Australasian Association for Institutional Research

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Monthly e-Newsletter – April, 2010

What's in this edition?

EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Gidday AAIRies. Sorry to be a bit slow off the mark this month – a lot on, and Easter was early this year as well.

Just a reminder to pencil in the dates for the 2010 AAIR Forum which will be held in Geelong, courtesy of a winning group of organisers at Deakin Uni. The dates are:
• 10-12 November, 2010.

The Forum will give us a chance to celebrate AAIR's twenty-first birthday, and puts the conference theme into context:
• Has Institutional Research Come of Age in Australasia?

The Call for Papers will soon be issued from ivory towers across the hemisphere. Let me encourage you to start sketching out the bare bones of your paper now.

There will be more information in coming newsletters. In the meantime, bookmark the conference website to keep up to date:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/

2010 AIR Summer Data Policy Institute Fellowship

The AAIR Executive is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2010 AIR Summer Data Policy Institute (SDPI) Fellowship is Don Johnston from Southern Cross University.

 The SDPI is scheduled for 20-26 June, 2010, in Maryland, USA. Thanks to a grant from the US National Science Foundation (NSF), hotel, meals, and instructional costs are provided for selected Fellows. US travel is covered in full; international travel is covered up to US $700.00.

 The Institute is an intensive, hands-on experience attended by institutional researchers (including doctoral candidates) from across the USA and around the world. Institute participants receive hands-on training from the directors of national surveys and databases. Participants also attend policy seminars led by experts in post-secondary US education policy analysis.

 Don will report on his attendance at the 2010 AAIR Forum. We're all very excited for him and know he will get a lot out of his US trip.

Your contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. For some reason, most everyone who makes a contribution doesn't want me to mention their names. But well done, Anon, whoever you are.

I aim to get the newsletter out 'around' the 5th of the month. But no guarantees – just to prove the point, this month's edition comes to you on the 11th.

Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events. And always keen to include items you think will be of interest to others. Please feel free to contact me. My email address is:
rob@sharpwords.com.au

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

VET Outbound Mobility Forum: Informing a Toolkit of Resources
Yarra Park Room, Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne
8.45am-5.00pm, 6 May 2010

Now you'll have to follow me carefully here, because there are two related but different events on outward mobility, running on consecutive days.

The event I've headlined above is an AEI event focussed on outbound mobility in VET. The Forum is the first public step I guess in producing a suite of resources for VET providers, which will be made available for nix. (Attendance at the Forum is also at no cost to you.) There isn't a program available yet, but the idea of the day is to showcase good practice in the VET sector around outward bound mobility. There's a link on the following page to an invitation to join a Steering Committee charged with developing the suite of resources. Here you go:
http://www.endeavour.deewr.gov.au/outbound_mobility/VET_Outbound_Mobility_Forum_Informing_a_Toolkit_of_Resources.htm

Then, on 7 May, there's the Outbound Mobility Forum put on by Victoria's unis – 9.20am-5.30pm at the Woodward Centre, Melbourne Uni. The details are on the IEAA website – there is a link to the program right down the bottom of the page:
http://www.ieaa.org.au/Events/ShowEvent_IEAA.asp?id=165&page=1

Metadata 2010
University House, Australian National University
26-27 May 2010

The conference theme is 'Sharing data, sharing ideas', and it may be of interest to some AAIRies. The program is still under development, but the call for papers says the conference will 'discuss issues related to metadata management, with particular emphasis on public sector data and metadata. We seek presentations describing innovative work and applications on metadata management issues, specifically management of public sector information involving:
- Legacy systems and cultures
- Dealing with information overload
- Creating true business intelligence
- Practical semantic web applications.'

Here's the good oil:
http://www.metadataaustralia2010.com/

2010 Skills Tasmania Conference
Wrest Point Conference Centre, Hobart
Monday, 21 June

The conference program isn't up yet, but there is a promise that each of Industry Skills Councils will run workshops throughout the day, which is a neat and sensible idea that maybe deserves consideration elsewhere in the country. The conference theme is 'Practical solutions to meet your skill needs'. The opening sentences on the web page below command attention: 'We're not trying to be alarmist but in Tasmania we've hit that point where more people are leaving our workforce than entering it, mainly due to our ageing population. That lack of suitably skilled staff is the major constraint to business growth is well understood and compounds the ageing population crisis.'

So, I guess the message is: Be astute, not alarmed. That's why the focus of the event is on workforce planning:
http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/conference

13th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference 2010
Intercontinental Hotel, Adelaide
27 June - 30 June 2010

The conference theme is billed as 'Aspiration – Access – Achievement'. No program as yet, though the topic list is encouragingly diverse, and includes:
- Academic and professional partnerships to enhance FYHE
- Assessment and FY students
- Innovative technologies for enhancing FY engagement
- Institutional transformation for the FYHE
- Pedagogies for social inclusion in higher education
- Strategies for supporting and widening participation of underrepresented social groups
- Work integrated learning for FY students

Keynotes include: Speakers
- Marcia Devlin from Deakin Uni
- Marnie Hughes-Warrington, PVC Teaching & Learning, at Monash
- Ruth Pickford, Professor, Assessment, Learning & Teaching, at Leeds Metropolitan Uni.

So, here you go:
http://www.fyhe.com.au/

ConnectED2010: 2nd International Conference on Design Education

Sydney (venue to be confirmed)

28 June-1 July 2010

The conference themes include:
- Multidisciplinary education in design
- Design collaboration and working with industry
- Designing sustainable futures
- Learning creativity and design
- E-learning and technology in design education
- Problem/project/studio based learning

The suggested target group is designers and educators in engineering, architecture and design:
http://connected2010.com.au/

HERDSA 2010 International Conference: Reshaping Higher Education

Deakin University

6-9 July 2010

The HERDSA Conference is with us again. Reshaping higher education is the focus, to be interrogated under the simply put key themes of:
- Policy
- Academic practice
- Research
- Leadership
- Student outcomes

There's even a conference launch video linked from the conference home page:
http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2010/index.html

The 12th International Asia Pacific Student Services Association Conference 2010

Queensland University of Technology

6-9 July 2010

Conference theme is 'Supporting | Engaging | Building Capabilities'. That's how it's written – need to explore the potential of that vertical bar as a new punctuation mark. The conference context is a 'focus on partnerships between Student Support Service professionals, academics & students to build more successful student learning outcomes, personal & graduate capabilities & satisfaction with tertiary education experiences.'

There will also be a parallel student conference that runs under the moniker of 'Dare to do it – Building capabilities and global cooperation for a sustainable future.' Details for both events here:
http://www.apssa2010.qut.edu.au/

6th International Conference on Teacher Education

SEAMEO-Innotech, Quezon City, Philippines

July 29 -31, 2010

The conference is titled 'Celebrating diversity and transformative innovations in teacher education'. Read on:
http://www.ictedphilippines.org/

2010 VELG National Conference

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre

5 & 6 August 2010

The Voc Ed Learning Group is running its fourth national conference under the banner: 'Investing in VET = Succeeding in VET'. A supremely practical and contemporary program with sessions such as:
- New AVETMISS requirements, timeframes & what it all means
- Changes to the AQTF Standards - impacts for trainers & assessors
- Why developing an 'assessment mapping matrix' is essential for assessors
- The link between VET & higher education by 2013
- Investing in staff through an enterprise RTO model
- Developing practical & effective RPL tools based on what a competent person actually 'looks like' in the workplace.

Lots of details here:
http://www.velg.com.au/default.asp?PageID=7&n=National+Conference+2D+About

ACEN 2010 National Conference

Curtin University of Technology (Bentley Campus)

29 September-1 October 2010

ACEN is the Australian Collaborative Education Network and its 2010 conference is titled 'Work Integrated Learning (WIL): responding to challenges'. Its focus is on:
- Assessing WIL
- Evaluating Learning Outcomes
- Partnerships
- Social Inclusion
- International needs and opportunities
- Research in WIL.

Dip your toe in:
http://www.acen.edu.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=195&Itemid=108

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Teaching so they get it

What I loved about this lecture is that it brings together in a neat package a whole lot of things we know about learning and teaching, what some of the flaws are in conventional teaching practices and assessment designs, and how we can make it all hum a bit better. The lecturer is Carl Wieman who delivered it late last year at an event held by the Institute for Advanced Studies at UWA.

Wieman is a Nobel Prize Winner who now heads up the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative at the University of British Columbia. And yes, the lecture has a definite lean to the sciences, but no doubt in my mind that it's worth listening to, whatever your discipline.

You can download the lecture here – just be aware that the audio production is at times a little loose, especially the Q&A at the end, but worth persevering:
https://lectopia.uwa.edu.au/lectopia/lectopia.lasso?ut=278&id=116037

More about the Science Education Initiative here:
http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/

2. Standards bearers

I don't know how it came about, but in late January the UK's Higher Education Policy Institute and the Joint Information Systems Committee ran a seminary at the House of Commons which was titled 'Quality and Standards'. It was addressed by Peter Williams, former CEO of the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and Roger Brown from Liverpool Hope University who has been thinking and writing about quality and standards in higher ed for a long time.

I found this transcript of their addresses useful, and even entertaining. As we scale the academic standards heights in Oz, helpful to get a view from a couple of folk who've already clambered the rock face. At one point, Brown remarks: 'I'd like to refer to what I've called Brown's Paradox (but I don't claim originality for it) which is that, as the system expands, the pressures of comparability increase but, by the same token, the ability to ensure it reduces.' I may be a slow learner, but I'm not buying that just yet – the scale in Oz isn't quite what is in Britain. Just nine pages from whoa to go:
http://www.hepi.ac.uk/files/1.Quality%20and%20Standards.pdf

Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange

National Symposium on Student Retention

Mobile, Alabama

November 1-3, 2010

Rosemary Hayes is Executive Director of Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (CSDRE), at the University of Oklahoma. Rosemary has asked us to notify AAiRies of a Call for Proposals and a Cash Prize for Best Institutional Research Paper. So, here we go…

At this year's National Symposium on Student Retention, the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at will award a $1000 cash prize for the paper, in any conference track, which best demonstrates the importance of Institutional Research in student retention efforts. Institutional Researchers were the founders of the CSRDE and continue to serve as our advisors and institutional representatives. Our symposium has a strong emphasis on current research and evidence based strategies.

Abstracts for the Symposium are invited and should be of 200 words and are due April 19, 2010. Final papers are due June 14, 2010. Abstracts will be given a preliminary review. All completed paper submissions will also be peer reviewed for presentation at the symposium and publication in the conference proceedings.

Confirmed speakers for this year's conference are Vincent Tinto, Ph.D., Distinguished University Professor in the School of Education at Syracuse University and Donald Hossler, Ph.D., Executive Director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

More information on Call for Proposals, abstract submission process, and the symposium here:
http://www.ou.edu/csrde/symposium/

3. Standards news

The ALTC's Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project is producing a monthly newsletter, *Disciplines setting standards*. You can get the back issues, and subscribe, here:
http://www.altc.edu.au/standards/newsletter

4. International student engagement

The goodies keep coming issuing from ACER's AUSSE collection. The Research Briefing released in January is *International students' engagement with effective educational practices: a cross-national comparison*. A very useful 7 or 8 pages comparing the international student engagement experience in New Zealand, Australia and the US. Five key findings are noted. Australasian international students 'on average have higher levels of engagement than domestic students.' And that in the context, first, that Australasian international students become more engaged with their unis over time than domestic students, and second, international students are more engaged in the US than they are in the Antipodes. The biggest gap is in staff-student interaction. Ponder this: http://ausse.acer.edu.au/images/docs/AUSSE_Research_Briefing_Vol5.pdf

5. 25 years of the first year experience

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education at Melbourne Uni has just released *The first year experience in Australian universities: findings from 1994 to 2009*. I'm afraid I've only managed the Exec Summary at this stage, but so far, very good. The report draws on a longitudinal dataset – such a wonderful thing.

The Exec Summary lists 30 important findings. If I may select three I've highlighted:
- Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds feel significant pressure from the financial commitment their parents have made, while at the same time are less likely to believe their parents understand what uni is all about.
- One of the standout changes over time is the number of hours students spend online. In 2009, students report spending 6.5 hours online per week for study purposes compared with 4.2 hours in 2004.
- Feedback continues to be an issue. One-third of students do not believe they receive helpful feedback on their progress. Only 26% of first years believe staff take an interest in their progress.

The Exec Summary lists seven areas deserving of national/institutional policy and program attention, including strengthening the interactions between students and academic staff and establishing academic standards for the first year. So basically, you have to read it, don't you? Me too. Here 'tis: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/research/FYE_Report_1994_to_2009.pdf

6. What are we assessing for?

US student engagement guru, George Kuh, co-authored a paper with Stanley Ikenberry for the US National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). NILOA is a joint enterprise between the University of Illinois and Indiana Uni. Its focus is on 'discovering and adopting promising practices in the assessment of college student learning outcomes'. NILOA's website is here: http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/

Back to the paper… It's titled *More than you think, less than we need: learning outcomes assessment in American higher education*, released in October last. The idea is that we'd use learning outcomes assessment to inform us about how to improve the individual learning journey. Yet most student learning outcomes data doesn't get used that way at all. How does it get used? Answers here: http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/PDF/niloafullreportfinal2.pdf

IT ISN'T OVER YET

'Of learning, as of virtue, it may be affirmed, that it is at once honoured and neglected. Whoever forsakes it will for ever look after it with longing, lament the loss which he does not endeavour to repair, and desire the good which he wants resolution to seize and keep. The idler never applauds his own idleness, not does any man repent of the diligence of his youth.

'So many hindrances may obstruct the acquisition of knowledge, that there is little reason for wondering that it is in a few hands. To the greater part of mankind the duties of life are inconsistent with much study, and the hours which they would spent upon letters must be stolen from their occupations and their families. Many suffer themselves to be lured by more spritely and luxurious pleasures from the shades of contemplation, where they find seldom more than a clam delight, such as, though greater than all the others, if its certainty and its duration be reckoned with its power of gratification, is yet easily quitted for some extemporary joy, which the present moment offers, and another perhaps will put out of reach.

'It is the great excellence of learning that it borrows very little from time or place; it is not confined to season or to climate, to cities or to the country, but may be cultivated and enjoyed where no other pleasure can be obtained. But this quality, which constitutes much of its value, is one occasion of neglect; what may be done at all times with equal propriety, is deferred from day to day, till the mind is gradually reconciled to the omission, and the attention is turned to other objects. Thus habitual idleness gains too much power to be conquered, and the soul shrinks from the idea of intellectual labour and intenseness of meditation.

'That those who profess to advance learning sometimes obstruct it, cannot be denied; the continual multiplication of books not only distract choice but disappoint enquiry.'

> - Samuel Johnson, *The Idler*, No 94, 2 October 1760. In *Samuel Johnson: selected essays from The Rambler, Adventurer and Idler*, edited by WJ Bate, 1968, New Haven: Yale University Press.

7. Small change

Just for interest, you might like to know that in 2007 Oklahoma State University started a campaign to raise $1b over five years to fund scholarships, faculty positions, research, programs and facilities. They're over halfway there at $537m. At the public launch of the campaign last month a $100 million donation from T. Boone Pickens was announced, specifically to support scholarships. Seen from Down Under, it's kind of breathtaking, isn't it? The background is here:
http://news.okstate.edu/index.php/news-archives/254-100-million-from-pickens-helps-launch-1-billion-osu-campaign

8. Who, what and where in the UK

Anonymous from north of the Victorian border has spotted a handy list of UK higher ed websites. Maintained by Hefce, there are actually four lists:
- Universities and colleges of higher education
- Further education colleges that provide HE courses directly funded by HEFCE (but no hypelinks here)
- Partners' websites (which lists a range of things from research bodies and L&T outfits to government departments)
- Other higher education resources.

There are organisations listed here that you've never dreamed of:
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_11/

9. The pod takes over the whole entire world

Ever since podcasting came into the world – you know, early this century – I've had a sneaking suspicion that it would grow in value as a learning and teaching technology. Naturally, as I'm committed deeply to my own biases, when I come across something that suggests podcasts are the bee's knees, I soak it up. So I bring you the Steeple project, led by Oxford Uni, the Open University, and Cambridge Uni. I'll let the website speak for itself: 'The vision for the Steeple project is to investigate, develop and document sustainable institutional infrastructure to support university wide educational podcasting. Steeple also hopes to instigate a viable community around scalable, enterprise-level solutions suitable for the UK-HE sector in the areas of automated video/audio capture, video/audio processing, and video/audio delivery ("podcasting").'

Excellent:
http://steeple.oucs.ox.ac.uk/

10. EQUIPAC

AAIRies just keep on keeping on. You can't get them to retire properly. AAIR's newest Life Member, Nick Booth, is a case in point. I thought he was gadding around the world, cocking snoops at those of us still at our desks. Not so. Or on partly so. Nick has released the 2010 version of EQUIPAC, his Windows program that produces equity reports from the standard student statistical files provided to DEEWR by higher ed providers.

As we are now grappling meaningfully with equity, and uncertainly it has to be said, it's probably a good thing Nick is still on the job. Nick tells me that the specs of the original 2005 version of EQUIPAC duplicated the functionality provided by the Equity module of DESTPAC in previous years: it gave reports on Access, Participation, Success, and Retention for ATSI, NESB, female, disabled, rural/isolated, and low SES students. He has now included additional reports on: retention by field of study; retention and success of NESB students by geographical region of birth; and retention and success of overseas students by geographical region of home residence.

There's a User Guide in PDF format, and other details here:
www.nickbooth.id.au/hestu

11. More tweaks, please

The Commonwealth government has funded the Australian National Engineering Taskforce to conduct two studies. The first, according to a media release from the Deputy PM, 'will study demand and supply of engineering skills while the second will research pathways for engineering education in the vocational education and training and university sectors.' All very good. We can't have a nation without an army of tweaks out there joining up all the bits of it. Some details here:
http://www.anet.org.au/news.asp

12. Blended electro-tech

370 Degrees Group may be known to you as a Group Training Organisation with a particular focus on the electro-technology area. It has just opened a brand new skills centre – 50-50 funded by 370 and the Commonwealth – that is purpose built for blended learning, and sports a sustainable design. You can get a tiny glimpse here:
http://www.370degrees.com.au/SkillsCentreOpening.aspx

13. A plan for a tertiary plan

In December last, the Victorian government received the *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan*, prepared by an Expert Panel chaired by Kwong Lee Dow. It's public release came off just last month. Among many things, the role of TAFE in the new tertiary education environment is highlighted, a target of 47% is proposed for 25-34 year olds holding a bachelor degree by 2025, and proposes a big push on quality.

The recommendation that really got me champing at the bit was this one:
*   That some appropriately qualified staff may be identified in schools, TAFE institutes and universities, who could effectively teach students needing special attention and assistance at first or second year undergraduate level. Over time employment arrangements for limited numbers of such 'expert teachers' could allow them to build careers through work in more than one sector. As well, a pilot program could be initiated with an education faculty to prepare a stream of teaching staff with proficiencies to teach from say, year 11 and 12 through to first and second year undergraduate level.

When do we start on that one? Anyway, the report is well worth a long lunch break:
http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/162894/Report-advising-on-the-development-of-the-Victorian-tertiary-education-plan.pdf

14. Skills for jobs in South Aussie

This snuck past me. *Skills for Jobs* is a report of the South Australian Training and Skills Commission which was released last November – and I didn't even know until just a few weeks ago. It sets out, as its sub-title says, 'priorities for developing South Australia's workforce' over a five year period.

The Agenda for Reform it sets out has six main bits:
*   a demand driven system
*   a tertiary system
*   pathways
*   skills for the new economy
*   use of skills and workforce development
*   quality.

If you are slower than even me, let me help you along. You can find the report right here, dear:
http://www.tasc.sa.gov.au/Portals/0/Documents/skillsforjobs/nov09/Skillsforjobs20Nov09.pdf

15. Regional loading, with a TAFE twist

Submissions have now closed to the Issues Paper on the Review of Regional Loading. Submissions haven't appeared on the Review website as yet, unless I'm missing something. But I did read the TAFE Directors of Australia submission, and so can you cos it's on the TDA website.

I was intrigued by the following passage on the first page: '… there is a growing concern that the current intense policy focus on higher education will mask the longer term and more diverse contribution of regional TAFE institutes. To address this, TDA has established a Regional TAFE Advisory Group (RTAG) as a standing committee of the TDA Board and has commenced a project to systematically investigate and report on the scope, concerns and impact of TAFE Institutes in regional Australia. The expected completion date for this project is mid 2010.'

Besides that initiative, the submissions makes out a pretty good case for funding tertiary education in the bush in a way that really promotes pathways, favours partnerships between tertiary providers, and uses solid measures as the basis for funding on performance. Here 'tis:
http://www.tda.edu.au/resources/TDA_Submission_to_DEEWR_Regional_Review_Issues_Paper_20100302.pdf

16. Teaching in VET

John Mitchell and John Ward have produced *The JMA Analytics model of VET capability development: a report on the National Survey of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Practitioner Skills*. (JMA, by the way, stands for John Mitchell and Associates.) The survey was conducted in late 2009, and the report hit the cyberdecks in January.

This report fills a gap. We have the draft national standards for teachers in school education now out for comment. Before this report we didn't have any sense of how teacher capability in VET can be caegorised. (This gap still remains to be filled in higher ed, and the academic standards project won't do it.)

The report uncovers some alarming shortfalls in access to relevant VET professional learning which teachers and RTOs need to jump on. I accessed the report from the JMA website, but couldn't get on to it just now so am directing you to a copy from the VTA website instead:
http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/docs/JMA_Analytics_National_VET_Capability_Development_31_Jan_2010.pdf

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IT IS WRITTEN

'THE BOOK LIKE A FENCE

'It exists only in parts, and never in one place. One needs to imagine it strung out in a line, a single sentence unrolled across the mountains and the plains, the deserts and the seas, the edges of the earth, unfurling, without end, past moon and sun and stars. How did it come to this? Imagine a book with catches like barbs that caught as it grew all earthly marks: algae traces on mangrove trunks; marine work engravings on bark hulls and temple columns; bird prints, rock-pool whorls, tidal stains, tree weepings, dirt shadows, songlines of the restless spheres. To read one must walk and run and swim and fly, but following, always following this one line, now thin, now thick, now clean, now broken, tight, loose, heavy, light, feathered, dotted, smudged, bold and faded, curved and arabesqued, at once spearhead, smoke wisp, whip-crack, milky way, now worm line, now hook, now cuneiform, rune, hieroglyph, symbol, alphabet of the stars – Babel in one voice. An elusive book, no man who set out to read it has ever returned. And so, over the centuries, the legend has grown that language, too, is a fence. But what it is keeping out, or in, only one returning might know.'

> - John Hughes, 2007, 'Things'. In *Someone Else: Fictional Essays*. Artarmon, Australia: Giramondo.

17. Training returns

The NCVER has released *Analysis of private returns to vocational education and training*, a study from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research. It's biggish at 92 pages, but I took all tables on trust and read the text alone.

The key findings are stepped out in the Exec Summary – if you share my IQ point, you might have to read slowly. The enlightenment is worth it. You get a picture of how VET qualifications stack up against each other, against Year 12 completion, and for mature aged students. And if you want the best return, here's the good word: 'Relative to persons who did not complete Year 12, the fields of education that provide the largest effects on earnings and employment outcomes appear to be business, engineering, architecture, building, and automotive.' The report is here:
http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/2221.pdf

18. Not beyond compare

The US Center for Community College Student Engagement has released *Benchmarking & benchmarks: effective practice with entering students*. It makes a pretty clear case for the uses of benchmarking that apply anywhere in education, not only in the US community college sector. I wish I'd stumbled across the report before I recently finished some work on benchmarking.

The report draws on data collected via the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). It offers pen pics of practice at community colleges and it strikes me that as the Aussie VET sector becomes more involved in pathways to higher ed that we might need to start keeping a good list of successful strategies. Stuff like this:

- 'Lone Star College-North Harris (TX) developed its Summer Bridge program for high school graduating seniors who need upper-level developmental courses in writing and/or math. The program enables students to complete developmental courses in an intensive, 15-day program so they can begin college-level courses in the fall, thus facilitating a smooth transition between high school and college. Summer Bridge students – who often are the first in their family to attend college – are recruited by a partnership of counsellors working both at area high schools and the college.'

Read some more:
http://www.ccsse.org/sense/resources/publications/SENSE_Benchmarking_and_Benchmarks_3-29-10.pdf

19. Well done WELL

On the website of the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council you will find Workplace English Language and Literacy Professional Development Guide for RTO. WELL is growing in prominence as we work towards skills deepening in the existing worker market. This Guide strikes me as a valuable resource for trainers operating in any industry, not construction and property alone.

Hyperlinks lead you to downloadable pdf or Word documents. So you can build a manual of templates, case studies and resources, all of which support diagnostic assessments of individual needs in the workplace and identification of good learning and assessment strategies:
http://www.cpsisc.com.au/rtos-test/ta-resources/wellpd

20. Workplace assessment

I haven't read this one yet, and I may be a while getting to it. Nevertheless, the title page caught my eye. The report, prepared for the New Zealand Industry Training Federation Research Network by NZCER, is titled *ITO workplace assessment structures and systems: survey and focus group findings*. The main chapter headings are:
- Assessor backgrounds and recruitment
- Training programmes and ongoing development
- Quality assurance, moderation and assessor regulation.

You can download it here:
http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-1656/n3937-ito-workplace-assessment-structures-and-systems---survey-and-focus-group-findings.pdf

21. Standards for school teachers

Australia's Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers are available for your review and comment until 21 May. The standards identify four levels of professional practice: graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead. Accreditation at each level would be referenced to performance against seven standards:

Domains		
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE	PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT
Standards		
1. Know their students and how they learn	3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	6. Engage in professional learning and reflection
2. Know the content and how to teach it	4. Create and maintain safe, and supportive learning environments	7. Contribute to the school and professional community
	5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	
Descriptors		
Refer to standard at each level of proficiency		

The emphasis isn't only what students need to know and be able to do, like the academic standards project in higher ed. It's as much about what teachers do, referring to the very sturdy research which tells us that if we consider the variables over which schools have (or should have) greatest control, it's the quality of the teaching which has the biggest influence on learning.

The Standards look good. I wonder how they will all translate into remuneration, as they should, but let's get the jurisdictional mish-mash on standards sorted and deal with the pay later. A link to the draft Standards is at the bottom of this page:
http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/npst2010-consultation-call_for_submissions,30532.html

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Think margin! Think margin!

Those words are the last of the lyrics from a rap song performed by Professor Dan Hamermesh in the last of his microeconomic lectures each semester. You can listen to the 4 minute segment about Dan on the BBC's Business Weekly program – take this link and scroll down to Chapter 5:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p006t3vz

If you'd like to know more about the micro rapper, here's his staff page from the Department of Economics at the University of Texas at Austin:
http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/economics/faculty/hamermes

Union rules

I'm not very good at keeping up with my preferred blogs. It was a while since I'd dropped in on one of my favourites – Larvatus Prodeo. So I had a little trawl a week or so ago and look what I found – 'The Last Tirade: A Ballad about NUS National Conference'. If you've ever been close to student politics, as a participant or observer, you'll recognise this as very much in key:
http://larvatusprodeo.net/2010/01/21/the-last-tirade-a-ballad-about-nus-national-conference/

A VC vlogs

A couple of Vice Chancellors have blogs, and Sandra Harding from JCU was among the first as I recall. She's taken the art to a whole new level, converting her musing into a video blog:
http://www.jcu.edu.au/blogs/vc/

LATE MAIL

From across the Tasman, late last week, came a number of items that are likely to be worthy of your time. I say likely, because I haven't delved deeply yet.

In NZ, the funding models for universities and industry training are being adjusted, with hardly time for a quick breath between announcement and action stations. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has released a paper titled *Revised educational performance indicators for SAC funded tertiary education organisations* (SAC being the Student Achievement Component of the funding model). You'll find it here:
http://www.tec.govt.nz/Documents/Reports%20and%20other%20documents/sac-educational-perfromance-indicators-march-2010.pdf

The revised measures will be used from 2010 – that'll be this year. The indicators are:
- Successful course completion measured by EFTS-weighted successful course completion rate.
- Student retention: measured by the Student continuation or completion rate.
- Qualification completion: measured by the EFTS-weighted qualification completion rate.
- Student progression: measured by the Completion progression rate.

There's some background to how all this will work in a Ministerial press release issued on 9 March:
http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/tertiary+tuition+funding+be+linked+performance

But wait. There's more. Like the promised *My universities website* in Oz, NZ is about to publish on the TEC website data 'about the educational performance of universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, wānanga and some private training establishments'. Plans are to publish data about ITOs, too – that's RTOs in Oz-speak:
http://www.tec.govt.nz/About-us/News/Media-releases/Media-release-TEC-to-publish-educational-performance-information/

And another thing. The NZ VET sector is reviewing the number of quals on offer, noting that NZ offers about 6,000 accredited quals, while Finland has just 500. And quick again – around 25% of quals will be gone by mid-year, though these are mostly inactive if I read this press release arights:
http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/targeted+review+qualifications