

SPECTRUM

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Listening to Students

Ava Gibson

“Until institutions consult their disabled students directly they will remain ignorant of the difficulties and barriers faced by disabled students as they go about their daily business” Tinklin et al., (2004)

Mick Healey, visiting HERDSA Scholar and Professor of Geography at the University of Gloucestershire, includes in his research interests the learning experience of disabled students and developing an inclusive curriculum. He gave a workshop at Victoria on Monday 24 July entitled, ‘Listening to students: the experience of disabled students of learning at university,’ attended by nearly 30 staff from Victoria and other Wellington tertiary institutions. In the workshop, Healey responded to the challenge of making disabled students’ reality visible through the use of case studies and through sharing the results of three UK surveys undertaken on disabled students’ experiences of learning and assessment.

Healey states that statistically in UK higher education there will be 11 students who have declared a disability in a class of 200, and another 11 students in the room who have an impairment and have not declared it. Numbers who have declared a disability at Victoria are lower. With 2.5% of the total university population in 2005 registering with Disability Support Services they remain an underrepresented group at University¹.

One of Healey’s surveys contrasted the experience of disabled and non-disabled students within the institution. Results indicated that most disabled students have not experienced any disability-related barriers with teaching and learning, except in lectures. Where they have, the

**Professor Mick Healey**

impacts are serious. The barriers were not universal and we need to be cautious about making assumptions on the basis of impairment, because two students with the same impairment may face different barriers within the same course. Healey stressed, therefore, the importance of addressing individual need and not devising general policies that may not cater for the diversity of student need. His research also illustrated the commonalities amongst students and highlighted some of the difficulties non-disabled students also have with teaching and assessment.

Healey noted that the main beneficiaries of disability legislation may, in fact, be the non-disabled students. As an advocate of inclusive teaching and learning strategies that benefit all students, he believes in incorporating the principles of universal instructional design² which considers the diversity of people within our courses without the need for accommodations.

¹ 1 in 5 New Zealanders identify as having a disability.

² Healey identified the following as necessary for universal instructional design: inclusiveness, physical access, delivery methods, information access, interaction, feedback, demonstration of knowledge.

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Comments and feedback on any article published in Spectrum are welcomed and should be directed to the editor: Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz

Listening to Students (cont.)

There are opportunities for staff to hear and learn from the experience of disabled students and reflect on course design, delivery and assessment through workshops and training sessions provided by Disability Support Services (DSS). Disability Equity Training is offered free to all staff, and places are still available for September workshops. We are also able to customise courses for schools.

An exciting development at Victoria is the audit and implementation of the NZ Code of Practice, 'Kia Orite'. Beginning with targeted groups, this inquiry will gather information from students and staff on 'best practice' within the school. Through identifying the areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, it will

become a valuable source of qualitative information to move forward in this area.

Contact Ava Gibson, Manager Disability Support Services

ava.gibson@vuw.ac.nz

or extension 6077 for further information on workshops or to receive a copy of Professor Mick Healey's presentation.

Staff Changes at the UTDC

John Good returns

The UTDC is very happy to welcome back John Good as a Temporary Lecturer until the end of this year. He assisted us with a study of distance and flexible learning at VUW last year and will be working with us on aspects of the findings from that study.



Linda Bowden joins

Linda Bowden has accepted the position of Evaluations and Reviews administrator taking over Christine Whaanga's role, initially part-time. Spectrum will feature more on Linda in the next issue.

Three Good Reasons to Get a Learning and Teaching Qualification

Warren Sellers

Are you interested in gaining "context, confidence [and] commitment" for your teaching and learning? The first cohort of participants in the UTDC's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (PHELT) indicate that these and other benefits make the PHELT Cert worth enrolling in. Participants welcomed the opportunity to dedicate time and space to their teaching and learning reflection and practice:

"[PHELT] provided a structured context for exploring my teaching philosophy, for understanding diverse learning styles, and for identifying key issues about curriculum design, assessment, and feedback across a range of disciplines."

Participants in the 2006 cohort valued the opportunity to discuss and debate teaching, learning and research in a collegial, focussed, and well-facilitated environment, with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. When asked what they most valued about the course, the following three themes emerged.

Collegiality

Participants commented on the collegial and supportive atmosphere in the face-to-face meetings, and the ongoing professional relationships that have emerged as a result of the course:

I valued the time...to think about [teaching and learning] issues, discuss them...with

colleagues from similar or very different fields within the university, and get a number of different perspectives to look at different teaching and learning challenges.

The diverse wealth of knowledge that teachers and colleagues brought to the learning experience...well-structured content...the cumulative wisdom of the class as a system.

Teaching Effectiveness

Beyond the reflective and collegial aspects of the course, participants also mentioned the effects on their professional practice:

I turned from teaching and learning practice based on gut instinct, to professionally informed understandings of practice. I'm now re-thinking practices and gradually introducing new approaches that bring theory and practice together. I'm absolutely committed to what I've learned; there's no going back!

We were asked to offer an analogy for how we saw our professional practice role. Mine was as a Museum Curator; gathering and presenting content in a way that made it enticing compelling and easy to understand. Now, I see myself more as a sports coach; involved and engaged with motivating my students to participate fully in performing learning in our subject.

How to be more critically constructive about professional practice...to connect teaching with day-to-day realities that are familiar to students.

Productivity and Research Output

In addition to the impact on participants' teaching, the course has had a positive impact on their research outputs and focus. A significant component of the PHELT course involves the design of a research project aimed at improving student learning outcomes and at generating PBRF-eligible publications. Participants are now working on a variety of research projects, covering such diverse topics as:

- examining the educational role of the critique in architectural studio teaching;
- the role of prerequisite knowledge in the achievement of teaching goals;
- investigating the use of participant video documentation as a data collection tool and blogging as a reflective process;
- the value of laboratory education from the student's point of view; and
- developing integrated curricula.

One participant has already been invited to present on their research project and to give a seminar at an overseas partner institution. Others are looking at publishing their research before the end of the year.

The UTDC congratulates the nine academics, representing three Faculties and six Schools, who have successfully completed the first course in the new qualification's pilot phase in the first trimester, and encourages staff to consider registering for the 2007 PHELT cohort. Interested academic staff are encouraged to contact Tom Angelo on ext. 7482 or Tom. Angelo@vuw.ac.nz or Kathryn Sutherland on ext. 5795 or Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz with questions and expressions of interest.

Quality Distance Learning and Teaching

Some initial thoughts from John Good

Last year I had the pleasure of interviewing many VUW staff engaged in distance and flexible learning and teaching (DFLT). I discovered that DFLT is happening all over Victoria's campuses and beyond, in various ways and for diverse purposes. So many capable and enthusiastic people, with considerable expertise and experience to share, are using DFLT, but it's happening in silos and is not being shared around the university. There appeared to be no sense of an overall purpose.

The University's senior management recognised this gap and last year's study was tasked with developing an articulated strategy that indicated the place of DFLT within the University's overall objectives for learning and teaching. The study also sought to identify the support environment that would be needed to ensure that robust and high quality outcomes.

As one outcome of the study, the UTDC is now developing a set of Quality Guidelines for DFLT in the university. I will be seeking input on these guidelines, particularly from those already involved in DFLT.

To set the scope for this, I'm referring to "quality" as a management term: a "quality"

course will be fit for purpose at an affordable level of cost. To achieve this it will have been well designed which is likely to lead in turn to reduced risk, greater success, increased sustainability and reuse of materials and techniques.

"Guidelines" are suggestions for good practice rather than rules that must be slavishly followed. We fully intend to present these guidelines in a way that will assist rather than constrain those doing the work. However, they are intended to be the VUW guidelines and compliance with them will constitute a measure of the quality of a DFLT offering at Victoria.

The UTDC has significant understanding of international good practice in tertiary DFLT and while some commonality exists in terms of guidelines, there is not yet any generally agreed single set of quality guidelines available. Therefore, it is important that what we do here is soundly based on evolving international good practice but also is specific to Victoria. Hence the need for consultation!

To shape discussion we have a set of possible topic headings for the guidelines. They are:

- Learning outcomes – what are they for this course?

- development and revision – how do we keep the course current and improving?
- design and delivery – what will work best in this particular situation?
- interaction and student engagement – internet-based distance education is developing its own pedagogy;
- course administration – what is needed for access and clear rules about interaction;
- teachers – what skills and support do they need?
- students – support; understanding of the rules; academic integrity.

We are aware, also, that a quality course will be dependent upon institutional support such as:

- reliable, secure, well-understood technical infrastructure;
- strategic thinking behind course selection and technology directions;
- appropriate reward and recognition systems.

I welcome thoughts on any or all of these elements of a quality distance course.

Contact: John.Good@vuw.ac.nz and on extension 7402.

Victoria's Teaching Excellence Rewarded for Fifth Year In a Row

For the fifth year running, Victoria has been successful in the National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards scheme, with Dr Warwick Murray winning one of only ten national awards, worth \$20 000 each. Since 2002, when the awards were introduced, at least one of the 10 yearly winners has been from Victoria. In both 2004 and 2005, we boasted two of the 10 winners each year. Such success complements our PBRF standing and marks Victoria as one of New Zealand's leading teaching and research universities. Dr Murray's contribution to Victoria's reputation was acknowledged by the national panel who awarded him the

\$20 000 in recognition of his excellence in teaching, demonstrated by his commitment to his students and his discipline, and to the wider Wellington community. His reputation as a lively and stimulating teacher was also recognised by the university when he was awarded a Victoria University Teaching Excellence Award in 2003. Dr Murray, who holds a PhD in Development Geography and a Bachelor of Social Sciences with first class honours in geography and economics from the University of Birmingham, joined Victoria University in 2001 from Brunel University in Britain. Watch this space for more on Dr Murray achievements in a future issue of Spectrum.



Dr Warwick Murray, 2006 Winner

PHELT: Victoria's Learning and Teaching Qualification

The UTDC has recently gained CUAP approval for its Master's level, 60-point, Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Learning and Teaching. Comprising three modules, spread part-time over a year, PHELT is aimed at professionalizing research-led learning and teaching. Participants meet for about 4 hours every two weeks in the first trimester, then

work on research projects independently in the second trimester. Currently, course fees are reimbursed for participants who successfully pass PHELT in 2006 and 2007. We encourage interested academics to contact the UTDC for a PHELT Information Sheet or to email or call Tom Angelo or Kathryn Sutherland, with questions.

Email Tom.Angelo@vuw.ac.nz or Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz for more information

UTDC Academic Development Workshops - Trimester 2 & 3 2006

To enrol, or for updated information, go to <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/events/>

SEPTEMBER

Academic Time Management

Date: Wed 13, 1:10 – 2:30PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Tom Angelo

OCTOBER

Managing Piles of Marking

Date: Fri 13, 10:00AM – 12:00PM

OR: Wed 18, 9:30 – 11:30AM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Kathryn Sutherland

Constructing Course Outlines

Date/Time: Fri 27, 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Venue: EA004

Facilitator: Tom Angelo

Fine-tuning Your T3 Course

Date/Time: Tue 31, 1:10 – 3:00PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Tom Angelo

NOVEMBER

Using Video to Improve Your Teaching

Date/Time: Tue 7, 1:30 – 4:30PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Kathryn Sutherland

Improving Your Teaching Evaluations

Date/Time: Wed 8, 1:00 – 2:30PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Kathryn Sutherland

Please note that session times and venues may change. Please check our website for up-to-date information

To enrol, or for updated information, go to

<http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/events/>

DECEMBER

Pre-empting the Post-Christmas Meltdown

Date/Time: Tue 5, Time TBC

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitators: Tom Angelo and Kathryn Sutherland

Course Re/Design

Date/Time: Thur 7, 9:30AM – 12:30PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Tom Angelo

Preparing Effective Lectures Efficiently

Date/Time: Fri 8, 9:00 – 11:00AM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Tom Angelo

Academic Time Management

Date/Time: Tue 12, 3:00 – 4:30PM

Venue: Room 201, 10 Waiteata Road

Facilitator: Tom Angelo



Interested in sharing your ideas about teaching, learning and research in a supportive and engaging environment with like-minded researchers and educators? The HERDSA New Zealand TERNZ Conference might be just the ticket!

In November 2006, the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) will host the fifth annual Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand Conference at the University of Canterbury. The TERNZ conference will be hosted by Canterbury's Centre for University Teaching and Learning on the 23rd and 24th of November 2006. We are anticipating another good conference with a difference - with lots of time to engage in conversation and discussion on a range of ideas and issues in teaching and learning research, and a great conference dinner - all for only \$150!

You can access the conference web site at the following address:

<http://hedc2.otago.ac.nz/Ternz/2006/home.asp>

TERNZ is a multi-disciplinary conference and our community comes from across subject areas and tertiary institution types. We encourage any Victoria academics interested in research into teaching and learning to register for this conference. Please contact Kathryn Sutherland in the UTDC if you have any questions: Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz

