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Creating institutional connections and a sense of belonging through cultural awareness and competence

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Creating institutional connections and a sense of belonging through cultural awareness and competence

Abstract

Abstract and presentation.

Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

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THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

Creating institutional connections and a sense of belonging through cultural awareness and competence

The University of Wollongong, in its current strategic plan, set itself a goal of doubling the intake of Indigenous students by 2018. Evidence suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people are more likely to choose a higher education provider if they feel a sense of belonging to the institution. This belonging can be forged by promoting ATSI culture, heroes and values in relation to the institution (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012). The organisational culture of a university also has a significant influence on the attractiveness of the institution to ATSI students (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012). Additionally, raising awareness of ATSI culture among non-ATSI students and staff has been recognised as an extremely important endeavour of institutions and an obligation all universities should realize (Gunstone, 2008). Cultural programs and/or cultural competency training for university staff, students and researchers, has been identified as one of the most effective ways of encouraging cultural awareness and competence across the institution (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011).

This presentation will report on a project instigated in the Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health (SMAH) at the University of Wollongong, that sought to establish a partnership with the local Aboriginal Corporation (IAC) and the university's Indigenous Centre (WIC) and through this relationship develop a mobile application that would lead individuals and groups through a self-guided cultural awareness tour of the University of Wollongong. The Mobile application guided tour, which uses GPS functionality, highlights Indigenous Australian culture, historical and geographical features and the connection of the local aboriginal Dharawal people to the 'Country' on which the University of Wollongong is situated. It also focuses on elements pertaining to the cultural safety and enhancement of belonging for ATSI students and community members. The intention was for the mobile application to be used with staff, students, indigenous people and community stakeholders including school and potential university students to showcase the University of Wollongong grounds and raise cultural awareness about Indigenous Australians.

Five separate guided walking tours (Trails) were developed through an iterative process that adopted a design based research methodology. Pilot and useability testing as well as ongoing formal evaluation guided the design evolution of the mobile application. Each of the five Trails featured four specific locations that mapped a path around the university grounds. The selection of each location featured in the five Trails, was purposefully chosen by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from the three project partners -SMAH, IAC and WIC as well as the University Facilities Management Division (FMD). The mobile application content associated with each station has been developed following extensive consultation with local indigenous community groups and indigenous academics from across the institution.

This innovative approach to cultural awareness-raising seeks to not only progress the strategic agenda of the university but also encourage the integration of inclusive teaching practices and behaviours of non-indigenous staff and academics and enhance the cultural safety of indigenous students and academics. The presentation will provide details of this higher education innovation and showcase how the five Trails and respective stations seek to promote indigenous students' belonging to the institution and raise awareness of ATSI culture among non-ATSI students and staff. The benefits and challenges encountered throughout the 3 stages of the project will be discussed as well as suggestions for how other institutions might approach and progress similar and related initiatives. Additionally, the presentation will highlight factors that were identified as having a significant impact on student experience and illuminate considerations for promoting positive student engagement. The presentation will also discuss some of the future plans for the advancement of the mobile application and further research that is being implemented.

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Behrendt, L., Larkin S., Griew, R. & Kelly, P. (2012), The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report, Department of Industry, Innovation Science, Research and Tertiary Education, Canberra Retrieved 13th November, 2013 from <http://www.innovation.gov.au/highereducation/IndigenousHigherEducation/ReviewOfIndigenousHigherEducation/FinalReport/index.html>

Gunstone, A 2008, 'Australian university approaches To Indigenous policy' Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, vol. 37S, pp. 103–108.

Hossain, D, Gorman, D, Williams-Mozley, J & Garvey, D 2008, 'Bridging the gap: identifying needs and aspirations of Indigenous students to facilitate their entry to university', Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, vol. 37, pp. 9–17.

Pechenkina, E & Anderson, I 2011, Background paper on Indigenous Australian higher education: trends, initiatives and policy implications, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, Retrieved 13th November, 2013 from http://sydney.edu.au/documents/about/higher_education/2011/20110930%20IndigenousHigherEducationReview-ReseachPaper.pdf

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Creating Institutional Connections and a Sense of Belonging through Cultural Awareness and Competence

Dr Dominique Parrish



BACKGROUND

DRIVERS ...

Institutional: Strategic goal of doubling the intake of Indigenous students by 2018

Federal Legislation: Assist with overcoming barriers and implement strategies for improving access, participation, retention and success of Indigenous Australian students.

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Policy: Raising awareness of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture among non-Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students and staff is an extremely important endeavour of institutions.



BACKGROUND

RESEARCH ...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to choose a higher education institution if:

- They **feel a sense of belonging** to the institution ¹
- The **organisational culture** of the university is '**pleasant**' ¹
- **Cultural programs and/or cultural competency training** for university staff, students and researchers, is the most effective way of encouraging cultural awareness across universities ²

1. Behrendt, L., Larkin S., Griew, R. & Kelly, P. (2012), The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report, Department of Industry, Innovation Science, Research and Tertiary Education, Canberra

2. Pechenkina, E & Anderson, I 2011, Background paper on Indigenous Australian higher education: trends, initiatives and policy implications, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra

AIM OF THE INITIATIVE

PROMOTE AWARENESS OF ...

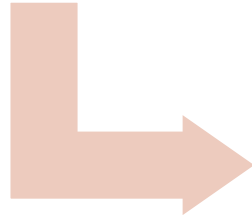
- Indigenous Australian culture, history & knowledge
- The Dharawal people
- The connection of the Dharawal people to the 'Country' on which the University of Wollongong is situated
- The importance of tolerance and inclusivity.



PROJECT PHASES

2013

- Physical Trail



2014

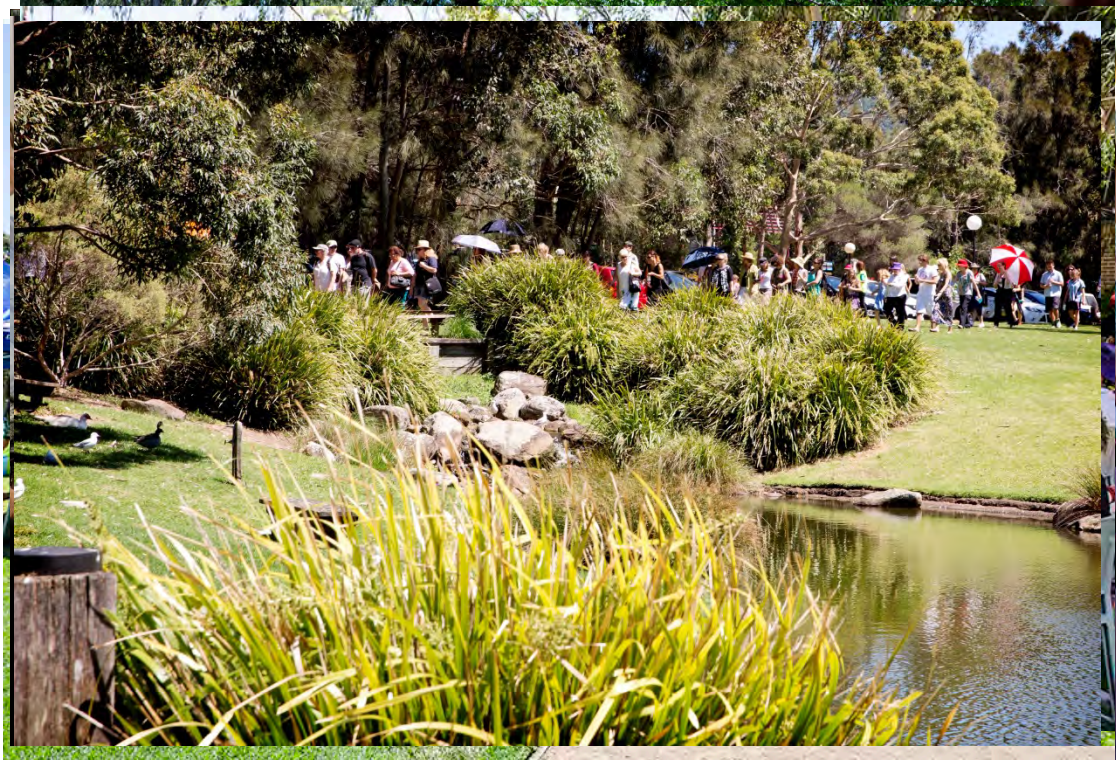
- Translation of Physical Trail to a Mobile App



2015

- Facilitate Community Consultation

PHYSICAL TRAIL – PHASE 1; 2013



TRANSLATION OF PHYSICAL TRAIL TO MOBILE APP – PHASE 2; 2014

- Employed project officer
- Ascertained target audiences
- Established a focus/aim for each trail
- Scoped the stations in each trail
- Designed a 'Taster Trail' for consultation
- Confirmed technology specifications



THE TRAILS – BLACK SNAKE TRAIL (ACADEMICS)

Exploring learning, teaching and research

Grandmother Mountain	Elder story about the Mountain
* Yarning Circle	Story about Aboriginal Learning Circles
Discovering ideas	Student story about journey to researcher
Journeys to University	Graduate's story about studying at UOW



THE TRAILS – PIGEON TRAIL (GENERAL STAFF & STUDENTS)

Exploring UOW and its Community

Grandmother Mountain	Elder story relationship of Mountain
* Deadly Staff	Story about becoming an educational leader & 1 st Indigenous Dean
Culture & Kinship	A personal story of introducing Aboriginal culture & Kinship
Walking Together	A personal story about NAIDOC Day walk



THE TRAILS – WALLABY TRAIL (YR 5 & 6

STUDENTS)

Exploring Culture and stories

*Grandmother Mountain	Dreaming story, five Islands & Mountain
Deadly Sports	First Indigenous Games held at UOW
Connection to land	Bush tucker & caring for the land
Building talent	Conversation between AIME mentor & Yr 9 student mentee



THE TRAILS – WHALE TRAIL (LOCAL COMMUNITY)

Opportunities for study

Grandmother Mountain	Story about connection of UOW to Mountain
* Deadly students	Graduation at UOW
Working together	Journey Community to working at UOW
Supporting success	First Aboriginal Education Centre



FACILITATE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – PHASE 3; 2015

- Employed Aboriginal project officer from the local community
- Confirm target audiences, foci and aims of each trail
- Seek endorsement of the stations and associated content in each trail
- Advise on the appropriate images/stories/community to feature in each trail and station



IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Significant engagement and support from community
- Has promoted the university pathway programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Improved Community and University relations as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and University relations
- Raised cultural awareness
- Engaging across all target audiences



CHALLENGES

- Cultural appropriateness
- Authentic and equitable collaboration
- Mobility and technology capability of those walking the trail
- Connectivity issues
- Time demands



FUTURE PLANS

- Create apps for regional campuses
- Develop supporting resources and activities (e.g. worksheets, mobile games)
- Embed in pathway, orientation and induction programs for students & staff
- Transfer custodianship to University (DVC-E portfolio)
- Strengthen presence of Community artefacts and links in the app



CREATING INSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS AND A SENSE OF BELONGING THROUGH CULTURAL AWARENESS AND COMPETENCE

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Online version of the app:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/deploy/trails/index.html>

