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Editorial 11.3

Romy Lawson

University of Wollongong, romy@uow.edu.au

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Editorial

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In the final issue of 2014 I am delighted to be welcoming papers from across the world, with contributions from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Europe. The papers cover a range of contemporary topics including learning in the digital era; supporting students in their academic literacies; first year experiences and an area close to my heart – authentic assessment.

In the first paper by Kearney and Perkins, we look at engaging students in their assessments. They have developed a model to foster Authentic Self and Peer Assessment for Learning (ASPAL) which has shown success in both the design and facilitation of assessments. They acknowledge the complexities of adopting authentic assessment but provide a convincing argument that the effort is worthwhile. The second paper, by De Jong and colleagues, also keeps the authentic practice theme going. These authors investigate lifelong learning in the public health sector finding that a blended approach to professional learning that is based on authentic problem based learning is a highly effective way to encourage learning.

The next two papers take a technology perspective on learning and teaching. Rockinson-Szapkiw looks at how social networks can be used to connect online doctoral students. Whilst the formal university online provision was not seen to impact connections, more organic, student generated social networking was deemed to foster supportive relationships. The fourth paper, by O’Keefe et al, again visits blended learning looking at the impact of this approach on first year accountant students. Drops in attendance prompted the team to re-design their first year program to provide flexibility for their diverse student body. This blended design was perceived to have a positive impact on student engagement.

First year experience is also features in the paper by Turkich and colleagues. They introduced a co-mentoring model to support each other in delivering large first year classes. The participants found this experience very rewarding and supported ongoing improvements to their learning and teaching design.

The final three papers look at academic language and literacy. Mejia explores learning a language, in this case Spanish, and proposes coping strategies to support student, especially beginners, in developing their oral skills. McWilliams and Allan then go on to discuss the challenges and best practice solutions in embedding academic literacy development support into the curriculum. These challenges are also echoed in Karathanos and Mena’s paper which also discusses strategies to embed English language support into the first year and beyond, as students transition to university.

My thanks to the hard work of the reviewers and editorial panel for their consistent high standard and detailed feedback to our authors; and to the many people involved in the background who keep the journal running though their roles in managing the website, the editing and layout of the journal.

Associate Professor Romy Lawson
Senior Editor, Journal of University Learning and Teaching Practice
romy@uow.edu.au

Dr Alisa Percy
Dr Dominique Parish
Co Editors, Journal of University Learning and Teaching Practice