	2015 (n)	2016 (n)
Dissatisfaction	25	21
Employment/financial	17	10
Other	8	6
Personal reasons (inc medical)	40	35
Relocation	8	10
Transfer – internal	96	37
Transfer - other institution	132	125
Unsatisfactory academic progress	33	6
Total	359	250

## Concluding discussion

Nationally and internationally, many universities are now undertaking outreach programs broadly similar to that detailed here to support and empower students during their transition to university and beyond. Although much has been written about the importance of adequately integrating these support programs into a whole of institution transition pedagogy, it is currently unclear how useful or mature such integration has been across the sector. This process is complicated by ensuring each program is appropriately tailored to the specific needs of its target cohort and institution. Nevertheless, because of the extra demands posed by increasing diversity and increasing student numbers that have led to the development of these programs, there is paradoxically less capacity to integrate these programs cohesively into daily university business. Support programs are often siloed into central services and staffed by professional staff who may not have the same prestige within the institution. Active partnerships with discipline academics, library staff, and other support systems are therefore essential (Banta & Kuh, 1998).

S@LT provides a case study of a successful outreach program, as well as demonstrating the power of integration and partnerships across university areas. Three primary success factors enabled this.

The first was bringing S@LT in-house in 2016. Had S@LT remained an external consultancy, it is unlikely that it would have had the same reach for students (Stephenson & Cox, 2017), or that the partnerships that have supported the program would have been able to flourish. Having the call centre at a regional campus potentially provides staff with a better understanding and rapport with students from regional areas, which may not have been possible otherwise.

The second success factor is the use of highly trained staff rather than students to deliver calls. While successful student-based outreach programs have been described (Nelson, et al., 2012), having permanent staff has enabled capacity to be built in appreciative advising and transition pedagogy (Hutson, 2010; Vander Schee, 2007); strong relationships to be formed across the university, and increased program sustainability.

The final success factor is a distributed leadership model (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, & Ryland, 2012) to enact changes necessary to integrate S@LT into academic business and facilitate meaningful relationships. As noted above, the S@LT program director meets with a diverse stakeholder group, including discipline and academic literacy academics and library staff, on a monthly basis to discuss matters arising in the CFY. This results in a collegial exchange between all relevant areas, to mutually beneficial effect (and, of course, for students as well). The ability to form, maintain and expand relationships across university areas is a common thread in all three success factors.

The data presented here demonstrates clear evidence of success for S@LT in several key indicators, including retention, success, student satisfaction, and academic achievement. This is despite several hurdles, including insufficient learning analytic support (although having to manually identify students at-risk, important dates, and specific advice alongside academics has further strengthened relationships) and the uncertainty of continued HEPPP funding. Being HEPPP funded has enabled S@LT to focus on a cohort enriched with students from equity backgrounds (particularly low SES, low ATAR and FIF students). However, the data suggests that it is not just students from these groups that are using or benefiting from S@LT. An implication for practitioners is, therefore, to consider whether the funding requirements of HEPPP facilitate or block the ongoing delivery of these programs. This may particularly be the case in institutions with a high proportion of academically under-prepared students (the primary concern reported here through referrals) that are not members of formal equity groups.

A further implication evidenced by the improvement in the 2017 CFY cohort's WAM is that holistic, integrated support is more beneficial than a subject-based approach, although any intervention appears to be better

than none, including contact via SMS and email. The integrated model described here provides an important point of difference to similar programs used at other universities (Barnes et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2009; Potter & Parkinson, 2010; Tower, Walker, Wilson, Watson, & Tronoff, 2015), which typically identify and support students on the basis of individual subjects. Even those examining the student experience across multiple subjects typically report their data on an individual subject basis, which we believe may conceal the benefits that come from taking a whole-of-student approach to appreciative advising modelled here in the CFY example. As others have noted, student success is everyone's business (Kift et al., 2010; Kift, 2008; Nelson et al., 2009). Further research is required to ensure that these positive outcomes are maintained as the CFY and S@LT programs continue to mature.

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