WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

VICE CHANCELLOR'S TRANSITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE

CONFIRMED MINUTES

A meeting of the VC'S Transition and Retention Taskforce was held on **Wednesday June 2nd 2021** from **2.00 to 3.30 pm in KW-UG 17** and via **Zoom**

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1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 WELCOME

Simon Bedford (Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming members.

The Chair noted with regret Leanne Yard's departure, and on behalf of the Taskforce thanked her for her effort, high quality work and tremendous contribution to the Taskforce and the broader University.

1.2 ATTENDEES

Simon Bedford, PVC Learning Futures (Chair)
Natalie Bradbury, Director, Student Retention & Success
Michael Burgess, Chief Student Experience Officer
Jo-Anne Chuck, Head, Teaching and Curriculum
Colin Clark, Project Officer, Learning Futures
Lizette Delacy, Director, Data Integrity, Quality & Operations
Lynnae Venaruzzo, Head, Technology-Enabled-Learning
Leanne Yard, Associate Director, Office of Competitive Intelligence & Analysis

1.3 INVITEES

Joel Walker, Director, Support Services

1.4 Apologies

No apologies were received—all members were present.

1.5 Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2021 were accepted

1.6 Action sheet from previous meeting

To assist members with monitoring and controlling the work of the Committee, the current action sheet (incorporating items arising from previous meetings) was discussed.

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2 NEW BUSINESS

2.1 Update on Western Success (Natalie/Michael)

Michael Burgess presented on Western Success at a recent Executive Committee meeting. An engagement roadshow is being planned for coming weeks, in which Learning Futures staff will be invited to participate.

Nicole Brackenreg, formerly of the Student Community Team, has been appointed to be the new manager of Western Success and will be starting the new role on Monday June 7th, taking over from Linda Wilkes after a handover period.

The Western Success team has experienced difficulty in contacting some offshore students. Schools have been requested to assist by passing on any additional contact information they may be holding on students that the Western Success team has been unable to contact. In addition to phone and email, the team will also use alternative channels such as social media apps. Students are being asked standard questions and a 'pulse check' to assess how they are tracking. It was noted that access to the required contact data has been the greatest obstacle.

Action: Colin to invite Nicole Brackenreg to the next meeting to provide an update on Western Success.

2.2 Outreach campaign for students who have lapsed enrolment (Natalie)

The status of students who are "inactive" as indicated in their course enrolment status needs clarification. For example, this may be as a result of enrolment in other courses or units, and thus the status remains in Callista. These students may be offered support if they wish to continue, or lapsed/persuaded to withdraw formally. It was highlighted that this process should be completed before being imported into the new student management system.

The Student Services Hub has been working with the Strategy and Planning Team of Student Experience and Marketing on a campaign plan, and with the SEO Strategic Insights Team to provide data.

The students will be prioritised for contact according to criteria-based tiers, such as having fewer than 40 credit points to complete or GPAs over 4.0. For struggling students, additional support such as transfer to the College may be a suitable progression strategy (refer to item 2.3).

2.3 Paper on reverse retention pathway (NB)

The paper *Supporting Student Retention and Success at WSU: A Reverse Pathway* was tabled by Natalie Bradbury and Joel Walker (see paper).

The proposed 'reverse retention' pathway is primarily intended for first-year students. Identified students at risk would be offered entry into a pathway program at The College, where they would receive additional support and could return to their second year at WSU without impacting progression.

The Taskforce strongly endorsed the proposal and increased integration of mainstream WSU programs with The College.

Some administrative hurdles must be overcome, such as the differences in timetables and the financial implications. It was noted that liaising with School staff such as

Deans, DAPs and ACAs will be necessary.

Action: Natalie and Joel to prepare a paper for the Executive Committee on reverse retention pathways.

2.4   Research questions and institutional operational approach (JC)

A brief literature review titled *Review of Flexible Learning and Retention* on the subject of flexible learning and its relationship with retention was tabled. The literature appears to indicate that flipped/online/virtual learning experiences are beneficial in terms of student satisfaction, academic outcomes and engagement, but activities must be designed for the online environment and be prepared well (see paper).

Little research appears to exist concerning retention at the institutional level or flexibility in terms of timetabling and administrative aspects. Another perspective that is missing from paper is the concern of the shift from direct instruction to active learning. Students need to be cognitively / meta-cognitively prepared for flexible learning and take responsibility for their own learning. The Learning Futures *Learn2Learn* module is intended to address this.

There is also little research in the Hyflex evaluation space, and where studies exist the sample sizes are small. Other areas to consider are perceived student learning styles and how that influences student engagement with their learning.

Technology-Enabled Learning has two projects on flipped learning design patterns, and Learning Futures is developing an ethics application on flexible delivery and retention.

Actions:
Jo to develop some research questions.
Colin to ask David Roach and the new research assistant in TEL whether a separate ethics application (in addition to that approved for TEL) is required.

2.5   School transition & retention actions—workflow for the Taskforce (JC)

In May 2021, schools were requested to complete a template concerning their retention targets (units, courses and themes) as well as the metrics and support required to achieve them. Seven schools had responded as of 2/6/21, but some had not used the requested template or identified appropriate metrics. Nominating metrics is necessary to improve dashboards, design information sources and refer schools to appropriate support.

Action:
Simon to email non-responders with an example of a good template, requesting a response by the 16th June.

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3   Other Business

3.1   In response to feedback, CIA is revising the legends/labels on the online Student Lifecycle graphics and charts. The capability to break down the student retention figures in the stacked bar chart is being added.

Action: Leanne / CIA to send link to the amended dashboard for the next meeting.

3.2   Jo Chuck and Leanne Yard had intended to develop a framework for SFU analysis using Kapiche. It is not clear who will do the Autumn analysis of SFU for autumn.

Action: Jo to write to Christine Crozer regarding who will perform the autumn SFU analysis.

3.3   The next meeting will be on Tuesday 29th June 11.00–12.30.