

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA



**2012 - 2016 STRATEGIC PLAN
DISCUSSION PAPER**

Open to Talent



Open to Talent: UTAS Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016

Discussion Paper

Next year marks 75 years since UTAS adopted the motto *Ingeniis Patuit Campus* or 'The field is open to talent'. In 1937 UTAS was modest in size and accomplishment, with 392 students enrolled. The succeeding years have seen expansion in staff and student numbers, research interests and degree programs, and the magnitude of our engagement with the world of ideas and international community. Unchanged is our central role in the life of Tasmania.

'Open to Talent', the proposed name for UTAS's new strategic plan, encapsulates our tradition of excellence and opportunity. We seek to build upon significant achievements associated with the EDGE and EDGE2 plans, and to explore our aspirations for UTAS over the next 5 to 10 years in a world that is increasingly connected, integrated and competitive.

The recent development of a UTAS Statement of Values provides a shared foundation from which to consider our future, and a model for university-wide participation in direction setting. The purpose of this document is to stimulate thinking and debate, to frame the conversation and to provide context to our deliberations.

1. Education

Fine universities around the world are reconceptualising modern education through curriculum design, educational philosophy and delivery methodologies.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of curriculum breadth, to augment disciplinary or professional knowledge and to prepare graduates with the flexibility and skills required in a rapidly evolving world. A variety of models expose students to different ways of thinking, such as the narrative tradition of the humanities and social sciences, the hypothesis-driven scientific approach, and the iterative process of design thinking.

Curricula that prepare students for engagement with a globally connected economy encourage an understanding of cross-disciplinary thinking as a route to the solution of complex problems. The development of language and entrepreneurial skills help graduates meet the demands of a changing world.

New and emerging technologies provide opportunities to improve educational practice, increase participation and overcome geography. There is increasing student demand for postgraduate education, often within the context of life-long learning and upgrading of professional skills.

What should the UTAS curriculum look like?

- *What attributes and resources could we draw upon to distinguish a UTAS education?*
- *What are the roles for technology and distance education at UTAS?*

- *Are there opportunities to provide more flexibility for students, including pathways to postgraduate study and articulation arrangements with other higher education providers?*

2. Pathways and Participation

As the sole university on our island we have broad responsibilities to the Tasmanian community. We provide a traditional university education at international standard, preparing students for immediate engagement with the world through work or research. At the same time we seek to partake in the broader participation agenda articulated by the Commonwealth Government, which sets ambitious participation targets of 40% of the 25 to 34 year old cohort, well above levels in Tasmania.

Some of the students that will join UTAS will not be well prepared for University study. In most Australian states different universities focus on distinct student cohorts, tailoring curriculum and pathways to a target student population. As Tasmania's only university we have responsibilities to all students.

How can UTAS provide excellent higher education appropriate to the varying needs of its diverse student cohorts?

- *How could UTAS reshape its curriculum to match this dual mission?*
- *What is the role for vocational education and training and other pathways into higher education?*
- *What implications does this dual mission have for academic staff roles?*

3. Student Experience

The student experience has always been at the heart of the university, traditionally through the collegiate system. Engagement between student and university speaks to more than just education. Students are partners in their own learning and experiences, with a responsibility to participate actively. We can enrich their time at UTAS through activities such as volunteering and internships, interaction with peers in social spaces, accommodation and clubs and societies, engaging with UTAS staff, and integrating educational experience with the unique environment that is Tasmania.

What should the UTAS student experience be and what might distinguish it?

- *How could we enhance the experience of those who study off-campus?*
- *What differences might there be between the undergraduate and postgraduate experiences?*

4. Research and Research Training

Our island location can help to define our research strategy, with resources focussed in areas where we have natural advantages. This brings benefit in terms of our international visibility and reputation, rankings and attractiveness to staff and students. We must balance this mission with a responsibility to showcase to Tasmanians the breadth of scholarship and research across different disciplines, and respect and support for the contribution that individual outstanding scholars make to the store of human knowledge.

Internationally, governments are seeking useful returns from research programs, with an emerging demand for solutions to complex and pressing issues that often require a multidisciplinary approach. The commercialisation of our activities provides one route by which we transfer our knowledge and expertise, giving our ideas traction in the broader community.

Where can UTAS foster research of international eminence?

- *What aspirations might we have for the ranking, nationally and internationally, of our research activities?*
- *How can we create an environment in which multidisciplinary research can flourish?*
- *How should our research impact on the community?*
- *What opportunities are there to improve the UTAS PhD and postgraduate preparation?*

5. Internationalisation

As a university, our traditions speak to a world of ideas, unencumbered by barriers of geography or discipline. Interaction with the world outside Tasmania brings many benefits to UTAS. These include the cultural, intellectual and financial rewards of teaching international students; enhancement of our international reputation; exposure of UTAS staff and students to the international community; creation of research opportunity through partnerships that synergise with local strengths; and the recruitment of talented staff and graduate students. By internationalising our curriculum, we ensure that students are culturally literate and able to achieve their potential in an ever more interconnected world.

While the benefits of internationalisation are clear, there is marked variation in the manner in which this is approached across the university sector worldwide. Some universities build overseas campuses, others deliver offshore programs, and still others restrict international teaching to onshore delivery. International research partnerships can be facilitated at the level of the individual or research group, or aligned at university level with institutional strategy. Some institutions embrace a restricted number of deep partnerships aligned with their strategy and opportunities, while others see value in a broader range of linkages.

How can internationalisation help us achieve UTAS's education and research goals?

6. Engagement

Our status as the only university in the state provides unparalleled opportunity for engagement with government, industry, business and community groups. The University is a significant economic contributor to the Tasmanian economy. Where University and external agendas align we can develop partnerships to leverage otherwise unavailable resources. In building these partnerships we will strengthen the community of support for UTAS, including the commitment of alumni to our institution. We can foster interaction by positioning UTAS as a centre for debate and discourse, making available UTAS research and staff for community benefit and communicating our achievements. We can learn from discussion how best to develop education and research programs relevant to Tasmania.

What engagement activities can help UTAS best contribute to the public good and foster mutual benefit?

- *What spaces could UTAS provide on our campuses that inspire others and are conducive to engagement activities?*
- *What opportunities should there be for alumni to engage with the business of the university?*

7. Our Staff

Our performance as an institution will be determined by the quality and commitment of our staff. Staff recruitment, development, support, management and retention will become increasingly important as generational change confronts Australian universities and competition for staff intensifies.

UTAS will be a destination of choice if current and prospective staff members believe that they can best further their careers with us, they are valued, and they are supported to achieve personal, professional and institutional goals.

How do we create an environment in which UTAS staff can achieve their best?

- *How could we establish, and enable staff to achieve, performance levels appropriate for UTAS aspirations?*
- *How might we develop skills, including leadership, amongst our staff and support them to achieve their and the University's objectives?*
- *How do we provide the best support for staff, including opportunities for collegial interaction?*

8. Infrastructure

We have committed to maintaining a UTAS presence at Hobart, Launceston and Cradle Coast, so as to best serve the communities of Tasmania, and we have growing nodes elsewhere. Our campuses host some beautiful buildings, yet others suffer from disrepair, and levels of activity, including student activity, are often subdued.

Building design and campus organisation affect our ability to provide the desired student and staff experience, to support research of international quality and to encourage the cross-disciplinary and collegial interactions that generate new ideas. Technological and communications infrastructure provide new opportunities to overcome physical barriers.

Universities across the world struggle to identify the most efficient provision of expensive infrastructure associated with research, including libraries and common facilities. The balance between local provision and centralised efficiency is particularly important for us to consider as we find ways to support staff and students at multiple locations.

We are fortunate to have available unused space at many locations. Collocation with other education and research providers and companies could bring activity to our campuses and create opportunities for partnerships that enrich the student experience through shared teaching and internships, and inform and strengthen our research programs.

What approaches to campus design and management might improve support for our core activities?

- *How could we best support students and staff operating across dispersed campuses?*
- *What opportunities might there be to recruit partners to share, with mutual benefit, our buildings and campuses?*

9. Campus Identity

Our success as an institution depends upon strong contribution from all of our campuses, across the teaching and research mission. Special opportunities are created by the communities in which we are embedded and distinct local attributes of industry, demography, population and environment. Alignment of campus mission and location will bring purpose to our activities and create an environment for strong, relevant performance.

What distinctive, campus-based missions can best contribute to achieving UTAS's strategic ambitions?

10. Resourcing, Supporting and Enabling

We will be working in an increasingly challenging environment. Already, there is growing competition nationally and internationally for the best staff and students and for status. Demographic trends predict declining numbers of graduates from Tasmanian schools. New policy and regulatory regimes will impose complex demands, and government funding remains at levels below international competitors.

If we are to successfully navigate these issues and to achieve our ambitions, UTAS will need to optimise its planning, performance management and quality assurance processes. We will need to develop new, robust funding streams to better finance our operations and invest for the future, whether from opening up new markets for education, seeking commercial partnerships or leveraging from our asset base.

We will need to think creatively about the best way to provide support for our core academic activities. For both academic units and administrative services, devolution of responsibility improves the quality of decision making related to teaching and research, but conflicts with the economic efficiencies that can accompany centralization or consolidation.

How could UTAS increase its revenue?

How should UTAS organise its academic and administrative services to best support its core activities?

What is the most appropriate way to organise our academic activities?

What is the optimum size for UTAS. How should load be distributed across our campuses and between undergraduate, postgraduate coursework, international and RHD students?

11. UTAS Identity

The UTAS identity is a product of our history and our future. Articulation of what makes us special – what we do and what we don't do - will guide public perception of our institution, influence the esteem in which we are held, and affect our attractiveness to staff, students and partners.

How do we want the rest of the world to see us?

Conclusion

It is for us to define the university that we wish to create. The conversations prompted by this paper, and by engagement within and outside the University, will inform the new UTAS strategic plan. Ideas can be shared at workshops in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Sydney, by completing a short online survey or engaging in online discussion.

The outcomes of this discussion will be captured in a Green Paper which will be distributed for comment and revision before the Plan passes through the usual approval process, reaching University Council at its February 2012 meeting.

The following documents provide local and international context for our deliberations:

- University of Tasmania, Strategic Analysis 2011, Summary Report (for UTAS Staff only)
- Making the grade 2011: A study of the top 10 issues facing higher education institutions,
- UTAS 2010 Report on Performance Against Institutional Goals

Links to these documents, as well as more details on the strategic planning process and how you can join this conversation are available on the UTAS Staff Intranet at www.utas.edu.au/staff/our-plan.



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