UWA Education Futures
Vision Statement

Introduction
On September 3rd 2012, the UWA Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Johnson, released a discussion paper, UWA Futures, that inspired staff to look forward to our second century in order to attain our goal of becoming recognised as a top 50 university by 2050. Professor Johnson suggested we need to set new goals that will ensure the University remains relevant and valued in the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century.

The first proposal in the UWA Futures paper was that the University conduct a full review of pedagogic purpose and practice in 2013 with the aim of introducing new pedagogies from the beginning of 2015. To that end, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Professor Alec Cameron, clarified the terms of reference for the UWA Education Futures project.

Terms of Reference
1. That the University develop a vision for student learning and teaching at a future time, say 2018, which is ambitious, yet able to be conceived at this time, and also flexible to admit future developments that are not currently envisioned. To be inclusive of the range of disciplines taught at UWA, it is anticipated that the vision should address principles, for interpretation and implementation at a disciplinary level, rather than a detailed prescription.

While any plans will be bounded by resource constraints, and some will argue that these should be addressed in the first instance, I believe strongly that we should seek to identify our preferred future state, and then seek to approach it most effectively with the resources that we can attract, rather than limiting our vision based on current models of resourcing and practice.

2. That the vision address the dimensions described above, including:
   • the size and structure of classes and cohorts;
   • the mix of online and face-to-face learning;
   • the mix of classroom and external activities (including, but not limited to, internships and exchanges) to develop identified graduate attributes;
   • the best fit between discipline, level of study (undergraduate, postgraduate coursework, and research training), learning goals and pedagogy;
   • the technological and infrastructure requirements;
   • the skills of teaching and support staff;
   • best practice in assessment aligned to student learning outcomes; and
   • models of collaboration in program design and delivery.

3. In developing the vision, evidence-based examples of good approaches to teaching and learning, both currently at UWA and externally (including internationally), will be identified.

4. That the areas be identified which will require substantial and identifiable intervention to transform the current offerings to the identified future state in the identified timeframe.

5. That a plan be developed, with clearly identified projects, priorities and funding requirements, to realize the five-year vision.
Professor Cameron established a working party from the University Teaching and Learning Committee to develop a vision consistent with the above terms of reference. The April 2013 Teaching and Learning Committee meeting was conducted in a workshop style to generate ideas and discussion about what the UWA Education Futures vision might include. This document is the first draft of that vision.

This document includes a description of eight proposed aspects to the UWA Education Futures vision including:

1. Experiential learning
2. Research/teaching nexus
3. Integrated learning technologies
4. Rich campus learning environment
5. Academic citizenship
6. Scholarship of teaching
7. Inspirational, challenging and engaging teaching and learning activities
8. Collaboration in program design and delivery

Each aspect of the vision includes a description for the future with issues included to focus discussion.
Experiential Learning

UWA students' learning is supported by a rich variety of learning experiences that connect them to aspects of the local and global world outside the University. These experiences are relevant to the discipline, involve natural and human constructed environments as well as real-world problem solving. Experiential learning includes a range of activities: excursions, camps, role play, internships, practicums, participation in community programs and placements, learning in other states and in international settings, volunteering, modeling, service learning and non-university personnel contributing to on-campus learning experiences. Experiential learning is well-structured, engaging, well-integrated with other relevant learning activities and enhances student learning.

Issues
1. The real world often changes at a rapid pace. Incorporating experiential learning can help to ground students’ university learning in changing contexts. However, it is challenging to keep the in-class theoretical component of learning relevant to the real world.
2. It is time consuming and difficult to timetable experiential learning experiences that require students to go off campus.
3. It is difficult to establish working relationships with external agencies that provide placements, guest speakers and excursions that contribute to student learning outcomes in appropriate ways.
4. Assessment and moderation of experiential learning is challenging.

Research/Teaching Nexus

Learning and teaching experiences for UWA students are intricately linked with cutting edge research conducted at UWA. Students recognize and value this aspect of their UWA experience; they are aware that research directly informs their learning activities, which includes the ‘doing’ of discipline-based and multidisciplinary research with guidance from their lecturers and tutors. Students discuss and debate research questions, methodologies, findings and implications with experienced researchers. Students generate their own research questions, create research designs, and develop research skills. They conduct simulated and actual experiments, formulate hypotheses, analyse data and draw appropriate conclusions.

Issues
1. There is a growing trend for UWA’s research objectives to divide teaching and research activities (e.g. increasing necessity to have Research Centres and Institutes so that our research remains competitive);
2. The ongoing decline in student funding undermines the capacity of Schools to provide ‘genuine’ research experiences for undergraduate students;
3. There is a possible need to trade-off breadth of undergraduate research experience to ensure depth of experience is maintained;
4. The NC2012 degree structure may necessitate a shift in some aspects of the research experience from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2;
5. Graduate career destinations – there are changing demands of prospective employers (e.g. industry and government)
Integrated Learning Technologies

UWA students’ learning is supported by a wide range of technologies that are seamlessly integrated into the students’ experiences. Students are able to utilize technology so that they have access to all that is needed for their learning at times and locations that are suitable for them. Technologies are used in innovative, engaging and informed ways as a tool to enhance learning. Technology supported learning materials at UWA are of a world-class standard.

Issues
1. Technology changes at a rapid pace. Keeping up-to-date requires continual renewal of hardware, software and teaching materials.
2. There is considerable variability in UWA lecturers’ skills and desire to utilize learning technologies.
3. Students have varying access to learning technologies.
4. Level of support/training for professional and academic staff and students.
5. Adequate IS support at all times to deal with technology problems.
6. Appropriate safeguards for any intellectual property that may be required.
7. Adequate access both on-campus and remotely.

Rich Campus Learning Environment

UWA offers an attractive campus with facilities where students can interact with each other to develop valuable employability and professional interpersonal and team work skills. Opportunities abound for students to develop and demonstrate community citizenship through participation in a range of volunteering and service learning activities. The rich learning environment on the UWA campus allows students to experience personal growth while developing life-long friendships.

Issues
1. There needs to be space to allow for students to meet and work in groups. The University of Sheffield information commons building is a good example http://www.shef.ac.uk/infocommons
2. There needs to be access to volunteering and service learning opportunities.
3. The new Business School building is an example of, given the right physical spaces and facilities, students will spend time on campus.

Academic Citizenship

Teaching and learning practices at UWA engender a community of staff, students and guests that is based on respect for each other and for educational goals, property, policies, rules and regulations. Teaching staff recognise the rights of students to learn and facilitate the learning process via effective, evidence-based teaching strategies.

Teaching and learning practices at UWA encourage students to:
- maintain academic honesty;
- participate actively in learning activities;
- engage in and monitor their own learning and achievement;
- respect the role and expertise of academic staff.
Administrative support ensures that students can make informed choices about their course structure (enrolments etc) and take personal responsibility for their academic progression.

Issues
1. There is a trend for students to view their university experience as a purchased commodity (i.e. see themselves as a paying customer) rather than an active educational experience.
2. There is also a trend for university staff to view students as an income source to support other activities including research.
3. There is potential for a responsibility shift away from teaching support to student self-sufficiency (due to funding shortfalls).

Scholarship of Teaching

Teaching at UWA is evidence-based, that is, it is informed by systematic inquiry into student learning and teaching. Pedagogies used by UWA academic staff are crafted specifically for the discipline-based content they are teaching, engage students and promote student learning and desired outcomes. UWA academic staff conduct systematic inquiry into the learning of their students, participate in forums for dissemination of research findings into teaching and learning and participate in teaching conferences and seminars that promote the scholarship of teaching. UWA academic staff strive to improve their pedagogy utilizing self-reflection, peer review, student feedback and structured professional learning.

Issues
1. Time spent participating in scholarship of teaching takes time away from discipline-based research.
2. Scholarship of teaching activities are not as highly regarded as discipline-based research for purposes of promotion and advancement.
3. Students often are surprised and sometimes disappointed to have to participate in non-passive activities that are not traditional in a university environment such as group work, peer assessment and having to answer probing questions during lectures and tutorials.

Inspirational, Challenging and Engaging Teaching and Learning Activities

Teaching practices at UWA inspire, challenge and engage students. Teaching and learning activities (including assessment) at UWA require students to think and learn at high conceptual levels rather than rote memorization and regurgitation of facts and information. This includes, among other things, applying, analysing, comparing and contrasting, debating, critiquing, transforming and creating. Teaching and learning activities challenge students beyond their current skills, abilities and knowledge, and inspire them to seek wisdom, and be the best learners they can be within their circumstances. Academic staff at UWA are enthusiastic about the topics they teach and engage students in active (as opposed to passive) learning activities. Academic staff at UWA inspire their students to go forth and become critical thinkers and creative leaders in their chosen field.
Issues
1. Many students come to university well entrenched in a “memorize and regurgitate for the exam” culture and find it difficult to adjust to a “thinking” learning culture.
2. Many disciplines require a significant amount of learning and memorization of facts prior to students being able to participate in higher order activities such as problem-solving and critically analyzing.
3. When teaching slightly out-of-field or in cross-disciplinary units, academic staff are often less enthusiastic about the subject matter and may lack confidence to include students in critical and creative learning activities.
4. It is difficult for lecturers to know their students’ current skills, abilities and knowledge and this varies from student to student.

Collaboration in Program Design and Delivery

UWA teaching staff participate in a variety of models of collaboration with teaching staff in research intensive universities nationally and internationally with the aim of delivering world class learning experiences for students. This involves shared on-line facilities, including lectures and other forms of information dissemination, with local learning experiences such as tutorials, laboratory activities and formative and summative assessment to support and develop students’ learning. UWA has identifiable teaching and learning expertise in particular topics/units where the University is a provider of high quality teaching and learning materials to other institutions. In other areas, UWA is a consumer of high quality teaching and learning materials.

Issues
1. These types of collaborations may create efficiencies that would allow more time for research.
2. Some teaching staff may become redundant if the units they normally teach are largely ‘brought in’ from other institutions.
3. Decision making about which courses to develop to ‘provider’ status and those to relegate to ‘consumer’ courses will be challenging and ongoing.
4. How would students’ respond to participating in a unit that is largely prepared and delivered by world experts that are not part of UWA?
5. Design of learning activities and assessment for ‘brought in’ units

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