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 **Tuesday 8th March 2022,** from **3.00 to 5.00 pm** via **Zoom**

1	PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 Welcome

Professor Simon Bedford (Chair) opened the meeting, welcomed members and guests, and acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land.

Attendees

Professor Simon Bedford, PVC Learning Futures (Chair)
Natalie Bradbury, Director, Student Retention & Success
Michael Burgess, Chief Student Experience Officer
Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck, Head of Teaching and Curriculum
Dr Colin Clark, Project Officer, Learning Futures
Jess Gleeson, Director, Data Integrity, Quality & Operations
Lynnae Venaruzzo, Head, Technology-Enabled Learning

1.2 Invitees

Michelle Corbett, Senior Coordinator, Equity and Diversity
Michelle Falconer, Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing
Leanne Yard, Lead Educational Advisor, NPILF Project
Dr. Gavin Smith, Project Officer, Learning Futures

From Edith Cowan University:
Professor Angela Hill, DVC (Education)
Professor Braden Hill, PVC (Equity and Indigenous)
Professor Rowena Harper, Director, Centre for Learning and Teaching
Michelle Rogers, Director, Student Life
Constance Wiebrands, University Librarian
Kathleen Balson, Senior Analyst, Student Success

1.3 Apologies

Dr Caterina Tannous, Director of Undergraduate Health Science & STARS/START Academic Lead

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2022 were accepted without revision.

1.5   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   GENERAL BUSINESS

2.1   *"Inclusion in Action"* (Professor Angela Hill, Professor Braden Hill, Professor Rowena Harper, Michelle Rogers, Constance Wiebrands, Kathleen Balson)

The Edith Cowan University (ECU) team won a National AAUT Program Award for 'Student experience that supports diversity and inclusive practices'. The team was invited to present their project to the Taskforce described by Professor Rowena Harper as "an outstanding student experience that delivers improved outcomes for all students that did not happen by chance". ECU's award for "Inclusion in Action" recognised the proactive efforts that ECU makes to:

- *Leverage data to identify areas for improvement and measure impact*
- *Systematically join up service teams in connection with Schools and academics*
- *Use contemporary research and evidence to inform their approaches*

This led to demonstrated impact in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students, and students from equity groups.

The team's 'joined-up approach' achieved collaboration between sections of the university in pursuit of student experience and academic excellence that supports diversity and inclusive practices. The project ensured it was informed by data and scholarship, while coordinating their actions. They developed a shared vision from discussing data, strategies, and policy in frequent meetings of a leadership group to develop systematic collaboration.

The meetings sought to develop a culture of normalising help-seeking, while removing barriers.

The ECU approach to improving student outcomes involved:

- Systematic collaboration across service teams and schools

- Analysis of data to identify areas for improvement

- Use of contemporary research and evidence

- Two communities of practice: Learning & Teaching Leadership and Student Support & Communications

- Peer-led services spanning every team in the program

Positive outcomes for Indigenous, international, and students from equity groups were demonstrated in using retention and student satisfaction data.

Measures targeted at equity and Indigenous students were integrated with the whole university. Students needing financial support were identified from their enrolment profile, enabling support to be targeted at those who most need it.

Professor Harper, noted that in contrast to many other universities, the use of services is written into ECU's policies on curriculum and assessment, including

learning support, a mandatory post-enrolment language assessment, and an academic integrity module.

Data at ECU are freely available, and the Student Success analysts collaborate with researchers to identify suitable data to support the narrative of the research.

To view the entire presentation, please see this link.

Action: Colin Clark to edit video of the ECU presentation for distribution to interested staff and request a copy of the slides from the team. Team to consider whether Western has similar impact that could constitute a citation program application to AAUT this year.

| 2.2 | **Step to Success update** | **(Natalie Bradbury)** |

The Step to Success Program Team has reconvened several times recently but experienced significant delays in obtaining discontinuation data from the Student Management System (SMS) in time for Term 1 at the College, which in turn has delayed identification of students from calls via WesternNow to join the program. Two students who registered for the program for Term 3 are continuing. Part of 5 of the selection criteria, that was not used last year was using APAs and DAPs to identify potential students. There has been interest from APAs and DAPs in being involved in selection of student candidates, and discussions are continuing on how this can be best managed.

The difficulty with obtaining data from the SMS has now been resolved, so the team can engage with students leaving in week 3 to suggest that they transfer to The College in Term 2.

| 2.3 | **School retention strategies, Senate Education paper (Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck / Dr. Colin Clark)** |

Associate Professor Jo-Anne Chuck shared School transition and retention (T&R) data for commencing students in AUT 2020 and 2021. These data were used for reflection by the Taskforce as they consider where Schools should target their T&R activities for 2022–23.

The themes (15–23 in the T&R Strategy) most commonly reported for engagement in Schools in 2021, were "*Design of the Curriculum"* (cited 25 times by the 10 reporting Schools), "*Comprehensive orientation and transition to higher education study"* (17), "*Early identification of students at risk of discontinuing their studies"* (17), "*Academic learning support"* (11), and *"A sense of connectedness to the institution in which they are studying" (9)*.

The Schools provided evidence of impact, and on reflection with the provided T&R data, there were no obvious clustering of successful strategies. There were discussions on the best way to identify successful strategies (e.g., accessible, and most appropriate metrics) and the need to disseminate good practices to other Schools. It was noted that external influences, such as COVID-19 may have had an impact on the implementation of activities, as do differences between School practices. Problems with dashboards capturing student data were also noted.

It was discussed that it may be useful to target resources at strategic measures, such as STARS coordinators with a specified role and workload, to analyse the needs of each School and recommend more targeted strategies to maximise the effectiveness of T&R initiatives.

Action: Assoc. Prof. Jo-Anne Chuck to prepare a paper for Senate Education Committee outlining the outcomes of Schools' 2021 Transition and Retention

Strategy work and suggested targeted themes and aligned data metrics for 2022-2023.

2.4   Flexible Learning research: Ethics, research question and modes of study (Jo Chuck)

An application for umbrella ethics approval for flexible learning research (the FLEX Program of Research) has been submitted to the WSU Human Ethic Committee but no feedback or response had been received at the time of this meeting.

2.5   Retention data and analysis / needs and requests (Michael Burgess/Natalie Bradbury)

The Student Experience Office has discussed data access and dashboards with Competitive Intelligence and Analysis (CIA). A planning session has been agreed where data needs around retention will be considered.

Another potential development is the US-based Education Advisory Board (EAD), which with 150 other institutions has built the *Navigate* technology platform. SEO staff has seen a presentation and the platform appears to have potential and may replace the Cenote platform used by Western Success and the now defunct SMS Advise module. The platform can be integrated with other systems such as Ellucian or Blackboard. It has sophisticated data analysis tools and other features that would reduce pressure on CIA for data needs by providing end users with the required priority actions for interventions. .

Action: Michael Burgess and SEO staff to continue the investigation of EAB's *Navigate* platform to assess its usefulness to Western.

Action: Taskforce members to be included in a planning session on data and dashboards with SEO and CIA.

2.6   Digital Learning Threshold Standards—Focus on student digital literacy needs (Natalie Bradbury/Lynnae Venaruzzo)

Digital literacy is taught to staff through the Learning Futures Professional Learning program and partnership programs such as Digital U with ITDS. It is hoped that a similar student facing digital literacy program can be developed.

2.7   STARS/START update (Dr Caterina Tannous, Dr Colin Clark)

As Dr Tannous was an apology for this meeting, this item was not discussed.

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3   NEXT MEETING

3.1   The next meeting will be on Wednesday April 13, 2022, from 10:00 to 11:30pm.