

Editorial

Vincent Tinto, Distinguished University Professor at Syracuse University, and member of this Journal's Advisory Board, sets the scene for this first issue of Volume 3 of *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* by providing an overview from a North American perspective of the attributes of effective tertiary classrooms with examples. While this issue had no specific theme, it is interesting to see the foci authors have selected when given the freedom to choose. In microcosm, the articles and practice reports could be taken as representing those aspects of the first year experience that are most salient among researcher-practitioners. Of the many submissions, five articles (A) and five practice reports (PR) have been selected. These presentations, like Tinto's, have as their ultimate focus, successful and effective learning experiences for students, which they attempt to achieve in a variety of ways.

Perhaps the most dominant focus was on how best to *enable* student transition through either specially designed programs or the use of specialist personnel in programs. With regard to programs: At a conceptual level, Nthabiseng Ogude and colleagues at the University of Pretoria in South Africa (A) report on their institution-wide journey that led to the development of *The Student Academic Development and Excellence Model*, a faculty-based, student-focussed model for student success at their university. Similarly, Bronwyn Rossingh and Terry Dunbar from Charles Darwin University in the Northern Territory, Australia (A), propose an action research based participant evaluation model designed to improve academic enrichment programs for Australian Indigenous students. At the implementation level: Trae Stewart, based at

the San Marcos campus of Texas State University (A), reports on the impact of involvement in a service-learning curriculum on a select group of first year students, and by inference, the impact on their engagement; Jenny McIntyre and her colleagues from Springfield Campus of the University of Southern Queensland (A) built a *Pathways to Academic Success Program*; Angie Cassar and her colleagues from Victoria University in Melbourne (A) scaffolded learning and embedded academic skills in a *Frameworks for Nursing Practice Program*; and Elizabeth Smyth from the Cairns campus of James Cook University working with Jason Lodge from Griffith University in Brisbane reported on an *Orientation Online* program (PR). With regard to personnel: Jason Lodge explored the impact of a specially trained *Principal Tutor* (A) in an accredited professional course while Geraldine Box and colleagues at Murdoch University in Western Australia investigated the role of networked *First Year Advisors* (PR)—again discipline-specific but, through the network, catering for the whole first year cohort. Carol Cameron and colleagues from the University of Auckland in New Zealand (PR) combine the program and the personnel in their *Targeted Learning Sessions* program that provides easy access, discipline-specific academic support in a library setting and involving course convenors, librarians and student learning personnel.

The majority of the articles and practice reports have multiple authors but what is significant is that in almost every case, the authors are a blend of academic and professional vocations. In just one of the numerous examples, the *Frameworks for Nursing Practice Program* involved nurse educators working with language and learning

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specialists, librarians and staff research developers. An interesting and perhaps unique blending of background expertise in lecturers and students occurs in the John Harrison and Hardy Ernst study at the University of Queensland (PR) which was designed to equip future health science professionals to use “new” media to communicate physiological science to non-professional audiences, and future communication professionals to interpret a technically complex brief, and render it accurately for non-scientific audiences.

Other issues evident in the offerings were:

The reporting of longitudinal data in the Cassar et al. and the Lodge articles, the increasing recognition of the importance of pre-orientation activities (Cassar et al., McIntyre et al.) and indeed, the complete student life cycle (Ogude et al.). Finally, as has been a trend since this journal began, there is again increasing evidence of not only institution-wide activities and academic-professional cooperation—hallmarks of transition pedagogy—but also submissions from geographically diverse locations both within and beyond Australia.

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