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Abstract

Welcome to the first issue of Volume 10 of Journal of University Teaching and Learning (JUTLP) in 2013. This year also marks the tenth year of the journal and we have seen it grow incredibly in that time. As an open access journal we struggled initially for acceptance. However last year there were 32000 downloads from the site, an indication of improved access as well as more interest in improving teaching practice. This increased recognition for research related to higher education teaching practice is also reflected in opportunities for grants. In Australia this year the federal government has recently announced that Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grants and fellowships are included in the Competitive Grants Register for the first time providing further avenues for our scholars to support their research.

Keywords

editorial

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In this issue, once again we have a variety of papers reflecting some of the key issues in higher education today. We start with Rissman, Carrington and Bland's paper on widening participation through an outreach agenda to secondary schools to support a better transition process for students who may not have engaged with a tertiary education. By collaborating with secondary teachers, university lecturers were able to provide access to a Bachelor of Education program in the final years of school. Their early attendance and experience of university assisted in breaking down the barriers for this cohort of students who may not have even considered furthering their education.

Another barrier university students face is the understanding and use of disciplinary language. This is identified by McGloin and Carlson as even more challenging for those students in Indigenous Studies. Learning the language of the discipline and appropriate terminology can create significant anxiety for students and the authors address this in the paper through their discussion of the political nature of language use over time.

In the third paper, Bair and Mader offer the reader further insight to supporting student learning by tackling the challenges faced by graduate students in the area of academic writing. Their analysis of data collected indicated disparate perceptions between faculty and students in some areas but a shared belief of the challenges faced by students associated with synthesising research and theory. They offer some processes they are undertaking to address some of the gaps.

In the next paper, Duarte reviews the business education literature to identify aspects of good teaching in higher education. She extends this through five case studies of exceptional teachers in a business school to identify their perceptions and provides examples of their practice. Improved communication between students and teachers is one of these aspects and in their paper on the use of social networking Van Doorn and Ecklund examine the student reactions to use of Facebook for student-teacher interaction through the text-based synchronous chat tool. The paper reports on the perceived usefulness of this tool to improve student learning.

The final papers focus on that very popular issue of improving assessment. The area of class participation marks are discussed by Czekanski and Wolf in the context of an American University. The challenges faced by part-time faculty are also at issue here as the interpretation of assessment tasks without clear criteria is addressed in this paper. Through their analysis of the literature they are able to identify a number of useful strategies to increase and evaluate class participation. These useful strategies are applicable to all disciplinary areas. Lastly, Eshun and Osei-Poku use an action research methodology to discuss student perspectives of the use of rubrics and assessment criteria in a design studio in Ghana. They used a peer assessment process with a large cohort of second year students and offer recommendations for assessment rubrics in the design studio environment.

Once again I would like to acknowledge all who are involved in making this journal the success that it is. Firstly, my co-editor, Dr Meg O'Reilly, for her support and allocation of reviewers and her invaluable contributions to improving the journal; our reviewers and editorial panel for their consistent high standard and detailed feedback to our authors; and the many people involved in the background who keep the journal running through their roles in managing the website, the editing and layout of the journal.

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