Overview of Student Life and Learning Portfolio 2014
Led by Adjunct Associate Professor Jane Skalicky

During 2014 the Student Life and Learning Portfolio within the Student Centre, comprised:

Client Services (Head of Service, Amy Lewandowski)

Student Engagement and Advice (Head of Service, Matthew Hingston)

Student Learning and Academic Development (Acting Heads of Service, Sally Fuglsang and Lucy Sun)

University Career, Disability and Counselling Services (Head of Service, Colin Clark)

At the core of the Life and Learning portfolio is a commitment to promote student engagement, success and retention in and outside of the classroom, through a holistic approach to the provision of student services, designed to support students’ intellectual and personal development and contribute to a quality student experience. Focus areas underpinning the activities of the portfolio in 2014 were:

- the pathways from which students come into their degree programs
- international student growth
- peer programs and student leadership and engagement opportunities
- English language policy and unit development
- increased complex case management
- holistic and proactive support of students at risk
- evidence of outcomes and reporting
- equity of service for online and flexible modes of study and support
- integrated models of service delivery and colocation of services

Contribution to the university

A comprehensive review of the Life and Learning portfolio was undertaken in 2014 to identify opportunities for enhanced connection across the portfolio, potential efficiencies, and improved service delivery for students; as well as to determine measures of evaluation.

Whilst the outcomes of the review became superseded by the major Divisional workplace change; each team progressed key strategic priority areas identified from the review, in addition to continuing to provide core services.

Client and Student Services:

Client and Student Services is the frontline team of the Student Centre, and is responsible for managing a vast range of enquiries via: the 1300 number, the Student Centre email inbox, online and in person. In addition, Client Services delivers: Ready for Uni, ID Card and Enrolment sessions to assist students with their essential administrative needs for study at the University of Tasmania. The mission of Client and Student Services at the University of Tasmania is the delivery of accurate information, or service, in a timely manner, using excellent customer service skills, within the guidelines of UTAS policy and procedures.
The total amount of phone, email and front-of-house enquiries managed by this team in 2014 was 113,662: 40,721 phone enquires, 19,557 email enquiries, and 52,384 counter enquiries.

In addition to team provided administrative Ready for Uni sessions to 1193 students.

Strategic priorities progressed by Client and Student Services:

- Exploring other university models for integrated services
- Analysing client data to inform improvements
- Investigating business models in the context of co-location of faculty-based academic administration staff
- Working with Finance to progress online payment solution (Pay UTAS Portal)
- Client Services Wiki and progress business case for CRM
- Service Charter / Service Transformation
- SLIMS Training and implementation

**Student Engagement and Advice:**

Student Engagement and Advice (SEA) assists students with their adjustment to university life, connection to other students and the wider community and helps them resolve any issues that may be affecting their university studies across the student lifecycle.

**Orientation** was coordinated through a SSAF funded casual position during 2014, coordinating and promoting all orientation sessions, the official welcome, Orientation expos as well as developing and maintaining online orientation resources for distance students, late enrollers and those who miss the face to face orientation sessions. 4528 students attended orientation in 2014.

**Student Adviser** interactions range from navigating students through the key aspects of the administrative, learning, cultural and social environments when first entering university to managing complex ongoing issues that impact on studies over extended periods. During 2014 15763 significant interactions where managed, a 65% increase from 2013.

**Student Success** works closely alongside the Student Advisers and provides real-time risk identification and phone follow up through the employment of student casuals. Student Success made 2598 successful contacts in 2014, providing targeted advice on individual issues and channelling students toward existing supports as necessary.

The **Community Friends and Networks Program (CFNP)** provides social engagement opportunities for students, particularly those new to Tasmania, to help them build networks at the University and in the broader Tasmanian community. Connecting with incoming students from the point of arrival, CFNP is central to our efforts to make sure our international students, in particular, are settled and socially connected from the early stages of their stay. In 2014, CFNP offered a diverse range of once-off large events, regular smaller events and off campus trips; and 10575 students across all campuses engaged with CFNP activities.

Strategic priorities progressed by the SEA team:
– Strengthening at risk and intervention through Student Success program and Data Analytics project
– Focus on social welcome and connection for International students in ‘first 24 hours’ after arrival
– Further development of online service delivery through development of distance students page, expansion of online orientation, social media and use of office 365 for one to one appointments
– Development of cohesive evidence base of student satisfaction and impact of service on attrition
– Rework the Student Adviser model in Launceston due to relocation into Kerslake building
– Expansion of Engagement activities (CFNP) to the Cradle Coast and Sydney campuses

University, Career, Disability and Counselling Service:

At the heart of career development and employment (CDE) practice is a suite of interventions ranging from individual consultancy to selection interview practice, resume feedback and workshops focusing on employability skills. Individual career consultancy provides students with specific, focused and dynamic career development counselling so they can build their career direction. During 2014, 734 consult sessions were attended, and students accessed 280 resume checks email and face to face modes. A further 212 individual and small group consult sessions offered by Career Education Officers has addressed a range of employment skills including interview practice.

The CDE staff coordinate the Vice Chancellor's Leadership Award, which saw 71 students successfully complete the award in 2014; the Career Mentor Program, where 126 students were mentored by UTAS alumni of which 182 are now registered with the program (72% increase from 2013); facilitate the Elite Athlete Friendly University program, with 27 elite athletes registered with the university in 2014; and are the Chapter Advisors to the Golden Key Society providing liaison between Golden Key and UTAS students, with 503 students joining in 2014, taking total Golden Key membership to 6198.

Disability staff facilitate the development of Learning Access Plans (LAPs) for students who disclose a disability or health condition and seek further assistance from the university. This is done through negotiation with the student’s health practitioner(s) and Associate Deans Learning and Teaching of each Faculty and takes into consideration each student’s individual requirements. During 2014, 1192 students were registered with the Disability Service, of which 640 had current and valid LAPs. Mental health conditions comprised 45.2% of disclosed disability types.

Counselling services were provided across all three Tasmanian campuses and online in 2014. Counsellors filled 2265 sessions during 2014 which is reasonably consistent with previous years and recognises a ceiling number of sessions that can be offered with the current staffing levels. The initial assessment and therapeutic treatment of clients remains the core business of the counselling staff. These sessions have been spread over 841 individual clients which equates to approximately 2.7 sessions per client.
Strategic priorities progressed by the UCDC team:

- Growth of career development services for students; including increased opportunities for international students
- Expansion of elite athlete program and updating policy inclusive of elite performers
- Development of online service delivery
- Continue to build strong relationships with academic staff within faculties to progress effective service delivery for students
- Re-establish and define core service delivery & review and formalise written procedures for each stream
- Streamline consistent feedback and evaluation processes across the range of programs and services to inform ongoing improvement
- Leadership of institutional wellbeing policy and working group
- Pilot Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) assessment tool with counselling clients.

**Student Learning and Academic Development:**

The Student Learning and Academic Development team (SLAD), provides a diverse range of learning development opportunities for degree students. Learning and academic skills assistance including English language development is provided through services such as Drop In, learning skills consultations, UniStart and the Introductory Academic Program (IAP). Student Learning also works with faculties to embed these same skills in a discipline-specific manner through unit and course-based workshops, and the Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program.

**UniStart** is an academic and study skills program offered to all domestic students commencing in degree courses at the University. UniStart is offered on all campuses and by distance, and is accompanied by a broad suite of resources to which student have access for the academic year through MyLO. 2051 students enrolled in UniStart in 2014, with 60% of these students completing UniStart online. UniStart International was also piloted during Orientation week providing commencing international students with familiarisation with academic culture in Australia and introduction to the learning skills essential for successful study.

**Introductory Academic Program** (IAP) for AusAID scholars is a four week pre-semester course facilitating adjustment to everyday life in Australia, academic culture, and develop English language and academic skills required for success. In 2014, 29 AusAID scholars completed the program.

The Student Learning staff provided 1974 individual learning consultations during 2014, with 34.7% being with international students, 23% CALD students, and 30.6% with domestic students (note: the remaining were unspecified). 213 language and learning development workshops were provided; with most involving collaborations with faculty academic staff to embed learning and language development within the context of units in order to meet the needs of specific discipline groups.
Credit bearing units: The introduction of breadth units into the University curriculum provided an opportunity for members of the Student Learning team to collaborate with staff from a range of faculties, including Health, Arts and SET. The team has worked with colleagues to develop and deliver the *Living and Working with Cultural Diversity* unit and the *Good Thinking: Reasoning Skills for Life* unit. The Global Perspectives program, that developed the breadth unit *Living and Working with Cultural Diversity*, received the Vice Chancellor’s team award for programs that enhance learning. The Student Learning team also commenced teaching units into the Bachelor of General Studies and the Bachelor of Philosophy. The units focus on topics including enhancing learning, peer learning and student leadership.

Student Learning Drop In is a peer facilitated service that provides all students at the University of Tasmania with the opportunity to develop their general academic skills. It is primarily a writing centre staffed by Student Learning Mentors who work with students to identify and develop their assignment preparation and writing skills. The service is offered on the Sandy Bay, Newnham, Cradle Coast, Darlinghurst and Rozelle campuses. 822 students were supported by their peers across the Drop In service in 2014.

The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program supported a total of 83 units across all Tasmanian and Sydney campuses and well on online in 2014. A total of 72 high-achieving students were employed by the program as either PASS Leaders or Mentors. The PASS team delivered 2232 PASS sessions (100 on average each week) and was offered to 6889 students across the year with 2200 accessing the sessions at least once.

Strategic priorities addressed by the SLAD team:

- Development and teaching of units for credit for peer leaders, mentors, VCLA participants and students engaging in learning opportunities.
- Development of breadth units in collaboration with other schools and faculties.
- Increasing collaborations with schools and faculties for the embedding of language and academic skills.
- Development of a suite of services to suit the diverse cohort of students from different backgrounds.
- Growth of peer support: online PASS and Drop In in Sydney campuses and CCC.
- Development of online resources and expansion of online workshops and consultations.
- Introduction of International UniStart Pilot.
- Implementation of academic workload model for academic staff.
- Leadership of the development of University’s English Language Proficiency Policy and implementation plan.

In addition, members of the Life and Learning portfolio contributed to institutional activities and initiatives as follows:

- Student Pathways and Transition Committee
- Sub-evaluation Learning and Teaching Committee
• Working with ED, Student Centre on setting a vision for service quality and integrated student services (Skalicky & Taylor, 2014).
• Leading project of institutional significance: Identifying and Intervening with Students at Risk of Early Attrition
• Convening Student Safety and Wellbeing Working Group
• Employing over 100 students across peer-led programs

**Contribution to the community**

Members of the Life and learning portfolio have contributed to community and civic engagement through the following initiatives:

**Assisted Placement of International Students** (APIS) pilot was a new initiative brokered in partnership with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, TAFE and the Tasmanian Government. The program trained and placed international students into the hospitality industry with the aim to help cover seasonal demand around Tasmania. This provided valued work experience to international students, potential income and also assisted with the selection of trained and well screened staff for employers. From 81 applications (maximum funded for was 80), 72 students were interviewed; 51 from the Hobart area and 21 from the Launceston area.

**Volunteering:** Students participating in VCLA contribute 4249 volunteer hours to the Tasmanian community during 2014.

The importance of volunteering was again emphasised during the National Student Volunteer Week in August. This culminated in an expo facilitated by CDE staff on the Sandy Bay campus where over 20 stall holders represented a range of volunteer organisations and opportunities. A working party assisted with the help of many student volunteers and the key community agency, Volunteer Tasmania. Between 250 – 300 students attending during the two hour expo and volunteer awareness campaigns increased profile across other campuses. The event provided an invaluable connection with local agencies as well as increased awareness for students of volunteer opportunities.

**Community engagement:** The UTAS Human Library was a key engagement activity with local schools and aged care facilities in 2014. Through conversations, the “human books” (students) share their stories and in turn, “the readers” (community members) can hear first-hand about what it’s like to come to Tasmania from another country or vice versa. In 2014 the Human Library made 20 visits to 5 primary and high schools, 3 aged care facilities, 2 community events and 2 local organisations including a live broadcast radio interview. From the 137 student participants, the library represented 36 countries.

**Harmony Day:** The Life and Learning team also collaborated with the community to celebrate Harmony Day in Hobart and Launceston.

**Contribution to the sector**

The University’s life and learning portfolio is nationally recognised both within the fields of peer learning and student leadership development.
University of Tasmania was awarded a national OLT grant: Building institutional capacity for peer leadership: Informing strategic decision making to enhance student leadership capability.

- Project Leader: Adjunct A/Prof Jane Skalicky
- Project members: UTAS, University of Wollongong, Monash University, Curtin University and Otago University, NZ
- International collaboration of understandings of peer leadership: National Resource Centre for First Year and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, USA.

The University’s work in developing a framework for peer learning is nationally recognised and has been drawn upon by other university’s to inform improved quality assurance and connectedness of peer learning programs. Deakin visited UTAS to meet with staff and inform their work; resulting the new Deakin Students Helping Students Framework; http://www.deakin.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/298421/Deakins-Students-Helping-Students-Framework.pdf

The University of Tasmania PASS program consistently contributes at a national level to the peer learning community. In 2014, Meg Dennis (Education) was shortlisted in the Australasian New Leader category for her outstanding work as an Online PASS leader. Chris Bigwood and Rochelle Hodge (Law) were also shortlisted and awarded at the National Centre for PASS for their contribution to student learning as a team in introductory law across the last two years.

Adjunct A/Prof Jane Skalicky is Editor, of the Journal of Peer Learning; the only international journal within this discipline.

Louise Oxley and Morag Porteous, of the Student Learning and Academic Development team were members of the Executive of the national Association for Academic Language and Learning

A new initiative in 2014 was the partnership between Global Engagement and CDE staff to raise the profile and assist applicant students with the highly regarded New Colombo Plan Scholarship - http://www.dfat.gov.au/new-colombo-plan/

- Ten UTAS students were nominated to apply for the NCP scholarship and were supported across the state by intensive workshops and 14 individual appointments and interview practice.
- An unprecedented five UTAS students were successful in being awarded the NCP Scholarship for 2015 out of a total 69 applicants Australia wide.

The Life and Learning portfolio were successful in their bid to host the 2015 Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association Conference in Hobart. Colin Clark; the University’s Head, University Counselling, Disability and Careers is convening the conference which will feature Professor Simon Bell of the University of Melbourne - Delivering world class service in higher education - as one of the keynote speakers, as a result of his collaborations with the Student Centre on progression of the Service Transformation project http://www.conferencedesign.com.au/anzssa2015/