



The Future of Higher Education: *Context and Questions*

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What is a University – What Does it *Do*?

Where are We Now?



The University of Western Sydney Act 1997

The object of the University is the promotion, within the limits of the University's resources, of scholarship, research, free inquiry, the interaction of research and teaching, and academic excellence.

Enduring, timeless elements of higher education?



The University of Sydney Act 1989

The object of the University is the promotion, within the limits of the University's resources, of scholarship, research, free inquiry, the interaction of research and teaching, and academic excellence.

A consistent set of objects, for NSW at least.



The University of Western Sydney Mission

To be a university of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service to its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.

A contemporary articulation for our University.



Current Role of the University

- Education – from diploma to doctoral level.
- Graduates with knowledge, skills and a wider range of attributes and capabilities.
- Creation, critique and transmission of new knowledge.
- Benefits to individuals, society and the economy.
- Major influence on regional economy, culture and aspirations – linking the region to the world.
- Engagement with regional institutions – public and private.



This is Where We Are – But Where Are We *Going*?



Background

Universities have a long tradition, but our lifetimes have seen great changes, with more to come.

What changes have we seen as individuals?

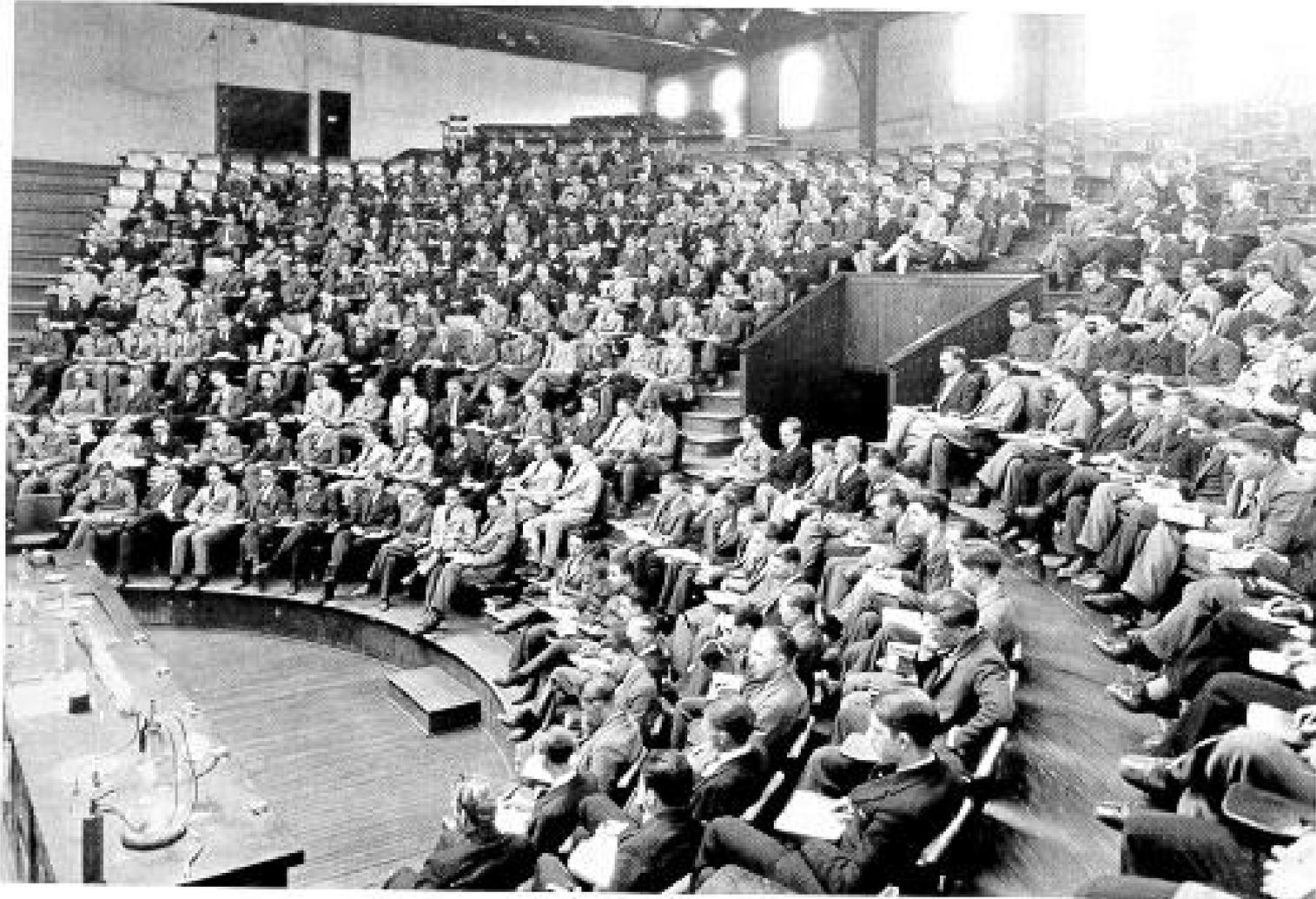
How has this affected our academic work?



From

University of
Western Sydney

Bringing knowledge to life



Source of Figure: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/pshistory/bezilla/towardstate.html>



To





Some Changes In Recent Decades

- Greatly expanded access to higher education.
- Growth in number and size of universities (public and private), with more to come.
- Access to overseas universities (online / face-to-face).
- Growth in number and diversity of students (Bradley Review – at least 40% of 25 to 34-year-olds having bachelor degree or above by 2025; 20% from low-SES).
- Wider range of student backgrounds – cultural, social, educational.
- Wider range of disciplines, professions, research areas.



More Changes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement.
- International education – incoming and outgoing students; massive expansion of overseas institutions.
- Funding for students (HECS) and institutions.
- Regulation, quality assurance and governance.
- Student aspirations, life circumstances, expectations.
- Greater focus on educational pathways and lifelong learning.
- **Educational technology, pedagogy and teaching.**



Pedagogy, Delivery, Technology

- Many of us started with “chalk and talk” but have progressively adopted new educational technologies.
- Greater use of online resources with mobile access (e.g. vUWS online learning and iPads).
- Delivery is a blend of face-to-face and technology supported – depending on the particular subject.
- Students want and value interaction with staff and each other.
- Development of new collaborative learning spaces.
- Staff development and support is crucial.





Pedagogy, Delivery, Technology

- Greater focus on defining and assessing learning outcomes – *what can a graduate do?*
- The ideal is to “assess less and assess better”, but this takes skill and effort.
- Greater collegiality in designing and delivering units and courses – potential tension with staff ownership, innovation and satisfaction.
- Renewed emphasis on engaged and research-informed learning.



Questions at a THETA 2013 Conference

- New technologies provide engaging, interactive and experiential learning that is socially connected and collaborative.
- Learning technologies have the potential to enrich learning experiences and to engage students in new and exciting ways.
- Yet, when we step into the shoes of a 21st century learner, some important considerations will also arise.
- Will innovative approaches to learning really help students to learn?



Role of Technology

- Will virtual worlds replace real worlds?
- Will learning experiences exist outside the cloud?
- Are new technologies just a distraction from learning?
- Will everyone have the same experience, or will some be ‘left behind’, or without access to the required technologies to learn?
- Will open educational resources homogenise a higher education ‘product’, with just one excellent lecturing Professor per topic on a global scale?



And Crucially...

- How will research continue to inform and transform education?
- How will education continue to inform and transform society?



CO2 Tree Chambers at the Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment



Questions for Discussion

1. In the university education of 2020, what will be some of the enduring, timeless elements of a higher education? What do we need to do now to ensure that those important, timeless elements endure?



Questions for Discussion

2. What are the elements that will inevitably change or indeed must change? What are the implications of these potentially disruptive changes for: students, staff, university leaders, academic programs, research strategies, communities, government leaders, employers, physical and digital infrastructure, sector-wide and institutional policies, engagement and collaboration?



Questions for Discussion

3. Consider the implications for:

- academic and professional staff work configurations, workload and professional development;
- changing styles of learning and engagement;
- the technology of the future;
- ways in which UWS will reposition itself for the future;
- the relationship between research and teaching and how that can or should be enhanced;
- distributed learning centres and learning spaces and how they should be designed and developed for the future;
- what key steps do we need to take as an institution to be seen as a leader in future proofing HE?

