29 MARCH 2016

RUN COLLABORATES TO DRIVE STUDENT SUCCESS

Building on extensive work over many years in student retention, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) has committed to further promote student retention and success through the establishment of a Student Success Innovation Cluster. This will provide support for six innovative projects, totalling around $120,000 in combined funding.

The Chair of RUN, Professor Jan Thomas, said that the projects will build on institution-wide efforts to retain students. They will focus specifically on using real-time learning analytics for improving student outcomes, engaging with distance and other students, and enhancing the experience of commencing students.

"Regional students face increased challenges remaining enrolled at university and achieving success. Regional universities have a high proportion of students who come from low SES and regional backgrounds, or who are mature age or studying externally. Many of our students are first in family and have not had equitable opportunities to access higher education, and have variable levels of preparedness for university study. It is essential for regional Australia and for the nation that these students are provided with the learning environments they need to succeed.

More highly skilled professionals are needed in regional Australia," Professor Thomas said.

"The RUN initiative builds on the extensive work and expertise of each of our universities. The results will be shared by all the RUN partners to further boost efforts and outcomes across the network. The projects follow on from our workshop with the U.S Universities Innovation Alliance in November last year on developing, testing and scaling new initiatives to improve student success.

"RUN has established a Student Success Innovation Cluster, driven by the Deputy and Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching group, and experts from data management and student services areas, to oversee the projects," Professor Thomas said.

"This initiative will help further support students at all our network universities and help close the gap in participation rates between the metropolitan areas and the regions."

Details of the projects are given below.

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The projects are:

CQUniversity: Early Alert Student Indicators (EASI) & Moodle Activity Viewer (MAV)
CQ University has developed an Early Alert Student Indicator system which assesses risk factors for student success. This is combined with a Moodle Activity Viewer which can show how students access their Moodle sites, how frequently and which parts. This can be used to 'nudge' students into action and has been shown to improve student engagement and success. This project will be scoped for implementation across the RUN universities.

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Federation University Australia: Unified Communication
As part of a University Council endorsed and funded strategic initiative to improve student retention and success, in 2015 Federation University Australia created a 5-year plan with a number of clear priorities. Alongside priorities focused on reliable and valid data use, the maintenance of a student-centred culture, targeted interventions and high quality learning and teaching, a key priority is to ensure strategic, proactive and continuous communication around student retention and success. As part of this priority, a unified communication project has been developed and this additional RUN funding will accelerate this internal project. The project will identify key messages sent during the student lifecycle; determine appropriate messages, timing, branding and mode of messages; streamline communications to avoid duplication and gaps; benchmark best practice; and share what we have learned with our RUN partners.

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Southern Cross University: Could do better: Engaging with distance education students
Like many of our RUN partners SCU has a high percentage (41% in 2015) of students who study at a distance and may experience more barriers to completing their studies. This project is designed to unpack and improve the 'felt' connection to SCU by identifying what the university can do to improve course satisfaction, teaching quality, unit success and timely completion. In addition strategies for overcoming the barriers and challenges, faced by students studying at a distance, will be developed. A mix of existing data, newly collected survey data and focus groups with distance students will be used to inform the research.

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University of New England: Engage-Succeed-Progress-Complete
UNE's project, Engage – Succeed - Progress – Complete, aims to further develop strategies which will enable UNE students to complete contemporary and challenging degree programs successfully. Using rigorous methodology, the project will go beyond existing

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student surveys to analyse the academic, social, environmental and organizational factors that influence student engagement and thus impact completion. From these findings, the project will develop a comprehensive sequence of system-wide responses designed to improve student retention and completion.

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University of Southern Queensland: Enabling Student Success through an integrated service model
The aim of this project is to explore approaches for designing, developing and implementing an integrated student support service model at the University of Southern Queensland. This project will provide some initial evidence from one Australian regional university that can assist in providing recommendations, strategies and resources in response to the following question: How can Australian regional universities develop an integrated student support service model that is sustainable, accessible, relevant, and impacts student success? The project will involve two inter-connected and inter-related case studies. The first case study will investigate how the newly established integrated service point at USQ Ipswich is being experienced by, and impacts on, the two key stakeholders – the students using the support services, and the staff providing the support services. USQ has in recent years observed an increase in the number of 'late enrolled' students (i.e. students who are not enrolled into their courses before the start of semester). The second case study will explore the USQ Late Enrolments and Admissions Framework initiative that was established in 2016 to help new students navigate through the university's many support and service points and to get enrolled into their courses as quickly and smoothly as possible.

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University of the Sunshine Coast: Starting@USC Toolkit for Students
The Starting@USC Toolkit prompts students to self-assess their expectations of university and their needs for and awareness of the personal and academic assistance available to them. Issued at the point of enrolment, the Toolkit uses simple survey functionality to ask students to consider a series of prompts about the first few weeks of university life. As they work though the Toolkit, students receive immediate as well as report-style feedback based on their individual circumstances. Student responses are weighted and prioritised for individual follow up and support to guide them through the transition period.

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