

## Editorial

The *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education (Int J FYHE)* explores the transition experience of the first year student but this issue, Volume 6 Issue 1, has several unique characteristics. First, as a publication, it has a significant *transition* feature of its own: This issue is the last under this title and the current journal is to undergo a transformation, re-emerging with a new title and look in time for the inaugural *STARS Conference* in Melbourne, Australia in July 2015. These are exciting times, not only for our editorial team, but also for prospective authors as the new journal will broaden the current First Year focus to that of enhancing students' tertiary experiences across their entire learning journey in all its multiplicity and complexity.

Second, it is also the biggest issue we have published to date having received our largest number of submissions. Consequently, we would like to thank the authors and reviewers for their patience and expertise that has resulted in what we believe is, and will continue to be in its new format, a unique publication.

## Feature

The *Feature* explores the five years of the *Int J FYHE*, capturing the evolution of the publication by summarising the published content through an analysis of the metadata of keywords, disciplines areas and methodologies. This data is synthesised into a simple model of concentric circles where the central focus is the student whose tertiary experience is influenced by increasingly distal learning, teaching, social and institutional-level activities. This represents the emphases reflected by the authors and editors.

## Thank You

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## Articles

Lynne Raw and co-authors from the University of Adelaide, Australia, utilise the transition pedagogy framework in implementing strategies to improve the transition of students into the medical school with positive results for international students. Marion Tower from the University of Queensland and her colleagues at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia also explore the experiences of commencing nursing students and support interventions based on good practice principles for student engagement and support.

The question of academic identity is explored by Kate Wilson from the University of Canberra and colleagues Linda Devereux and Paul Tranter from the University of New South Wales Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra, Australia. The authors ask, "For first year students, to what extent

does their military identity conflict with, or challenge, their identity as students in the civilian academy?" Similarly, Dawn Bennett and colleagues from Curtin University in Western Australia explore the understanding of first-year engineering students' thinking about their competencies, identity, self-efficacy, motivation, and career and identify differences between international and domestic students' perceptions of self and of career competencies, conceivably related to self-esteem.

Fiona Ng and co-authors from the University of Sydney and the Australian Catholic University in Australia detail an alternate pathway program known as the Early Offer Year 12 (E12) scheme, which is a widening participation initiative aimed at increasing participation of students from areas identified by the Australian Government as 'disadvantaged'.

A grading matrix that requires students to reach minimum standards is discussed for assessment in a large first year biology course by Lesley Lluka and Prasad Chunduri from the University of Queensland, Australia. As well as a mechanism for universities to meet tertiary requirements, the matrix has resulted in an increase in student engagement in the discipline. Scaffolded assessment is trialled within an enabling program at the University of Notre Dame at Fremantle, Western Australia with a positive impact on student engagement, retention, attendance and relationships with teaching staff. Authors Keith McNaught and Sophie Benson also note the increase in staff dialogue about teaching and learning and the positive impact on student/staff relationships.

Regina Sliuzas and Kathy Brady from Flinders University in South Australia explore the experience of first year students commencing their studies mid-year and an innovative orientation and transition program known as *Mid Year EXCElerate*. While the program has produced positive results, the authors discuss the implications of these types of activities in a previously under-researched area in FYE.

Danielle Hitch, Susie Macfarlane and Claire Nihill from Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia report on activities undertaken by Australian universities to support academic staff to provide inclusive teaching revealing inconsistent levels of awareness and understanding. Jennifer Clarke and her associates at The University of New England in Armidale, Australia detail the establishment of a

First Year Teaching and Learning Network in a regional university with a strong focus on distance education. The Network has demonstrated that it is possible to have an institution-wide approach to transition flexible enough to accommodate diversity in both student needs and discipline requirements.

## Practice Reports

Marjorie Kibby discusses Hope Theory and utilises the *Adult Hope Scale* pre- and post-semester to derive a "hope score" for a first year film and media cohort at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

First year learning support is explored by Kay Hammond and co-authors at the Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. Targeted Learning Sessions, developed by Cameron, George and Henley (2012) and reported on in this journal, have been replicated in the Unitec context with a particular cohort of students. The results further the work around normalising help-seeking behaviour and eliminating the barriers between support services to increase collaboration between professional and academic staff.

First year work placement strategies are reviewed in three Practice Reports in this issue. The first year operation of the Flinders Law School's First Year Clinic Placement Program is detailed by Tania Leiman, Deborah Ankor and Jocelyn Milne from Flinders University in South Australia. The program inspires students to explore and develop their emerging identity as a legal professional from their very first year in the Law School. The Curtin Coaches program at Curtin University in Perth, Australia sees pre-service teachers in their first year participating as classroom tutors to school-aged students. Saul Karnovsky, Charles Flodin and Susan Beltman provide an overview of the Curtin Coaches Program which offers tutoring services to schools in predominantly low socio-economic areas or where students come from traditionally marginalised groups. Work placement opportunities are also explored in regional Australia. Jessica Biles, Brett Biles and Faye McMillan from Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, Australia discuss the core elements of a first year placement initiative and the outcomes of a pilot project that provides the opportunity for undergraduate Bachelor of Nursing students to work with communities to reduce the health disparities of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities while informing curriculum

design surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Karen Nelson  
*Editor-in-chief*

The University of Sydney's successful Track and Connect Program utilises senior peers to contact those students identified at risk of withdrawal from first year subjects and provides information, encouragement and service referrals at key decision points throughout the semester. Sophia Barnes, Grace Macalpine and Ana Munro detail the program outcomes to date as well as possible considerations and improvements in the future. Attempts to prevent attrition among enrolled nurses undertaking a nursing course at a campus in a low socioeconomic area in Queensland Australia are explored by Sheila Doggrell and Adam Polkinghorne. Engagement strategies included building an online presence with a community website, review lectures and workshops aimed at developing an approach that can be applied in other disciplines and broader areas of the institution.

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## Reference

Cameron, C., George, L., & Henley, M. (2012). All hands on deck: A team approach to preparing year one arts students for their first major assignment. A Practice Report. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*, 3(1), 101-108. doi:10.5204/intjfyhe.v3i1.117

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