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Alone yet not alone: Networks and regional facilitation in leading a university campus

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Abstract

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Alone yet not alone

Networks and regional facilitation in leading a university campus

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Head of Campus

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Shoalhaven

Shoalhaven, a region on the South Coast of NSW Australia, is host to a University of Wollongong Campus that is pro-actively part of regional change processes. Leading that Campus is a woman, Associate Professor Robbie Collins, Head of UOW Shoalhaven. This is a distributed campus of a University making its mark on the university scene in Australia but also well known for its regional development orientation in its home town of Wollongong.

Shoalhaven, as part of regional Australia with population around 120,000 in non-holiday periods, experiences high unemployment and significant numbers of both young and older people. Escape to the city is the pattern for 18-30 year olds. As well, the community has around 3% Aboriginal people with the main towns having up to 10% Aboriginal people.

In 2003 when Robbie took up her role as Head of Campus, there were very few women in positions of influence amongst the networking of the business community and local City Council. The culture on the University campus was very much “poor us, poor Nowra” (the name of the biggest town in Shoalhaven).

In 2012 UOW Shoalhaven is a developing vibrant supportive environment. Effectively linked to the community through a range of networks UOW Shoalhaven has Aboriginal University students standing up to be counted in their support of the campus at the Shoalhaven 2012 Business Awards. Student academic results are equal to those of students on the main campus.

Such a narrative needs reflection and sharing - to explore what seems to be working and what steps come next? This is a pracademic consideration of the process of university development tied to regional development. Theory and practice are essential to the process.

The cross-disciplinary presentation will draw on research in organisational development, higher education, regional science, leadership and women’s studies.