The Learning Co-op: a showcase of cooperative leadership to provide a coherent model of student academic support

Rebecca M. Goodway  
*University of Wollongong, rluke@uow.edu.au*

Fiona B. Macdonald  
*University of Wollongong, fionamac@uow.edu.au*

Alisa J. Percy  
*University of Wollongong, alisa@uow.edu.au*

Sally G. Rogan  
*University of Wollongong, sally@uow.edu.au*

Melissa L. Stephen  
*University of Wollongong, mstephen@uow.edu.au*

*See next page for additional authors*

Publication Details  
The Learning Co-op: a showcase of cooperative leadership to provide a coherent model of student academic support

Abstract
This presentation showcases a cooperative model of leadership and governance at one Australian university that emerged out of a shared vision to improve student access to extra-curricular academic support services. The presentation begins by describing the strategic partnership formed by the diverse academic support providers within the DVCA Portfolio (Library, Learning Development, Peer Learning, Digital Literacies and UOW College) to deliver their services in a less fragmented and more visible and accessible space within the University Library, called the Learning Co-op. Drawing on the principles of effective cooperative models (eg. Taylor, 2015), the paper will discuss how some of these were achieved and which still require further development. The paper will then describe the actual service provision and the way existing services, such as 'Book a Librarian' and the Library Rovers, Learning Development seminars and consultations, and the Digital Literacy seminars and online modules were relocated and combined with a new provider of English language support (UOW College), and perhaps most importantly, included the creation of a new role, the Peer Academic Coach (Peer Learning), to work with the Library Rovers as a triage point for students within the Learning Co-op space. Finally, the evaluation data for the two-phase pilot based on student access data, focus groups, evaluation forms and a user survey will be provided. Among the various data collected and analysed, a key positive outcome was that 63% of student enquiries were resolved immediately by the peer learning services in this space. The authors wish to highlight the deliberate and strategic use of the term 'co-operative': for the organisation, it frames and values the co-operative nature of the partnership between the service providers; and for the students, it foregrounds the use of peer learning services and the notion of co-operative learning as a key element of the provision. The initiative showcased here demonstrates how a co-operative leadership and governance model can create, as Taylor (2015) has suggested, 'an arena of experimentation' (p.150) that: involves a shared sense of purpose, values more equitable stakeholder involvement and agency, enhances the distribution/sharing of resources and information, and at a broad level contributes to valuable organisational improvements. This approach has been embraced by the University Executive and will continue to evolve in 2016 with funding provided to create the Digital Learning Co-op for regional, remote and offshore students.

Keywords
uowlibrary, leadership, support, cooperative, academic, showcase, op, co, learning, student, model, coherent, provide

Disciplines
Arts and Humanities | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This conference paper is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/asdpapers/568
Learning Co-op

A showcase of cooperative leadership to provide a coherent model of student academic support
Authors

Rebecca Goodway – Digital Literacies
Fiona Macdonald - Library
Alisa Percy – Learning Development
Sally Rogan – Peer Learning
Melissa Stephen - Peer Learning
Heather Thomas – UOW College
Context

Student Academic Support

Learning Development (Building 11)
Seminars, consultations, resources
Academic language and learning
HDR Research writing
Maths and Statistics

Library (Building 16)
Book a librarian
Library Rovers
Research consultations

Peer Learning (Building 19)
Peer Assisted Study Sessions
Global Communicators

Digital literacies (Building 39)
Online & f2f workshops

UOW College (Building 36)
Pre-tertiary English Language Foundations Programs
All part of the DVCA Portfolio, but….

Characterised by fragmentation

- Physical/virtual
- Financial (budgets, hard and soft funding)
- Governance and lines of reporting
- Priorities
- Data collection and reporting mechanisms
Conversations
Student Academic Support

Learning Development
(Building 11)
Seminars, consultations, resources
Academic language and learning
HDR Research writing
Maths and Statistics

Library
(Building 16)
Book a librarian
Library Rovers
Research consultations

UOW College
(Building 36)
Pre-tertiary English Language Foundations Programs

Peer Learning
(Building 19)
Peer Assisted Study Sessions
Global Communicators

Digital literacies
(Building 39)
Online & f2f workshops
Developing a shared vision
Forming a strategic cooperative leadership group

- Creating of a shared vision – accessible and visible student academic support
- Identifying what aspects of student support should be included
- Inviting members
- Negotiating roles and responsibilities
- Sharing of leadership – a cooperative model
Forming

Obtaining Executive support
Finalising membership
Negotiating potential services and delivery

Storming

Differentiating services
Establishing roles and responsibilities

Norming

Finalising pilot services, roles and marketing
Development of program
Recruitment, induction & training

Performing

Delivering pilots
  Autumn (Location 1)
  Spring (Location 2)
Reporting to UEC, Senate & VCAG

A co-operative model

Proposal

- Develop a cooperative space that acts as a one-stop shop for student academic support
- Locate it in the Library where students are engaged in study
- Place at the centre of the design, a peer-supported study area where students can receive immediate support and be easily booked in to expert services
- Integrate and utilise data to contribute more effectively to improvements in teaching and learning practice across campus
- Work towards an online version of the one stop shop for regional, remote and offshore students

Conceptual model developed and socialised by Dr Alisa Percy
Peer-supported study area
Peer Academic Coaches and Library Rovers on hand to help troubleshoot issues
  • Peer Academic Coaches (Peer Learning)
  • Library Rovers (Library)

Seminar Series and online resources
  • Study, Write, Present at University (Learning Development)
  • English language (UOW College)
  • Maths & Stats (Learning Development)
  • Thesis writing (Learning Development)
  • Digital Literacy (Digital Literacy)
  • Library research (Library)

Student consultations
  • Assignment writing (Learning Development)
  • English language (UOW College)
  • Maths & Stats (Learning Development)
  • Library research (Library)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Learning Development</th>
<th>Digital Literacies</th>
<th>UOW College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Learning</td>
<td>Peer Academic Coaches</td>
<td>Library Rovers Librarians</td>
<td>Academic Language and Learning educators</td>
<td>Digital Literacy Teachers</td>
<td>English Language Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Peer triage</td>
<td>Peer triage Librarian consultations</td>
<td>Consultations Seminars Online resources</td>
<td>Seminars Online resources</td>
<td>EL Consultations Seminars Online resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op responsibilities</td>
<td>Website updates</td>
<td>Administration of Endnote seminars</td>
<td>LC Program development Administration of SWP seminar and consultation</td>
<td>Administration of DL Seminars</td>
<td>Management of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and management of PACS</td>
<td>Training and management of Rovers</td>
<td>Induction and management of teachers</td>
<td>Management of teachers</td>
<td>Management of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternate hosting of monthly Co-operative Leadership Team meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared responsibility for reporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>HEPP funding</td>
<td>Recurrent funding</td>
<td>Recurrent funding</td>
<td>SAF funded</td>
<td>Self-funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection systems</td>
<td>PL database</td>
<td>Library database Careerhub</td>
<td>LD database Careerhub</td>
<td>DL Excel sheets Careerhub</td>
<td>LD database Careerhub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our achievements - 2015

Contacts
4000 face to face
5000 online

Peer triage
63% of the 837 student enquiries resolved immediately

No. 1 PAC enquiry
Essay/assignment assistance

No. 1 Rover enquiry
Research assistance

Seminars
87 seminars¹
1467 attendances

Consultations
574 Assignment Writing (LD)
189 English Language (UOWC)
704 Maths & Stats (LD)
173 Thesis Writing (LD)

1. This figure does not include Library Research Seminars
Challenges

Lacks a single driver
  • Can a cooperative work without electing a leader?

Lack of central coordination
  • Disparate systems
  • Disparate data collection
  • Disparate funding

Space
  • Physical - Limited space in Library location
  • Digital – Different websites, Learning Co-op website currently a holding place
Future directions

2015 a year of ‘doing’

2016 a year of doing, reflecting and reviewing

2016 Develop proposal for Digital Learning Co-op

- Unique URL
- Specific brand
- Synchronous and asynchronous support
Learning Coop
Strategic Direction
“check in”

- Identify shared values
- Clarify and build shared agreement about
  - our unique services
  - our unique roles and expectations as strategic leaders
  - resource allocation
  - our tools and processes for effective strategic leadership
- Develop a planned calendar that includes CSL deadlines/actions (along with other important deadlines/actions)
- Discuss service expansion to the regional campuses
- How will decision making/Leadership will look moving forward?

Data and reporting

- Develop a framework for what data is being collected and how it can be connected
- Establish who is responsible for data collation
- Identify key stakeholders and reporting timeframes

Focus Topic – Digital Learning Coop

- Develop a funding and resource proposal for the digital Learning Co-op
- Explore structure, platform options, plan for investigation/report back and timeframes