Simulation for Bachelor of Paramedic Science students, like the three students featured in our cover photograph, creates opportunities for deliberate practice of new skills without involving real patients. A high-tech nursing simulation space and skills development laboratory, part of the Gympie Learning Hub opened in August, allows Nursing Students to engage with real-life clinical experiences.

The $24.1M Sippy Downs Learning Hub (Building E), due to be opened at the commencement of the teaching period Semester 1 2014, will include multi-disciplinary simulation and e-learning facilities. Groundwork for the 1050 m² Engineering and Science Training Facility has also begun. This state-of-the-art facility due to be completed in 2015 will include simulation technology and provide large, open spaces suitable for concrete stress tests, hydraulic engineering experiments, photovoltaic cell (solar cell) testing and accident scene simulations.

_Pictured:_ (clockwise) Bachelor of Paramedic Science Students, Ilona Lefevre, Cassandra Ann Luck and Adam Manley (left to right, with ‘patient’ Jarrod Trahar at Cotton Tree Beach, Maroochydore.

---

**Have you seen these images and wondered what to do with them?**

These are QR codes and can be scanned by most smartphones. The smartphone reads the code much like a barcode and then takes you to the content associated with the code. Content can be videos, web pages, images and even pdf files. If you don’t have a scanner then search the App Store or Play Store for ‘QR Code Scanner’. You will see a lot of options, choose a free one and follow the app instructions to scan the codes.
From the Vice-Chancellor

Professor Greg Hill

Celebrating Excellence in Learning and Teaching, now an annual feature in the University’s learning and teaching landscape, once again documents a range of notable successes and advancements achieved over the past year.

It profiles USC people doing what we have always valued - making a positive difference on campus, in the region and beyond. The innovation and commitment of USC staff enables outstanding educational and social outcomes. This is evidenced by initiatives from bringing school students on campus through the regionally-engaged MyTED project, to another swag of national Citations awarded to staff for their outstanding contributions to student learning, and much more besides. National grant funding has enabled several innovative projects – building future academic leaders, enhancing cultural competence, using mobile technology for paramedical skills development, evaluating maths and science grant projects, educating for sustainability and enhancing experiential learning in planning education. Locally, we have invested substantially in learning and teaching innovation, through several grants programs funded by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor’s office and facilitated by the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C-SALT).

As I have interacted with the learning and teaching community around the country this year, I have been very pleased to observe the high regard in which our staff members are held throughout the sector. Because of this, we have been able to contribute to national discussions about a range of learning and teaching matters, we have welcomed national and international leaders onto campus to work with our staff, and we have sought to align our direction and work not only with the needs of the region, but with national and international best practice.

All of this spurs us on to ever greater aspirations. The last twelve months have seen our expansion northwards into Gympie and southwards to Brisbane, the design and construction of cutting edge teaching and learning infrastructure, and continued recognition from the Good Universities Guide, in which we remain the only public university in Queensland to be rated by graduates as five stars for teaching quality, generic skills and overall satisfaction.

Ever since the community consultations of the 1990s, when the university was being planned and established, we’ve made a promise to ourselves and to the public to make a positive difference. 2013 Celebrating Excellence in Learning and Teaching testifies to that promise being alive and well in the organisational culture of this place, and gives due recognition to the many amongst us who are doing great things for students, the university, the region and the sector. I add my congratulations and my thanks to each staff member whose work appears in this publication, as well as to the many others who contribute to the University’s mission and purpose through teaching, research and engagement.
From the Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Professor Birgit Lohmann

Reflecting on the past year, there is much to celebrate at USC in learning and teaching. Indeed the building construction which has been evident across our institution in the past twelve months is a fitting analogy for what has been happening in learning and teaching at USC.

Individuals and teams have been building outstanding student learning experiences in face-to-face and virtual settings, building our student numbers, building new discipline offerings, building new spaces for teaching and research, building supports for staff success and building new ways of approaching twenty-first century educational challenges and opportunities.

We are working determinedly to build our student population over coming years, as one of just four Australian universities with growth targets set at twenty percent or higher. The trajectory we are on will see us reaching 12,000 students by 2015, a size that will bolster institutional resilience and enable ever greater educational outcomes for the region.

We all know that a building is only as solid as the foundations on which it is built, and it is these foundations that are profiled in 2013 Celebrating Excellence in Learning and Teaching. I think you would agree that the achievements in these pages are certainly worthy of celebration. Be it recognition, research, student engagement, learning spaces, graduate attributes, blended learning or professional development, USC’s standing in learning and teaching is being strengthened and enhanced through a range of staff-led initiatives.

During this year Graduate Attributes have come into their own as a valuable scaffold for curriculum design and renewal, with extensive work undertaken in faculties and support areas to embed the graduate qualities and skills into curriculum. We now have access to insightful analytics about the extent to which each attribute features in the student learning experience, and the USC’s Graduate Skills and Qualities have provided a lens through which student learning may be understood.

Blended learning is a key strategy for USC, and we are seeing fruitful efforts being made towards institutional support for blended learning and for technology-supported innovation at course and program levels. The environmental scan that was conducted by the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching this year provides valuable baseline data from which we can measure progress on the blended learning front.

High quality professional development activities underpin many of the achievements celebrated in this publication. There is notable alignment between staff success and participation in offerings such as Learning and Teaching Week, Foundations of University Teaching, the Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme and the various other workshops and programs.

As a retrospective on 2013, this publication reminds us of the great things that have been achieved. I trust it will also inspire us to redouble our efforts in 2015 and beyond, to continue to build USC as an influential institution that makes a genuine difference to all who are part of our extended university community.
Today’s higher education learning and teaching environment is more focused than ever on quality outcomes for learners. USC staff have spent this year addressing a number of issues that are significant to improving learning and teaching across the sector. Student engagement, blended learning, ePortfolios, simulation, visualisation, graduate attributes, teaching standards, curriculum revisioning and learning spaces are just a few of the areas where we have been active in 2013. These are the issues that research in higher education tells us make a difference to learning outcomes and students’ experience. Engaging with students, researching and putting innovations into practice ensures that the University of the Sunshine Coast retains its reputation as a leader in learning and teaching.

The stories told in this publication place value on learning and teaching excellence. While not every staff member appears in the pages, the stories told this year speak to an institutional commitment that is articulated through the strategic plans and demonstrated through the activities of staff as they work alongside students. As I read, I recognise the centrality of the student experience in every story. Many colleagues speak about how their work improves students’ learning. Much of the grant activity focuses on students’ access to a quality university experience whether that be through experiential learning in workplaces, through the use of innovative technologies, improved curriculum or enhanced learning experiences.

These pages reveal a firm commitment to the scholarship of learning and teaching, and to reflection on, and active improvement of, teaching practice. I applaud those people who have participated in one of the many programs offered by USC that provide support for staff to improve the student learning experience. I’d also like to acknowledge the many colleagues who participate in grants panels, sit on committees, mentor and share their teaching practice willingly. I recognise the leadership shown in addressing the issues that matter and the commitment of staff to making a difference in the lives of their students. These are the activities that bring the vision of the University to life.

Finally, I’d like to thank all staff on behalf of our students. USC occupies an important place in our region. It provides opportunities higher education that might otherwise be impossible for some of our students. We are in the business of changing lives through education. It’s not always easy work but it is hugely rewarding and very important, so thank you.
Learning and Teaching in the Faculty of Arts and Business

Dr Maria Raciti | Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)

In 2013, the Faculty of Arts and Business (FAB) continued to pursue excellence in learning and teaching. In line with this, a faculty-wide, large-scale revitalisation of curriculum was undertaken and involved all staff in the faculty. Alignment with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) brought with it rationalisation of programs as well as development of new program offerings which meet the needs and wants of our students. Curriculum renewal was a considerable undertaking and saw all courses offered by FAB migrated to the new course outline template—an important milestone in the USC Graduate Attributes and Standards Project. The renewal of curriculum provided individual academics and discipline teams with the space to rethink course-learning outcomes and re-calibrate assessment. Advancing our inclusive, connected and co-created learning journeys in ways that benefit students beyond graduation was, as always, at the heart of FAB learning and teaching endeavours in 2013.

Learning and teaching conversations and activities centred on supporting student engagement and the student experience, ultimately enabling our students to flourish. Furthermore, we continued to augment our program offerings with Law and Creative Industries, welcome additions to our existing portfolio of programs. As the year draws to a close, the intent and result of these faculty-wide curriculum enhancements is a palpable improvement in the quality of our program and course offerings.

The FAB Student Engagement and Retention Project which started in 2012 continued to unfold. It has comprised a number of faculty-wide, cohort and course-specific initiatives, targeted predominantly at our first-year students. Features of the project included funded course-level interventions and curricular/co-curricular partnerships. Of particular note in 2013 was the introduction of week one tutorials for all first-year courses.

The Faculty of Arts and Business is committed to providing students with skills and knowledge that are valued, meaningful and useful. As such, scholarship and research in learning and teaching is highly valued in the faculty as they provide many advantages for students: bringing richness and depth to the curriculum as well as a variety of challenging, yet rewarding, learning experiences. The FAB Learning and Teaching Seminar series has been extremely successful since its inception in 2012 and has become a valuable dissemination outlet for showcasing scholarship in learning and teaching, providing a forum for forging relationships and sharing of learning and teaching insights, practices and resources. Importantly, the seminar series brings people together.

This year, FAB celebrated the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Citation success of Dr Uwe Turton and Dr Ross Watkins. Congratulations also to Dr Greg Nash, Gail Crimmins and the COR109 team who won the national Benchmarking Leadership and Advancement of Standards for Sessional Teaching award. These national awards are testimony to the exceptional learning and teaching endeavours of the faculty. All in all, in 2013 we have created a platform for learning and teaching that will bring continued success for the faculty in 2014 and beyond.
Learning and Teaching in the Faculty of Science, Health, Education and Engineering

Associate Professor Jennifer Rowe | Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)

In 2013 the Faculty of Science Health Education and Engineering (FoSHEE) continued to embed excellence in learning and teaching. The anticipated Gympie Learning Hub is open and FoSHEE is supporting the advancement of higher education with promising beginnings in undergraduate nursing and primary education as well as offering the Tertiary Preparation Pathway program. Congratulations to the staff who have worked with enthusiasm and vision to support this new space in the USC community. The School of Nursing and Midwifery was new in 2012. It continues to grow and thrive in learning and teaching, scholarship and research. External accreditation in professional programs is a constant feature of FoSHEE learning and teaching life. In 2013 the faculty has seen accreditation activity in engineering and clinical exercise science programs. Education is currently working on its suite of programs. This work reflects the important relationship of industry and the academe and inspires dynamic and ongoing curriculum development. Curriculum development is continuing in both faculties due to a number of drivers including external accreditation, Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), embedding USC graduate attributes, retention work and responses to the migration of individual courses to the new course outline template. It has been inspiring to see the collaboration in program groups across the faculty which has revitalised programs and courses.

New technologies, resources and learning spaces are being introduced which will facilitate the enactment of flexible formats to extend student-focused learning. With the imminent completion of Building E comes state-of-the-art technology which will enable enhanced simulation and immersive experiences for students. This technology is at the cutting edge of simulation pedagogy in nursing, midwifery and other programs. The anticipation of these technologies ensures that immersive and innovative teaching methods remain at the forefront of our learning and teaching agenda. Equally exciting for the support of the student learning experience is the expanding number of ‘clinics’ operating on campus. Funding from Health Workforce Australia (HWA) has facilitated the expansion of clinics, including antenatal care through the Collaborative Midwifery clinic (with Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service), wound care clinic (with Blue Care) and Occupational Therapy (OT) child and youth clinic. These collaborations provide a great community interface and a wonderful opportunity for authentic learning experiences which prepares students with the capabilities they need to transition to their professions.

Again in 2013 there are accolades and awards to celebrate. Most recently we have celebrated the success of FoSHEE staff, Graham Ashford, Dr Sanjeev Kumar Srivastava and Dr Terry Lucke. Each has been awarded a citation for their outstanding contribution to student learning in the prestigious Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Citation program. FoSHEE staff have also been successful in the Commonwealth OLT Innovation and Development Grants Scheme. Associate Professor Bill Lord is leading a team which includes Dr Florin Oprescu, Nigel Barr and Theresa Downer (in partnership with Deakin University), in a project which will develop learning resources and associated pedagogy for learning clinical skills using mobile enabled technologies. On the home front FoSHEE staff have been successful in the internal Learning and Teaching Grants Scheme. Dr Amanda Henderson, Dr Rebecca Donkin, Dr Jane Taylor and Dr Janet Wyvill were each recipients in diverse fields including virtual microscopy, enhancing blended learning, examining empowerment in nursing students’ curriculum, flipped classroom, memorable messaging, first year students and engagement.
Recognition

Outstanding achievements in national learning and teaching arena

OLT Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning

USC’s position as a national leader in quality teaching was reinforced in 2013 with another highly successful year in the Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) Citations Program. For five consecutive years USC has received more Citations as a function of its size than any other Australian University. This year’s successes showcase the diversity of learning and teaching influence and innovation at USC. Five staff members were duly recognised for their exceptional contributions to student learning. Outstanding in 2013 were:

**Graham Ashford**

For transformative teaching from the forefront of global best practice in sustainable development: empowering students and promoting engagement with complex concepts through collaborative, experiential learning.

Before entering academia, Graham spent twelve years leading research and training projects in environmental management, climate change and poverty alleviation for foreign governments and United Nations agencies. He found the techniques he learnt then for engaging people with complex concepts were transferable to the classroom. Graham uses collaborative, experiential learning to contextualise and enliven even the driest of complicated economic and scientific topics, allowing his students to see themselves as agents of change.

**Dr Sanjeev Kumar Srivastava**

For designing and delivering curricula and resources that promote comprehensive understanding of the spatial sciences by multi-disciplinary undergraduate students who become highly valued, workforce-ready graduates.

Sanjeev is passionate about the spatial sciences and derives great satisfaction from meticulously designing curricula and learning resources that ably equip his students to achieve their learning goals and embark on their chosen careers. His students progress to positions in a variety of workplaces and impress their employers with the depth and breadth of their knowledge. Awarded for his contributions to student learning, Sanjeev has published his curriculum innovations in international scholarly journals.
Dr Terry Lucke
For bringing engineering to life for students through personal passion, enthusiasm and engaging curricula based on experiential learning.

The hallmarks of Terry’s teaching are his experiential learning strategies and his passionate teaching style, which are enthusiastically received by his engineering students and widely acclaimed by academic and industry peers. Terry applies the latest research on active learning to design innovative resources and projects, such as his famous 'Spaghetti Bridge Competition' which teaches students the mechanics of materials. Terry loves engaging students by deconstructing abstract theory and translating it into real-world examples.

Dr Helmut-Uwe Terton
For designing and delivering exciting, engaging and inclusive curricula that build students’ competence and confidence, enabling their success in the digital design industry.

Uwe’s students benefit from his extensive international experience as a digital design practitioner. Drawing on this experience, he develops curricula with a strong focus on experiential and work-integrated learning. His inclusive curricula and resources incorporate versatile, creative learning experiences that accommodate both varied learning styles and student equity groups. His graduates are snapped up by employers—including prestigious national and international design firms—who value their comprehensive practical and disciplinary knowledge.

Dr Ross Watkins
For empowering students of creative writing to attain their potential through empathetic mentoring and innovative curriculum initiatives.

Language is the measure of Ross’s life and he seeks to transmit this passion to his creative writing students. He views publication success as only one aspect of the writing process; he measures empowerment in terms of students’ capacity and confidence to express themselves meaningfully through narrative, whatever their level of ability. He facilitates this empowerment through empathetic mentoring and innovative curriculum initiatives. Ross’s students eloquently attest to the success of his approach.
2012 OLT Citation winners were Ms Johanna Einfalt and Ms Janet Turley
For designing and driving a sustained assessment support model built on collaborative partnerships: Paving the way for student growth in skills, independence and peer-to-peer learning.

Johanna and I were awarded the citation for creating a model of student support for researching and writing skills that combined team-taught lectures integrated into business courses with a weekly drop-in consultation service, known as BUdi or Business drop-in. The success of the model lies in its foundation, which is a collaboration between academic and skills-support staff which provides ‘safe spaces’ for student learning. The model is holistic in nature and ironically the long journey—that was our citation—can only be described as a whole of the University (and beyond) experience. There were just so many people to whom we felt we had to send thank you cards for supporting us. That in no way is intended to detract from Johanna’s unflinching determination and tenacity which ultimately got us over the line, but I take this opportunity to thank all of them once again.

We were unsuccessful in our first citation attempt and I hope Johanna does not mind me sharing that this was pretty devastating after the enormous effort we had put into that application. To mirror the sentiments of those winners who contributed to this publication in 2012, the citation process does provide an opportunity for personal and professional reflection and growth; it is a satisfying acknowledgement of a job well done, and the cash prize is a bonus. This learning and teaching award has had a direct impact on our research capacity both during the writing of those mammoth ‘2 A4 pages in Tahoma, point 11’ (to quote one of this year’s winners) and during the subsequent 12 months. Gathering evidence for our citation had its unique challenges and as a result we have gained invaluable research skills, more experience in conference and journal publication and a large network of very talented people.

Johanna used her half of the citation prize money to attend a conference in Budapest and to participate in a two-week intensive seminar at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, designed to develop expertise in research methods. Johanna hopes to use this experience to publish her findings from the international student research she conducted during a Professional Development Program (PDP) visit to Germany and to provide inspiration for the next chapter of her research career—a PhD. I have not yet spent my share of the prize money, but imagine it will likewise help to fund aspects of my own PhD.

Life in the afterglow:
Reflections on awards worth winning
2012 OLT Citation Winner Associate Professor Meredith Lawley: For sustained excellence in research supervision of a diverse range of doctoral students, motivating and inspiring through a supportive guide approach to developing independent researchers.

I became an academic many, many years ago because I wanted to teach and I teach business research methods and marketing (I love to combine these disciplines through frequent field trips and experiments, that is, shopping). The university environment has allowed me to teach an amazing array of students at undergraduate and postgraduate level in courses and as research students, not only in Australia but also in some wonderful overseas locations such as Shanghai, Fiji, and Munich.

While I love to teach, I begrudge the time spent writing applications as I would much rather be doing the fun stuff like teaching, working with research students and preparing new teaching materials.

So, how did I come to win an OLT citation with this attitude? Two factors contributed to my decision to apply—the feedback and support from past and current students and the encouragement, support and very gentle nagging by C~SALT staff—the T team of Tilly and Tania. The process of writing the application forced me to reflect deeply on my teaching—an activity I try to do regularly, but for which I seem to have less and less time. Putting the application together allowed me to close the loop in many respects by looking more closely at how my HDR (Higher Degree by Research) students had performed after graduating. My goal as a supervisor is to turn out independent researchers and it was extremely satisfying both to look at what my students have gone on to achieve in this area, and to think that I made some contribution to their success.

While I might dislike application writing I still encourage anyone else out there who might dislike the process to seriously consider devoting some time to it.

How I am spending my money? One of my most satisfying teaching experiences was last year when I took a group of 19 business masters students on an international study tour to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. We visited an amazing array of large and small companies in a variety of industries—I gained an amazing number of new insights and examples I can, and have been, using in my teaching. I was also amazed to see how the experience affected my students—none of whom had visited China before. I am going on another international study tour to Vietnam and Hong Kong later this year, this time as an observer as I made the mistake of telling other academics how great the study tour had been and there is now a long line of business academics volunteering to lead study tours.
Vice-Chancellor and President’s Medals for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

Dr Mark Holmes, Ms Kendall George and Ms Ginna Brock were each awarded a prestigious 2013 Vice Chancellor’s Medal for Learning and Teaching. They also each received $5000 each to advance their work at the University.

Dr Mark Holmes won the Vice-Chancellor and President’s Medal for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

Mark is a Senior Lecturer in Nutritional Biochemistry and Discipline Leader for Biomedical Sciences. He was nominated for his innovative teaching and groundbreaking course development including liaising with industry for USC’s new Medical Laboratory Science degree.

Gaining an edge through clinical placements
Providing undergraduate students with industry experience through work-integrated learning is essential for many professional degree programs at university, but it is quite a break from tradition for a laboratory-focused biomedical science program. When I was appointed as Discipline Leader for Biomedical Science in 2007, I started looking into the possibility of introducing structured clinical training opportunities for our biomedical science students to ‘give them an edge’ in a highly competitive job market. The success of this work-integrated learning initiative for our students was a major reason why I was awarded the 2013 Vice-Chancellor and President’s Award for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

Establishing the clinical training opportunities for our biomedical science students came about through a lot of hard work and perseverance. Our discipline focused on three important clinical areas—clinical measurements, clinical trials and medical laboratory science. We now have a number of our final-year biomedical science students undertaking 10-week training placements in major hospitals in Brisbane and at Nambour General Hospital to become ‘entry-level’ clinical measurement scientists in areas such as cardiac diagnostics, sleep diagnostics and respiratory science. Some of our students are also enjoying short placements (2-3 weeks) in Queensland clinical trial centres, which they can do after studying a short intensive course on clinical trial management that we now run in conjunction with a leader in clinical research training, ARCS Australia.

We are also about to graduate students for the first time in medical laboratory science at a technician level with their ‘work-force readiness’ coming about through industry placement training funded by Health Workforce Australia. USC students are great ambassadors and feedback from industry about their performance on placement has been extremely positive. In fact, several of the students have been offered positions at these workplaces upon graduation.

I was really impressed with how previous recipients of the learning and teaching award decided to re-invest their award money (this year $5000) back into the education of their students. On my drawing board is a plan to use my award money to establish training in clinical embryology at USC so that our students can consider a career in the growing
IVF industry. I already have several experienced IVF scientists interested in assisting me with this teaching concept. If all goes to plan, USC may have an opportunity to become a leader amongst Queensland universities in clinical embryology education.

I remain very passionate about seeking further training and employment opportunities in biomedical science for our USC students. The new Sunshine Coast University Hospital which is due to open in 2016 will provide some exciting opportunities for clinical training, so the future is looking really bright for our biomedical science students.

Ms Kendall George won the Vice-Chancellor and President’s Medal for Excellence in Learning and Teaching – Sessional Staff (Faculty of Science, Health, Education and Engineering). Kendall, a Lecturer in Bachelor of Nursing Science and Master of Midwifery, was nominated for her work with the midwifery team in simulation and case-based learning—which was commended by the national accreditation panel—and other contributions in teaching innovation.

I felt very honoured to receive the award and have found there are remarkable extra benefits including peer recognition and public acknowledgement. This was emphasised when I was invited to be presented with a medal in recognition of the award at the graduation ceremony in April this year. The financial reward has also enabled me the freedom to undertake professional development and enhance my research. I will be attending, and presenting at a national conference in October this year focussing on child and infant wellbeing and at an international conference in Prague in 2014 with regard to midwives improving women’s health globally. Benefits will include valuable networking and knowledge gained which I can share with my colleagues and in the classroom to enrich my students’ learning. The award will also support my future career aspirations and provide evidence of a ‘job well done’ as well as a fabulous wall decoration and discussion piece proudly displayed in my work space.

Ms Ginna Brock won the Vice-Chancellor and President’s Medal for Excellence in Learning and Teaching – Sessional Staff (Faculty of Arts and Business). Ginna, a Lecturer in Faculty of Arts and Business first-year courses, was nominated for her consistently high teaching standards and creation of positive learning environments, resulting in outstanding feedback from students.

Winning this award affirmed the tenets of my teaching philosophy. My purpose as an educator is to assist students toward their educational goal by producing optimal student engagement that motivates and inspires. I have discovered in my 17 years of teaching that actively engaged students are more likely to attend tutorials, retain academic concepts and principles, participate in the classroom setting and complete the required assessments. In fact, the major detriment for many students involves either feeling disconnected from the subject matter or a lack of confidence in their academic ability. Therefore, my teaching philosophy consists of three key aspects: atmosphere, knowledge and responsibility. These integrated aspects form a learning environment that is constantly student-focused and increasingly student-directed. The creation of a positive environment not only is conducive to learning, but also motivates and inspires students to learn by attempting new and challenging academic pursuits.

During the first two to three weeks of the semester, I repeatedly model questioning techniques, observation strategies, note-taking skills and academic-argument formation. Yet, even though I am modelling these techniques, I am continually encouraging the students to think critically about their own intellectual processes, to attempt various learning methods and to take academic risks. As the semester continues, my role diminishes and the students begin to direct their own learning and research. The most rewarding aspect of teaching is observing how students develop a desire to inquire further and to investigate the possible ramifications and outcomes within their research interests. By the end of the semester, the students have achieved an understanding of the subject and received the tools needed to be responsible for the progression of their future knowledge. To me, this is success.
USC’s Marks and Grades Project was awarded the Co-Op Award for Excellence in Student Administration and Customer Service at the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) Awards 2013.

The Marks and Grades Project Team developed the Interim Results Module (IRM), this included a new business process and the development of a web-based application for students and staff at USC. This development supports the verification and ratification of all students’ final marks and grades, its implementation allowing complex problems stemming from handling large amounts of grades data by manual processes to be resolved. The solution seamlessly integrates with USC’s learning management system (Blackboard), from which students’ interim marks and grades are derived, and the Student Information System (PeopleSoft) where final marks and grades are released to students.

A key success factor of the project was a shared leadership and collaborative approach which engaged all stakeholders—IT Services, Student Administration, the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching and the two faculties—in all stages of the project.

The project team believes it achieved a number of major outcomes, gains and benefits to staff and students, including:

- Significant mitigation of risk of errors in student final marks and grades
- Opportunity to release final grades to students up to five days earlier
- Eliminating duplication of data entry and manual handling of data, yielding significant time savings for all involved
- Consistency in practice achieved by alignment of system design (including system validations and roles) with assessment policy and procedures
- An effective, streamlined mechanism to electronically manipulate grades data from USC’s learning management system (Blackboard) to the Student Information System (PeopleSoft)
- Improved reporting and opportunities to analyse grade data, enhancing curriculum renewal
- Establishment of a sustainable system and user support model for the process and system, with opportunities to develop to meet future requirements
- A model for successful whole-of-institution change management and ongoing commitment by all stakeholders to working collaboratively to achieve strategic change

**Top marks for innovation**

**Interim Results Module**

- Grade data seamlessly extracted from Bb by course coordinators
- Workflow supports verification and ratification of final marks and grades
- Reporting
- Electronic submission of ratified grades to PeopleSoft
- Posted and released to students
OLT Innovation and Development Grant: Expert in my pocket: a mobile-enabled repository of learning resources for the development of clinical skills in student health professional. Project Leaders Associate Professor Bill Lord and Dr Florin Oprescu ($180,000)

Information and communications technology can provide ‘just-in-time’ support for students in the health disciplines to learn and practice specific clinical skills. The Expert in My Pocket project is a collaboration between University of the Sunshine Coast (Bill Lord, Florin Oprescu, Nigel Barr and Terri Downer) and Deakin University (Helen Forbes, Nikki Phillips, and Peter Bright) which was awarded a national Office of Learning and Teaching Grant of $180,000. The project is creating a free, publicly accessible, standardised website of learning resources comprising video vignettes and supporting materials to enhance student development of psychomotor clinical skills.

Importantly, the training videos are presented from a first-person point of view by expert health clinicians who ‘think aloud’ as they step through the procedures. The videos are specific to the Australian practice setting and are available in a high-quality format compatible with computers and mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. Another technology being trialled by this project is Quick Response (QR) codes for scanning by smart devices that allow the users to instantly connect with the required resources. It is expected that the resources created by the project will be highly valuable to practitioners, students and educators in tertiary health disciplines.

OLT Strategic Priority Project: Enhancing the Training of Mathematics and Science Teachers Program (ETMST) Evaluation Project. Project Leader Don Maconachie ($600,000)

USC and PhillipsKPA have been granted $600,000 by the Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) to undertake a formative and summative evaluation of five projects for which five consortia have been funded by the OLT for four years. PhillipsKPA is a private higher education consultancy firm that the University has partnered with on projects funded through the Structural Adjustment Fund (Collaborative Futures Project) and the Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching (development of A Handbook for Executive Leadership of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education). This new project is a major undertaking, requiring commitment of the USC-PhillipsKPA team for the full four years and obliging the team to work with the OLT reference group to guide the program of activities of each consortium.

The five consortia comprise up to six institutions each led by a university with a strong track record in research, as measured through the ERA, in relevant academic fields. The OLT reference group includes the Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, and a range of senior national academic and policy leaders with an interest in the advancement of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. The Commonwealth, through the Office of the Chief Scientist, has provided the funds for this OLT grants program.

The USC-PhillipsKPA team conducting this project includes Craig McInnis, David Phillips, John Bartlett, Don Maconachie and Kate Chivers. The project commences in October 2013 and will be completed in December 2017. The initial tasks for the USC-PhillipsKPA project team will be supporting each consortium in formulating project objectives for the implementation phase of their respective projects and developing an overall evaluation framework for the whole program of work.

The evaluation project will be managed by USC through the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C-SALT) and the Executive Projects Unit (EPU).
Sustainability and climate change are complex issues with high stakes for communities, equipping graduates from a diversity of programs with the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve sustainability and to proactively address climate change requires interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. Our practices need to cross disciplinary and organisational boundaries to draw on the richness offered by multiple disciplines and a variety of pedagogical settings.

Our project acknowledges the commitment to sustainability within the Sunshine Coast Region and seeks to build a Regional Community of Practice for sustainability and climate-change teaching and learning that facilitates engagement between USC staff across disciplines, students, TAFE, and graduate destinations in the region. We aim to enhance the quality of sustainability and climate-change courses, build the professional capacity of educators, and strengthen links between education providers and employers to improve graduate and sustainability outcomes.

The project began earlier this year with an opening workshop where teachers, employers and students began to share ideas, needs and innovations. The workshop highlighted the regional significance of sustainability and support for creative pedagogical approaches that apply systems thinking, adaptive learning, and participatory engagement with regional issues and organisations. The team is building on these initial ideas with an online survey to ensure a detailed understanding of graduate needs across the region and in various disciplines. Development of accessible teaching innovations to share the skills and knowledge of individuals and groups in our community of practice has also commenced.

(i) support and develop academic leadership in learning and teaching (ii) prepare academic leaders for the future by enabling them to engage with a principles-focused leadership program and (iii) develop a Professional Learning Conversation Protocol to facilitate conceptual change, in this case conceptual change about what it means to be a learning and teaching leader. Rather than utilising a leadership training model, the conversational approach draws on the knowledge and experience within the group, enriched by the provided resources, as a basis for collaborative learning. A facilitation tool called the Professional Learning Conversation Protocol for Academic Leadership will be developed and trialled during the project.

Action Learning: Enhancing understanding of interactions between domestic and international students — A regional universities perspective. Project Leaders Dr Leone Cameron and Oscar Imaz-Mairal ($22,500)

The purpose of this OLT Extension Grant project is to enhance (i) multi-cultural teaching skills of academics in regional universities (ii) the relationships between domestic and visiting international students at USC and other regional universities and (iii) the potential of USC and other regional university network members as suppliers of world class education to the international market. Staff in regional universities who share a concern or passion for the success of internationalisation and the promotion of more inclusive engagement will participate in a symposium and workshop, facilitated by expert educators, designed to enable the growth of knowledge through participative action learning and reflective processes. The project extends the OLT funded “Finding Common Ground” (Arkoudis, et. al. 2010) project by enabling expert reflection and fostering a community of learners who are keen to support the growth of environments for interaction not only within the classroom but within regional communities.
Coming to a completion:

Experiential Learning in Planning Education

Project Manager Christine Slade
Dr Claudia Baldwin and Associate Professor Johanna Rosier, from the Faculty of Arts and Business, are leading an Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) ‘Innovation and Development’ research project into Experiential Learning (EL) in Planning Education in partnership with La Trobe, Edith Cowan and Griffith universities, the University of Tasmania and the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA). Experiential learning includes activities such as service, practice, outreach, ‘cooperative’ education and workplace or work-integrated learning. These activities broaden students’ learning experiences through exposure to real planning issues and practice both within and outside the university. This project recognises that students learn about real-work experience from a wide range of activities including field trips, role plays, design studios and practicums. It addresses academic standards and the assessment and promotion of student learning, particularly in practice settings.

This two-year project started with a baseline survey of all accredited Australian and New Zealand university planning schools to determine the extent to which EL is used through different activities as well as any tools and techniques used in assessing EL tasks. Responses were received from 52 course coordinators across 18 university planning programs representing 100 different courses/units. Almost all survey respondents (50 out of 52) reported using some form of EL in their teaching; it was used in 10 or more courses at around 20 per cent of responding universities, but at around 80 per cent of the universities EL was used in six or less courses. Although a variety of assessment types were reported, traditional assessment forms such as written assignments, essays and reports dominate current practice.

In Semester 2, 2012 and Semester 1, 2013 the project team tested existing and new EL ideas and assessment items in their classes involving evaluation of the chosen activities and tasks by students, staff and professional practitioners as well as critical reflection by the project partners. Comprehensive case studies have been written to inform a deeper understanding of the EL principles developed in the project and create resources for the project’s online toolkit. Planning academics will be able to access resources from this website enabling them to make changes to their existing EL activities and add to their teaching resources. Another aim of the project is to provide potential suggestions for improvement to the PIA planning school accreditation policy. Further information about the project can be found at www.usc.edu.au/explearning.
In 2012 an innovative project was funded to develop a University-wide collaborative approach to supporting first-year students. The project, Engagement and Capacity Building: Enhancing first-year retention through building staff communication and leadership capability, was designed to develop highly effective support strategies for USC’s first-year students during their transition to higher education.

Additional project outcomes included enhanced staff communication and leadership capacity in those academic staff working with first-year students. The grant team, whose members were drawn from a variety of disciplines, was jointly led by Professor Marion Gray from the Faculty of Science, Health and Education and Dr Anna Potter from the Faculty of Arts and Business. In the first part of 2012 the project explored, implemented and evaluated three separate engagement and retention strategies aimed at first-year students across 21 courses in both faculties of the university.

Regularly missing classes has been noted as one of the key behaviours linked to students being more likely to drop out of university. One strategy therefore involved tracking student engagement with course content, measured through students’ online access to course teaching materials and tutorial attendance. Students who appeared to be disengaged were emailed and subsequently phoned, and offered support and advice.

A second strategy involved staff mentoring students within a specific discipline area. Mentoring has long been seen as a critical factor in the retention of undergraduate students and can communicate to the student a sense that the institution cares. First-year students’ mentors met with them as a group early in the semester to establish a relationship and then contacted them regularly throughout the semester.

One of the top reported drivers of student attrition within USC was not feeling ready or prepared for university life and underestimating the level of study required. Poor academic performance, often resulting from an underestimation of the time, effort, and skill level required for university, can affect a student’s ability to persevere at university studies and place a student at-risk in terms of retention. Thus, a third strategy, First Assessment, Early Intervention, invited students who had failed or had only just passed their first major piece of assessment to participate in an academic planning discussion with their tutor, using a reflective workbook structured around a self-regulation problem-solving cycle. The purpose of the intervention was to ensure that students who may be at risk due to a failure event were equipped, both in terms of practical strategies and self-belief, to become successful learners.

The project team is currently using data collected from student and staff surveys, focus groups and student academic outcomes in order to determine the efficacy, sustainability and application of the three strategies in a whole-of-university model. Preliminary findings indicate all three strategies have merit and are robust enough to be effective in a variety of contexts and disciplines. The early evidence also underpins the importance of academic leadership in implementing effective retention and support strategies for first-year students. It highlights as well the value of the work carried out in all areas of the University in attempting to ensure the first-year experience is a positive and enjoyable one for all students.
UsC’s Learning and Teaching Grant Scheme (LTGS) making a difference

Five Exploratory Learning and Teaching Grants of up to $10,000 were granted in Semester 1, 2013 to fund proof-of-concept, evidence based learning and teaching projects that test and evaluate an original or innovative idea.

Utilising virtual microscopy with online blended learning to enhance first year student engagement and learning

Project Leader Dr Rebecca Donkin

Virtual microscopy is now commonplace in large institutions predominantly for teaching histology and pathology. Online technology translates traditional glass slides from the light microscope to the computer. Though there are many advantages of virtual microscopy (eg, available anywhere/anytime, promotes peer learning, engagement and collaboration), it has not been readily utilised in smaller institutions with budget constraints.

The focus of the activity for this project would be to use virtual microscopy in a case study curriculum in histology and haematology in Semester 2, 2013 to encourage peer learning and engagement through blended learning tools that can be implemented online at the University of the Sunshine Coast and evaluated to determine if these blended learning activities are engaging and assist with the retention strategies of the university.

Considering the projected growth of the university in the next five years it is envisioned that increased student enrolment will put significant strains on current laboratory equipment, resources, staffing and infrastructure.

By developing programs that have a significant blended learning approach plus virtual microscopy and online learning activities, it is expected that these technology rich developments will be more sustainable than the current practice. To further the connection with blended learning at USC, virtual microscopy was showcased during Learning and Teaching week 2013.

The impact of a flipped classroom approach in higher education on students’ engagement in self-directed learning

Project Leader Dr Jane Taylor; project team members Dr Rachel Cole, Ms Julie-Anne Foster, Ms Ulrike Keyssner, Ms Kara Lilly

Our team saw the need for greater flexibility in the design and delivery of courses to cater for our students’ contemporary context. In response, our project seeks to explore a shift in learning and teaching methods to promote further student engagement with their learning. This research will evaluate students’ experience of the flipped classroom approach and responds to USC’s focus on the integration of educational technologies with face-to-face teaching to enhance the student learning experience; also, it aligns with constructivist pedagogical principles and social constructivist theory. The flipped-classroom approach integrates blended learning with a focus on student engagement through increased opportunities for peer and instructor inter-actions. The need for high levels of engagement by students in their learning is well established as being central to optimising the student tertiary experience.

The flipped classroom comprises weekly pre-class learning activities, face-to-face workshops and tutorials, and extension online resources. We are currently in the dual phases of designing and producing online, inter-active pre-class activities and exploring face-to-face learning approaches through group activities. Each stage scaffolds students’ current understandings and increases cognition levels they are required to apply. This research will evaluate the impact of a flipped classroom on students’ engagement in learning via an on-line survey, in-class feedback, SETAC (Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses) surveys and focus groups. The project will also develop an evaluation engagement indicator framework, case studies on adopting blended learning technologies and flipped classroom process guidelines.
Evaluating nursing students’ empowerment to meet expected industry capabilities

Project Team Leader Dr Amanda Henderson; project team members Deborah Hitchen-Holmes and Eleanor Horton

The aim of this project is to assess the viability of an impact evaluation methodology to assess critically whether the Bachelor of Nursing Science curriculum empowers students to meet industry expectations. The palliative-care setting is used to illustrate and assess the proposed methodology; industry guidelines exist for undergraduate capabilities, but assessment, planning and delivery of generalist care are also required in complex cases.

The outcomes intended for this project are:

1. A formal evaluation of students’ reflections on their empowerment to meet identified industry capabilities and care for patients in complex care cases
2. A formal evaluation of the critical stakeholder reference group’s perspectives on the attainment of industry capabilities for complex care cases
3. A final project report to translate knowledge and strategies on the usefulness of the impact methodology to evaluate curriculum and industry expectations, and
4. Recommendations on a preferred evaluation approach that can be used to critically assess if students are empowered to meet industry expectations in health-care settings.

To better prepare and empower our students, we need first to understand the experiences of students in clinical assessment; and the relationship with planning and delivery of care in complex care settings. Comparing student’s reflections of empowerment to undertake these tasks against industry expectations may identify potential gaps within the curriculum.

Embrace the audience (ETA): exploring the fear of public speaking in first-year students and developing a strategy to alleviate anxiety

Project Leader Dr Greg Nash

The first year message: What memorable messages are first-year Education students receiving at the University of the Sunshine Coast? What is the impact of these messages on the student’s engagement and eLearning?

Project Leader Dr Janet Wyvill
A further seven Exploratory Learning and Teaching Grants (up to $10,000) were granted in Semester 2, 2012 for commencement in early 2013.

A blended learning action research project, integrating social media to build and support peer networking between domestic and international students
Project Team: Dr Leone Cameron (Lead), Annette Helling-Benze and Florentina Benga and International team members: Dr Catherine Chaumeil, Dr Bruno Mazieres and Prof. Gordon Eckardt

Occupational therapy students’ perceptions of assessment for learning and its impact on their preparedness for future assessment and professional graduate competencies
Project Team: Ailsa Gillen (Lead) and Prof Marion Gray

The Scientific Report through the lens of Graduate Attributes: How is it taught, practised and assessed throughout a program of study?
Project Team: Dr Ann Parkinson (Lead), Theresa Ashford and Nicole Masters

Using assessment to facilitate transformative learning: The impact of live role-play assessment on counselling and social work students’ capacity to link theory with practice
Project Team: Dr. Christine Morley (Lead), Dr Phillip Ablett, Judy Moir and Karen Marshall

Healthy Islanders: Curriculum renewal incorporating blended learning using health related tasks for epidemiological studies of a virtual population
Project Team: Assoc Prof Peter Dunn (Lead), Dr Rachel Cole, Frank Muller and Dr Michael Bulmer, UQ

Attracting and retaining more USC engineering students using the CDIO approach
Project Team: Dr Terry Lucke (Lead) Dr Adrian McCallum and Assoc Prof. Les Dawes, QUT.

Play while you Learn Spatial Planning Principles: the application of interactive multi-touch table technology (pictured below)
Project Team: Dr Nicholas Stevens (Lead), Assoc Prof. Johanna Rosier, Assoc Prof. Christian Jones, Dr Uwe Terton and Ben Rolfe
My Tertiary Education Day: 
Encouraging primary school students from Gympie priority schools to consider tertiary education opportunities.

Dr Uwe Terton | Project Manager and Dr Ruth Greenaway | Project Officer

The purpose of this project is to encourage primary-school-aged children and their parents from Gympie priority schools to consider tertiary education opportunities through capacity building interventions. Such interventions include an interactive eBook, a campus visit to USC Sippy Downs with Indigenous activities focusing on aspirations and narratives from USC staff discussing non-traditional routes to higher education.

My Tertiary Education Day (MyTED) provides an innovative framework for investigating aspirations for participation in higher education. Results of the investigation will inform the development of a multi-strategic outreach project for primary schools and the publication of an eBook which will focus on literacies, in particular, digital literacies; the literacy component will support students in their language development (written, oral, spatial). The eBook will provide a resource for future outreach projects.

MyTED is a multi-layered research project consisting of three research phases. During phase one the focus was to capture the aspirations of a group of Year 4 primary school students and their parents for their future. Aspirations for the future and any factors that influence the capacity to aspire to participate in higher education were captured through the use of Photovoice, which enables participants to represent their point of view through photography and narrative.

Phase two promoted dialogue through the sharing of narratives about non-traditional routes to higher education. A diverse group of current staff members from various higher education facilities were interviewed about their journey to tertiary education.

The interviews were included in an eBook titled Billy Bunting Secret Agent which was shown to the primary school students. The capacity building phase included a campus tour where students participated in a meeting in the chancellery and viewed the paramedics, engineering, nursing and science labs. They attended a workshop that involved students painting their aspirations using Indigenous symbols printed on bags with ochre paint, and listened to Gary Crew discuss his children’s novels and his pathway to university.

In the final phase the research team returned to the schools to again ask students about their aspirations and to determine if they had changed due to the interventions.

The research project now enters its data analysis phase; it will report on findings and publish the eBook early in 2014.

The project is funded under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and addresses equity, social inclusion and USC’s strategic priority to enable access to the USC experience.

‘Cracking the code’
on winning grants and awards

In May USC hosted a national expert panel discussion on Cracking the code: a how-to guide to successful learning and teaching grants. With Category 1 status now being assigned to Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) grants and fellowships, the session provided invaluable strategies for grant success.

The panel consisting of Suzi Hewlett (General Manager of the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) grants and fellowships, the session provided invaluable strategies for grant success.

The panel consisting of Suzi Hewlett (General Manager of the Office for Learning and Teaching, Dr Peter Coolbear (Director of Ako Aotearoa, New Zealand) and Professor Rick Cummings (Director of the Centre for University Teaching and Learning, Murdoch University) shared insider advice about accessing highly competitive funds and achieving optimum levels of influence after receiving funding.

The session was also beamed via Blackboard Collaborate to Brisbane to allow 12 members of QPEN (Queensland Promoting Excellence Network funded by OLT) to participate. A recording of the session is available on the Grants and Awards for Learning and Teaching page of the University’s website or scan the code above.
Enhancing the student experience and engagement at USC
Karen Shelley | Project officer Student Engagement Program

The University of the Sunshine Coast is committed to providing a high quality student experience, ensuring quality interactions between students and staff. As such, the University invests in a diverse array of innovative student-support services and student-engagement initiatives that aim to encourage positive interactions and enrich students’ lives. USC’s Student Engagement Program (StEP) has been initiated to ensure a whole-of-University approach to student-enrichment and retention activities that are student-centred and focused on student success. The following are examples of some of the initiatives currently in place at USC:

**Student mentor program**
According to Beltman and Schaeben (2012) “mentoring is a well-established, evidenced-based social support strategy that can enhance academic, social, personal and career outcomes of recipients”. In response, USC has introduced a voluntary social-support program that assists new students with their transition to university life. In Semester 2, 2013 a student mentor has been provided for all new students enrolled in the Tertiary Preparation Pathways (TPP) program and selected courses in the Faculty of Arts and Business (FAB). In Semester 1, 2014 Student Mentor Program co-ordinator Julie Hobbins plans to expand the program by allocating all new students at USC a student mentor. The mentees have been surveyed regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program and, while the final data has not been released, initial feedback has been very positive with one mentee commenting: “It was really good to be able to talk to someone who knew exactly what I was going through … it was great to know that I had that support if ever I needed it.” (2013 Opinio Mentee Survey).

**Library computer buddies**
Education students are roaming the library as Computer Buddies every day during peak times as part of wider field experience undertaken for their course. Computer Buddies, dressed in light green shirts, offer IT support to students who require assistance with document formatting, page numbering, table of contents, etc. According to Librarian Beth Crowther, Buddies has been an invaluable resource for students who are challenged by the formatting and presentation of assignments and is a highly successful initiative.

**Lynda.com**
In Semester 1 this year, IT Services provided students access to Lynda.com, an internet-hosted replacement for a set of self-paced training materials that was previously on Blackboard. This collection of training video clips allows students to acquire core and discipline-specific business and computing skills in a just-in-time way. In addition to providing regular phone, email and face-to-face support, the Student IT Help Desk directs students to Lynda.com so that USC’s students become increasingly aware of this great resource. IT Services sees Lynda.com as complementary to the Student Life and Learning/ Library Computer Buddies initiative that is providing personal assistance to students in the use of common software like Microsoft Office. Unlike the Student IT Help Desk and the Computer Buddies, Lynda.com is accessible anytime and anyplace that a student has access to the internet. Some courses are incorporating Lynda.com content into their learning materials.
Helen Stallman, a University of Queensland academic, has been conducting research on student wellbeing and resilience since 2009 and, based on her findings, developed a licensed, online tool for academic staff called the Learning Thermometer (LT). Learning outcomes and relevant academic and wellbeing resources are uploaded into the tool for each course with students registering on the site as part of their course. The LT consists of four short online surveys which students complete at strategic times throughout the semester. Students then receive personalised feedback and, according to their responses at each survey point, can be linked to appropriate resources and strategies that support their learning and wellbeing. Teaching staff can then modify or highlight aspects of the course to improve students’ learning during the course of the subject. The LT is currently being trialled at USC in six courses in Semester 2, 2013 and will be reviewed at the end of the year.

Social media
USC is currently utilising many forms of social media to connect with students at key points in the student lifecycle. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, Flickr and Pinterest are being used to promote events and provide information. The forums are student-centred and allow students to ask questions and to enable their social connections. The forums also provide for the communication of a variety of essential information (academic calendar dates, information events, etc.). The USC Facebook page currently has 7671 likes and is commonly used by current students for comment and communication, but is also used as a fan page for current, future and past students. Images on Facebook capture student life on campus and can be shared with family and friends at home. Students use the Facebook wall to share information; buy and sell books, equipment and household goods; ask others what they think about topics/courses; ask student admin or program-type questions; ask about local information; celebrate milestones, and more.

Students@Work
Students are employed to work in Student Administration as part of the Students@Work initiative. These highly trained students come from a variety of discipline areas across USC and provide valuable assistance to the student administration team. The students are able to use their talents and acquire new skills to prepare them for their future careers. This initiative provides the opportunity for peer engagement across the student lifecycle.

Program Information and Enrolment Sessions (PIES)
Student Administration, in collaboration with faculties, introduced PIES which are held at the start of each semester. PIES are focused on program advice and the enrolment process to assist students to in the challenges of knowing what to enrol in, how to enrol and navigating unfamiliar processes and terminology. In addition, the event provides students with the opportunity to interact with other students and meet with faculty and administration staff before the start of semester. Providing students with some indication of their program and early expectations about the program allows students the opportunity to change their enrolment should they believe that they are in a program for which they may not be best suited. PIES are also being held at Gympie and South Bank campuses in 2014.
“Blended learning is the combination of modern and traditional methods of learning combining the face to face interaction and communication with your teachers as well as communicating via online methods such as blackboard and discussion boards.”

“We all use our phones consistently and Facebook.”

“Facebook discussion boards are now used in many subjects as you can get an instant response.”

“We don’t always check emails but we are always on Facebook.”

“I play video games and use Facebook.”

“My phone is my way of people contacting me, I connect with others in my class through text, the phone is the lowest common denominator for all students.”

“I use Blackboard to check when assignments are due and to print off the lecture slides.”

“With email you don’t know when you will get a reply, with text it is immediate.”

“Blended learning is using different methods of teaching.”

“Technology is a new way of teaching and learning and a way to become more knowledgeable.”

“We use laptops and iPads to converse and gather ideas because it is faster.”

“The wireless network is extremely important as it enables us to get hold of the Internet while we are here and to study in this environment is easier than anywhere else.”

“Blended learning is the combination of online and face-to-face learning.”

“It can be used to confirm what we learn in class.”

“In a social setting I text and use Facebook and Twitter.”

“We use technology to look up stuff when we are working in a group.”

“The wireless network is useful when I run out of pre-paid internet.”

“It is a new generation and technology is a massive part of life; you have to be able to embrace it.”

“I use Facebook to organise group projects.”

“We have everything we need here in terms of technology.”

“Blended learning is the amalgamation of technologies.”

“I prefer face-to-face learning; I need to be able to discuss things with my tutor and with the class.”

“All learning is important so we should bring in as many ways of getting information as possible.”

“It is a great way to communicate with your peers and to organise groups when doing assessments.”

“We need more power points.”

“I work a lot from my laptop so having access to the wireless network is important when I am sitting outside studying or having my lunch.”

During Learning and Teaching Week 2013 Dr Ruth Greenaway spoke to USC students about what Blended Learning means to them.
Innovating the Classroom: USCspaces project

Dr Ruth Greenaway | Project Officer USCspaces

The production and reproduction of space at USC enables the provision of a high quality student experience and assists in the delivery of quality teaching, learning and graduate outcomes. The priority is to provide learning spaces that can be transformed by the users into places of learning. In order to do this, the users must imbue spaces with meaning, thus producing a sense of place.

The needs of current students attending USC must be considered in the production and reproduction of learning spaces. To do this it is necessary to include them in decision-making and to hand them some control by looking beyond what has traditionally been accepted practice and to consider a Thirdspace for learning. A Thirdspace for learning includes learning environments which have been developed in response to a change in pedagogy that is more aligned with a student-centred approach to learning and teaching.

Pedagogical change is a key factor in engaging students and promoting a student-centered environment. Such change is facilitated in spaces where both academics and students optimise the perceived and actual affordances of the space. Affordances such as space to move, flexible furniture and technological resources contribute to pedagogical change.

Spaces may be physical, blended or virtual environments that enhance learning, engage and motivate learners and promote authentic learning interactions.
The USC spaces project supports pedagogical change; it is a collaborative process; it is a spatial journey and it will evolve. USC provides a vast array of learning spaces to cater to the needs of all students.

Gympie Campus opened in August 2013
The University of the Sunshine Coast broadened its footprint geographically when it officially opened its state-of-the-art study centre in Gympie in August 2013. The facility is part of the Collaborative Futures Project and will play a vital role in training future professionals in the region. USC Gympie includes a 75-seat lecture theatre, tutorial rooms, a high-tech nursing simulation space and a skills-development laboratory. The tutorial rooms have been fitted out with flexible furnishings to allow for collaborative learning and other pedagogical changes to occur. A range of programs were delivered at Gympie this year, including Nursing Science, Primary Education, Headstart and the Tertiary Preparation Pathway bridging program.

New building coming to Sippy Downs in early 2014
Building E at Sippy Downs is also funded through the Collaborative Futures Project and is currently on track for occupation at the start of Semester 1 2014. The facility has innovative learning spaces that will cater for a range of pedagogical approaches to ensure students are provided with a variety of environments in which to learn. Affordances in the tutorial rooms include alternate presentation points, floor boxes with powerpoints for laptops and a swivel lectern plus flexible furnishings which are mobile, stackable, easy to move by one person and, above all, comfortable. The building includes a tiered teaching space which has 14 collaborative work spaces with a laptop on each table including an ability to transfer information generated by the students to the presentation screen at the front of the room. Facilities also exist for students to bring their own devices (BYOD) and that content can also be displayed. Simulation spaces for use by a variety of disciplines, particularly nursing, are a feature of this building. The spaces provide a training ground for students where they are immersed in a learning environment replicating a real-life situation without the associated risks.

Representation of tiered learning space courtesy of Peter Edman, Indesign Technologies.
Aligning the journey with the destination: Program curriculum development tools

Theresa Ashford | Academic Developer C~SALT

As USC grows, two major areas of ongoing work are new program development and current program revision. Both practices are exciting and lead to opportunities to engage and reorient our teaching and learning practice to a learner-centred approach. Many academics are familiar with the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2000) and all programs have now started to use the USC Graduate Attributes as a curriculum-design tool, ensuring that our programs are authentic, connected and incorporate the whole student journey. This process ensures alignment with the program’s proposed learning outcomes and graduate-destination competencies, qualities and skills. New natural mapping data for the Graduate Attributes is now being released to programs; the data will also be useful for those proposing new programs. There is substantial research within tertiary learning and teaching on the efficacy of using this constructivist approach (see Taylor et al 2009). This approach is most effectively operationalised through the principles of learner-centred curriculum planning, use of active learning strategies, the learning journey being transparent and expectations being explicit.

These principles should drive the following key elements in program design and planning:

- **Program Vision**: What is the program about? alignment with USC niche market; strategic initiatives; focus—specialty; relationships internal/external; purpose; aims and goals; this should drive the design.
- **Program Design**: Graduate attributes; key outputs, threshold concepts; industry standards; the student learning journey; blended learning; course design cascades into the assessment suite.
- **Assessment**: Outputs/AQF—authentic; connected; interesting; and meets the program vision—who are these students and what qualities and skills are they developing and how?

To date, mapping data has been collected from course outlines to give programs a view of what the student learning journey looks like. This natural mapping of graduate attributes is very useful for program design and development considerations and is available from Theresa Ashford (tashford@usc.edu.au). Sample of curriculum data available:
Looking for ethics through the lens of the Graduate Attributes

Theresa Ashford | Academic Developer C~SALT

Ethical decision-making is fundamental to a well-functioning society and an effective workplace, so it is an important component of USC’s Graduate Attributes. As an academic developer, I work with program leaders and course coordinators to ensure that programs address and assess the full suite of Graduate Attributes. You may find it interesting that across all of the programs at USC, courses are least likely to map to the ethical and sustainability-focused attributes, notwithstanding that most lecturers feel that they are important; in part that may be due to the different interpretations of ethics in tertiary education. Wiles (2013) indicates there are four elements that guide or inform ethical decision-making: ethical frameworks, professional codes of practice, individual moral understandings and legal regulation. To date, much of the focus on teaching ethics at USC is focused on ‘professional codes of practice’, which covers application and knowledge of workplace practice as well as ethical research related to plagiarism. There is room to develop more assessments that engage students in critical analysis and consideration of ethical issues, reflections on ethical/moral dilemmas, use of ethical frameworks, valuing consequences of actions and interrogating scientific practice.

Course Coordinators considering how to incorporate ethics within their course or program may be interested in these two examples. The first example is a course that sits in a science program which previously did not have any assessments directly addressing the ethical attribute. The course coordinator took up the challenge and wrote a new assignment that allowed students to explore the ethics in physiology research by critically examining ethical problems and case studies using the USC Research Misconduct Policy and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. The questions were designed to engage students in deep thinking about scientific practice.

The second example is about a course coordinator who added an assessment task on the application of moral theory and the use of ethical decision making criteria in determining appropriate policy responses to environmental economic issues such as climate change, genetically modified crops and conservation interventions. Students worked in groups to create video-based ‘Current Affairs’ documentaries on the issue which included role-playing different perspectives with moral-theory experts. This task highlighted to students that different ethical perspectives will have enormous variance in terms of economic policy practice and ultimately will differ based on what is held as ‘morally considerable’. The task was well received, according to SETAC feedback.

The ethical graduate attribute presents an opportunity to ensure that all of our graduates leave this institution with an exposure to all four components of ethical decision-making and hopefully make a positive contribution to society in any role that they choose to play. I personally look forward to uncovering other best practice in teaching and assessing ethics at USC in 2014.

Examples:
Dr Ann Parkinson, Systemic Physiology 1: Ethics Assignment.
Mr Graham Ashford, Environmental Economics: Ethical Case Study Group Video Presentation.
What’s the buzz around Blended Learning?

Ian Wright | Blended Learning Coordinator

USC teaching staff have heard a great deal about blended learning over the last year or two. When the concept of ‘blended learning’ is raised and discussed with staff, reactions vary from “I’ve been doing that for years” through to “What an exciting new way to teach”.

USC has adopted the following description of blended learning—“the fusion of educational technologies and face-to-face teaching in physical and virtual environments to enhance the student learning experience”.

In 2013 additional staff were employed in C–SALT to support blended learning. We have had learning designers, resource developers and a coordinator joining staff already working with learning technologies. The increased emphasis on blended learning also includes the C–SALT academic developers who work to ensure that curriculum development and renewal occurs in the context of a connected world where learning can occur at any time, in any location, by drawing on resources from anywhere.

Blended learning is not new but the rapidly growing range of technologies that have possible applicability to learning and teaching make it an exciting area to work in. A large part of our work is in assisting teaching staff see the benefits of using technology to enhance their teaching. Beyond raising awareness, we can then go on to provide encouragement, resources, support and guidance to ensure that academic staff feel empowered to make the most of these exciting possibilities.

Many USC staff are already well versed in innovative, technology-supported teaching and a further part of our work is to nurture connections between staff to assist sharing of expertise, knowledge and support.

When we consider how much we now use internet-mediated technologies in everyday life; from trip planning to banking to socialising to recreation, it is no surprise that high expectations are placed on universities to offer equally rich learning environments. The Blended Learning Initiative at USC is an exciting step in positioning this university to build on its excellence in face-to-face teaching through equally exciting technological innovation.
Blended learning environmental scan

Ian Wright | Blended Learning Coordinator

From June to August 2013, the blended learning staff within C~SALT undertook the first environmental scan of blended learning activity at USC. The reasons for undertaking the scan included:

a) to provide a snapshot and benchmark of activity in blended learning at present
b) to develop an evidence base for strategic activity by C~SALT to extend, improve and evaluate the use of blended learning across the University
c) to develop and test some instruments and methodologies that could be revisited periodically to assess changes in the extent and nature of blended learning activity

The scan had three main elements: The first was an online survey made available to USC staff with participation voluntary—110 respondents completed the survey; the second stage was an analysis of statistics from the Blackboard Learning Management System to find indicators of activity that could provide insights into the use of blended learning at USC; the third stage involved individual interviews with five staff who had been identified as active practitioners of blended learning.

This has been a valuable exercise for USC providing, as it does, a ‘line in the sand’; we now have a point from which we can measure progress and success in broadening the scale and depth of blended learning.

Some noteworthy findings from the scan are:

- widespread adoption of the basic elements of blended learning, in particular, the use of the Blackboard LMS is occurring
- lack of a strong take-up of the more interactive elements of the online environment such as discussion boards to foster staff-to-student and student-to-student interactions was evident
- lecture-recording is only used to capture about 20 per cent of potential recordings despite it being popular with students
- considerable enthusiasm was shown to find out more about blended learning and what it can offer students
- some excellent innovation is occurring in blended learning across USC programs

The scan identified four key areas for focus, both for C~SALT and other business units of USC:

- people factors including academic attributes, staff and student support
- institutional factors including workload, USC culture, technology and learning space provision, agility and senior leadership
- external factors including sectorial pressures, technology developments in the wider world and
- strategic drivers such as student retention and projected growth of the institution

These themes have informed the development of the USC Blended Learning Strategy and provided a focus for action over future years.
Celebrating simulation in learning and teaching

Patrea Andersen | Associate Professor, Nursing

2013 has seen USC quickly realise its objective to extend facilities to support its blended learning strategy and provide immersive simulation learning experiences for students. This will be celebrated with the opening of the new E block building in January 2014.

These facilities house state of the art simulation learning spaces for Nursing and Midwifery that include replicas of hospital environments and immersive simulation facilities that can be adapted to create community practice and home environments. Incorporating the use of high technology medical equipment and manikins that replicate pathophysiology associated with a wide range of patient conditions, these facilities will further enhance the learning opportunities for students and prepare them for the realities of professional practice. The resource will be supported by advanced AV/IT technology that will allow simulations to be recorded and live streamed. This will facilitate debriefing and enable staff to include learning exercises that enhance student development of reflective practice and clinical reasoning skills.

These spaces will provide exciting opportunities for teaching innovation; support the advancement of teaching and learning and make a significant contribution to extending blended learning at USC. With this USC’s focus will now move to support academic staff to develop knowledge and skills supporting the use of simulation pedagogy in curriculum. In addition to planned professional development sessions offered by C-SALT, a post graduate course entitled Simulation in Practice Education will be offered in session four 2014. This will meet the growing demands from health and education for courses to prepare clinicians and academics to implement simulation in curricula and professional development learning activities in the digital age. Course content will include critical appraisal of simulation modalities and underpinning learning theory, design, implementation and evaluation of simulation scenarios, debriefing and technical skills required to management and use of programs that support AV and IT equipment in simulation. Details about this course can be obtained from Associate Professor Patrea Andersen (panders1@usc.edu.au). These advancements demonstrate USC’s continued commitment to quality and excellence in learning and teaching and to providing students with learning experiences that rival the largest universities in Australia.
USC’s ePortfolio journey: past, present and future

Christine Slade and Keith Murfin | Project officers

ePortfolios, which are online ‘repositories of digital written, visual and auditory artefacts created, stored and shared and the discretion of the learners’ are increasingly seen as a pedagogical tool to meet contemporary external and internal needs of higher education. In late 2012 C~SALT undertook a six-month feasibility study to determine whether the University community values using ePortfolios for student learning. The predominant response came from academic staff in professional degree programs needing ways to evidence student competencies to external accreditation authorities. A range of other uses expressed by academic and professional staff illustrate the adaptability of an ePortfolio.

The study resulted in a smooth transition to a fully supported Early Adopter Phase in 2013 with two programs, one undergraduate and one postgraduate, implementing ePortfolios into their learning activities and assessment tasks. One hundred first-year Bachelor of Occupational Therapy students are being introduced to ePortfolios by learning the main features of PebblePad+ and completing a reflection on an assessment task. Fifteen Masters of Midwifery students are using their ePortfolios to follow selected women through their pregnancies as case studies, as well as storing future career and accreditation-oriented artifacts.

Key learnings from the feasibility study have been shared through two publications and a number of presentations. For example, a peer-reviewed paper about the importance of pedagogical support underpinning technological innovation was presented at the HERSA 2013 conference in Auckland. More recently, a journal article about the management of organisational change associated with potential ePortfolio implementation was accepted for publication by the International Journal of ePortfolios.

C~SALT staff have also had opportunity to share the university’s ePortfolio experience with other members of the Regional Universities Network (RUN) and other universities at the Australian ePortfolio Forums in 2012 and 2013.

C~SALT, in collaboration with the Early Adopter program academic staff, are currently researching the progression of that stage in order to find out the enablers and barriers associated with a planned larger implementation process across the university during 2014-2016.

USC’s Learning & Teaching Week 2013 was notable for many ‘firsts’ in its diverse and informative program. With the theme, Blended Learning: an agile response to a dynamic world, LT Week was held on campus in the last week of August.

In keeping with the theme, two of the ‘firsts’ were in use of technology: for the first time an app was made available allowing instant access to the LT Week Guidebook; Twitter accounts also allowed instant communication with followers.

Other ‘firsts’ included:

• USC Theatre and USC Singers participated with contributions at the opening ceremony, a roving theatre promoting the Showcase and before the Twilight Keynote Address;
• For the first time the keynote speaker was from overseas—eminent Canadian open-online course pioneer Professor George Siemens from Athabasca University, Edmonton; his keynote was titled Connecting learners: technology, change and higher education. A recording of Professor Siemens’ keynote is available from http://bit.ly/GeorgeSiemensUSC (or scan the QR code over the page);
• Use of invitational videos from DVC Professor Birgit Lohmann and Faculty Deans to help promote LT Week; and
• Involvement of a LT Week Reference Group to assist the LT Week Convening Group and enable wider participation across the University.

During the week a variety of presentation styles was on offer including short papers, interactive workshops, plenary address sessions, and a Blended Learning Showcase with informative market stalls. Faculty breakfasts on the Friday before LT Week provided opportunities at two venues to network and generate preliminary discussions on blended learning practice.

Convenors were pleased to record some interesting highlights including: 35 different sessions presented; 19 sessional staff taking part; more than 130 names recorded for sessions; more than 80 downloads for the Guidebook app; and 77 ratings submitted for the People’s Choice Awards.

Next year, the convenors are hoping to see at least double the number and interest across the campus, as this important event on the University calendar in helping to maintain USC’s proud record of achievement in learning and teaching.

People’s Choice Awards for best presentations at LT Week were awarded to:

• Peter Dunn, for two presentations—Identification and definition of lexically ambiguous words in statistics by tutors and students and Statscasts: supporting student learning of introductory statistics using screencasts ($1,000)
• Anna Potter, for her presentation—Engagement and retention of first-year students (the DVC’s commissioned grant project) ($500)
• Sarah Pye, for her presentation—Blending theory and practice on the world stage ($500)
Sessional Development Days 2013

Caroline Cottman | Academic Developer C~SALT

Two Sessional Development Days were held in 2013; these conference-style days provide professional development on teaching issues tailored to the role of sessional academics.

The day in first semester focused on the graduate attribute of collaboration through the theme of Collaborative learning – Making groupwork work. Groupwork is such an integral part of university studies and often considered a sticking point for both students and staff. Some of the sessions held on this day focused on skills required for group work: active listening, building group dynamics, open and clear communication as well as conflict resolution. Other sessions explored group roles and the need to have a balance for teams to perform successfully. There were workshops for sessionals by sessionals and this aspect of having current active teachers as facilitators is appreciated by those attending.

On this day we had visiting facilitators sponsored by the Australian Council of Deans of ICT (ACDICT) to conduct a workshop on Improving teaching practice for engineering, science and IT. This workshop gave the 30 participants a grasp of learning concepts and collaboration with the focus on teaching in the sciences and IT disciplines.

Overall about 115 sessionals attended and felt the day provided “great strategies for group work”, “motivated me to reflect on my teaching practice”, “great opportunity to interact with other sessionals” and “networking with peers from other disciplines and departments”.

These occasions are also an opportunity for sessionals to attend the hands-on practical Blackboard sessions offered by C~SALT staff, which provide familiarity with the Learning Management System (LMS) and empower staff to be more confident, independent users.

In July the second Sessional Development Day centred on oral assessments with the theme, Coming to grips with oral assessment. The guest speaker was Associate Professor Gordon Joughin from the Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) at University of Queensland. Gordon’s research has focused on students’ experience of oral forms of assessment and, more broadly, the relationship between assessment and learning. The keynote address emphasised the many forms of oral assessment—presentations, viva voces, debates and podcasts and the reasons why oral assessments are powerful learning opportunities. This gave sessionals a chance to discuss their response to oral assessments and how can we help prepare students for what is often a stressful and challenging form of assessment.

Another highlight of the day was the presentation from the Cooroy Toastmasters—Richard Hansen and Tex Pipke. It is acknowledged that many presenters struggle with the concept of getting their message across in a way that will make an impact and remain in the mind of their audience. Tex and Richard presented ideas and concepts that can make a dramatic difference to how the message can be delivered effectively. Those attending did feel inspired to improve their presentations and noted that they will consider how they can apply the new information to their teaching practice.

More than 110 sessionals attended and noted that this day had enabled them to “become aware of important skills I need in preparing students for assessment” and to “take advantage of the opportunity to discuss teaching/tutoring strategies”. The Vice-Chancellor joined the sessionals for the last session of the day; this was commented on by quite a few, for this “made us feel important: and that “we are valued by the university”.

Two sessional development days will be offered again in 2014 and we always welcome participation from sessional academics willing to share their teaching practice. Please email AcademicDevelopment@usc.edu.au
Peer assisted teaching supports innovation and evidence-based practice

The Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme (PATS)

Caroline Cottman | Academic Developer C–SALT

This has been the third round of PATS at USC. The scheme was established by Associate Professor Angela Carbone at Monash University and has been trialled across five Australian universities with funding from the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD).

The aims of PATS are to enable collegial conversations around teaching practice and to inform and equip academics with skills and strategies to improve their teaching and courses.

In 2012 there were three mentee/mentor partnerships at USC and this year some new collegial configurations were formed to spread the combinations and relationships that have proven successful. Currently there are five PATS groups at USC, some in the form of the initial mentee with mentor, others as peer partners, and a triad with two mentees and a mentor. These include:

- mentee Christine Slade and mentor Al Grenfel
- mentee Leone Cameron with mentor Graham Ashford
- mentee Rebecca Mellifont with mentor Bill Lord
- mentee Florin Oprescu with mentor Meredith Lawley
- mentees Kelly Chambers and Marguerite Westacott with mentor Caroline Cottman.

PATS is essentially a developmental and confidential process where colleagues work together to improve, or reinvigorate teaching and course-development practice. The focus is a series of structured activities over the semester: nominating goals, identifying barriers, then planning for gathering informal student feedback and observation of teaching in order to review and reflect on practice and plan improvement for the future.

At USC PATS is coordinated by Caroline Cottman who also facilitates professional development workshops and supports participants with resources and materials related to focusing on their teaching practice.

To learn more about the Peer Assisted Teaching Scheme please contact Caroline Cottman ccottman@usc.edu.au.

Foundations of University Teaching (FUT)

Maxine Mitchell | Academic Developer C–SALT

The Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C–SALT) has facilitated the Foundations of University Teaching (FUT) course annually since 2006. FUT is a well-established USC professional development initiative that provides an introduction to teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. The course has relevance for all ongoing and sessional staff members and clinical facilitators who contribute to learning and teaching. FUT is especially suitable for staff who are new to university teaching or new to the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Normally FUT is offered during summer semester each year, but because of growing demand, FUT will now also be offered annually in Semester 2. To support the diversity of those participating, the course is offered in a blended learning mode with some aspects of the course content and learning activities taking a self-paced, online approach and other aspects delivered face-to-face on campus, using a workshop-based approach. This approach enables flexibility and accessibility in ways of engaging in continuing professional development and practice for USC staff.
Testimonial: by Keith Murfin, FUT participant, Summer Semester 2012-13

Foundations of University Teaching was a course I embraced with enthusiasm, completing it over the summer of 2012-13. I entered the course from a different background and with a different set of goals to the other participants. Being new to higher education and having recently taken up the role of Learning Systems Functional Analyst in the C-SALT, I do not teach on a regular basis. My aim for this course was to get a new perspective of what it meant to be a lecturer at USC and get a better understanding of the educational technologies that would best support learning and teaching.

What I wasn’t quite counting on was the change of perspective I got. The first three weeks picked me up, turned me upside down and shook loose everything I thought I knew about teaching. I was then extended a hand and challenged to put it all back together using the correct terminology and using theoretical concepts and frameworks. I came out of the course with a lot more questions than answers, but the foundations to know what to ask for and where to look. It excited a passion for learning and teaching.

I recommend Foundations of University Teaching as an excellent opportunity for anyone entering into teaching in higher education or anyone looking to re-energise their teaching.

Testimonial: by Sandra Elsom, FUT participant, Summer Semester 2012-13

The most significant impact of the Foundations of University Teaching course I completed over the 2012-13 summer was the recognition of my teaching perspective. Before the first session we were set a task to complete a questionnaire that identified our perspectives on teaching and my results were fairly balanced among four of the five perspectives. However, the ‘social reform’ perspective was a mystery to me. A social reforming teacher, as I understood it, was one who taught his or her students how to reform society, and I felt a little defensive about that—it’s not my role to tell my students what to think. In the first session, the perspectives were discussed among the wider group. Two nursing educators were the only people who placed themselves into the social reform category and they explained that, as health educators, they firmly believed that a society needs to be healthy. Upon hearing that, I realised I had completely misunderstood the social reform aspect of being an educator.

It’s not about teaching people what to think, but about teaching people how to think, because a society needs to be educated. I am now researching in the field of equity and diversity in education, focussing on access to tertiary studies, and I understand that education does not teach social reform; it is social reform.

Another of the FUT tasks is to design and present a lesson as part of a group; it was a little unnerving to be placed into a group for assessment with people who are mostly strangers and who work in different fields. We selected a topic we knew nothing about, but we were each able to bring something different to the task. I am very confident that the students in our mock lesson walked away—or possibly danced away—having learned a useful new skill, and I basked in the warm glow of having had the best group experience of my academic life.

Finally, I would like to spruik the benefits of the Professional Learning Plan. I used this task to give myself a gentle push to complete something I had been planning to do for some time. The task requires that participants plan some professional development which includes the use of ICT. I wanted to create an online teaching portfolio, but I had never taken the time to learn how to build a website. I felt that my plan would be more impressive if I actually carried it out, so I took some online lessons, learned how to build a website and created a brief, but professional looking portfolio, which included photographs, examples of my work, my résumé, and my teaching-philosophy statement. As a result, when a long-term contract was advertised in my department shortly afterwards, I was able to present my application in a polished and sophisticated manner, and was successful in gaining the role.

I recommend Foundations of University Teaching as a worthwhile exercise in developing your skills in teaching, getting to know your colleagues, making valuable connections, and—you never know—maybe having a little fun as well.
The Collaborative Futures Project (CFP) was funded by the Commonwealth Government under the Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF), the purpose of which is to assist smaller universities in the context of a more deregulated higher education sector. The idea of SAF is to enable universities to adjust major aspects of their operations so they can improve their effectiveness and efficiency in a more competitive environment.

The aim of CFP was to change USC’s business model in three ways: (i) move from being mainly a face-to-face provider to one that uses blended learning and teaching to a much greater extent; (ii) establish better program articulation and student-pathway arrangements with TAFE partners (Sunshine Coast TAFE, Wide Bay TAFE and South Bank Institute of Technology); and (iii) develop new joint infrastructure with our TAFE partners; not only would these moves align strongly with higher education policy (and therefore be likely to be funded, especially given the decision to focus, in the first instance, on one of the government’s priority professions of nursing and midwifery and key policy area, a seamless tertiary education sector), but they would also provide much-needed new buildings with innovative learning spaces, enable USC to expand into simulation-based learning and expand its footprint, all in accordance with the strategic plan.

CFP is not only about making USC a more sustainable organisation, but is also intended to enhance the USC experience for both students and staff. Students have made it clear that they want the full campus experience as well as the ability to use new technologies to support their learning. This includes provision of open spaces, both inside and outside buildings, that are conducive to private study and collaborative learning as well as social interaction.

For staff, CFP offers a more stimulating academic environment, opportunities for career advancement and greater job satisfaction and support for adoption of incorporation of new pedagogies into their courses and staff development to enhance their professional skills.

CFP is now at the stage where teaching has been conducted for a semester at USC Gympie; the new Sippy Downs Learning Hub is on track to be available for teaching at the beginning of 2014, including for students and staff from Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE; and the School of Nursing and Midwifery has developed a comprehensive new framework for the development of simulation-based learning across its range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs.
Equalising the first-year experience
COR109 expands university-wide

Dr Greg Nash | Program leader, School of Communication

The University of the Sunshine Coast recognises that students need well-developed communication skills for the workplace, personal life and success at university. In 2014 COR109 Communication and Thought will become the first institution-wide course offered to all undergraduate students. The initiative stems from some significant research and reflections on teaching practice that enhances the student first-year experience.

Under the guidance of course coordinator Dr Greg Nash, the focus of COR109 is to develop foundational academic skills and provide a holistic approach that offers strategies and advice on learning about learning and getting the study/work/life balance right.

This is a very exciting time for teaching staff: the majority of staff involved in COR109 actively research in learning and teaching and three refereed papers relating to teaching practice in COR109 were presented at the 2013 International First Year in Higher Education conference in Wellington, New Zealand.

Assessment feedback practice is at the forefront of this research and we are now seeing COR109’s first feedback face-to-face strategy being taken up by two other Australian universities as well as offering the opportunity for cross-institutional research to further improve assessment feedback practices.

Future directions for COR109 research and improving teaching practice are being generated through identifying causes of stress and anxiety in university students. This approach has seen the successful application of a $10,000 exploratory grant into the impact of anxiety caused by public speaking assessments for first-year students and future projects focusing on group-work assessment and the moderation practices of teaching staff.

COR109 prides itself on being student-friendly and focused and has consistently performed well in student feedback on teaching evaluations. This success is evident with feedback such as: COR109 “equipped me with the skills I need to succeed at university”; “It was the only course that told me important information regarding uni assessments that no one else told me”; “I would have failed without it”; “No question was a stupid question”; “All staff involved were always helpful” (SETAC Semester 1, 2013).

With enrolments of more than 2,500 students expected in the coming semesters, COR109 has many challenges ahead, but with the dedicated teaching staff, constant reflection on teaching and research focuses to improve practice, the course has a very bright future that will continue to provide an excellent experience for commencing students at USC.