The case for centralised support for learning and teaching at universities

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Presentation Outline

• Background to this presentation

• Why we need central learning and teaching (CLT) / academic development units (ADU)

• What can a successful CLT/ADU offer?
Personal background

• Director, Learning and Teaching Centre, Australian Catholic University

• Director, Information Services (Learning and Teaching), Griffith University

• Associate Director, Educational Products and Services, Information Services, Griffith University

• Officer Commanding Army Learning and Training Centre (Brisbane)
Reflecting on my recent journey...

- From: Director, Information Services (Learning and Teaching, Griffith University...  
  – A journey from
  - one institution to another
  - one role to another
  - one type of role to another and
  - a review of the learning and teaching support function!

- To: ...Director, Learning and Teaching Centre, Australian Catholic University
Context

• Time of major transformation and change
  – Exist within a Global Economy
    • Increased international competition
  – Experiencing an Information Revolution
    • Leading us from an Industrial to an Information Age and a Knowledge Economy
  – Rate of technology uptake and transformation
    • eLearning now becoming mLearning..!
Time of challenges and increased expectations:

- Reported change in the student experience
  - Students (school leavers and mature aged) reporting different demands
    - *Your teachers don’t use enough technology in their teaching and, when they do, they don’t use it well enough!*
  - Changes in the way children educated in schools
    - K-12 – Situated and authentic learning experiences, more constructivist approach

- More competitive national Higher Education market place
  - Caps removed
  - ‘Funding per student’ model
  - Increased national competition (traditional and non-traditional providers)
  - Impact of a change of Government (?)
Some points for consideration

• For most of us learning and teaching is our main source of income (80%+?)

• Students now, more than ever before, engage with a whole institution not a faculty or school
  – We need to provide a consistent whole of institution experience across the whole learning and teaching continuum from curriculum design and development to delivery
  – We can no longer be excellent in pockets and woeful in other areas, we have to have a consistent standard set, applied and adhered to across the institution

• In a buyer’s market pressure is to decrease cost but maintain or increase quality
  – …this challenge has to be approached in a deliberate and conscious manner and not left to chance
Some more points for consideration

• More competitive but increasingly regulated/quality assured sector

• We need to ensure quality and minimise risk

• Facing increasing competition from alternative providers and methods of delivery

• This will further impact upon that supply...forcing more competition for a scarcer resource (supply and demand)

— There’s a tsunami coming. [But] I can’t tell you exactly how it’s going to break
  — John Hennessy, President, Stanford University
Why an ADU/CLTs

• Need a coordinated ‘whole of institution’ response
  ...that is grounded in learning and teaching theory
  ...that is based upon the processes of curriculum design/development and delivery
  ...that acknowledges that we are not meeting student learning and teaching experience demands

• We can't meet this challenge and change this fact in an uncoordinated way
What can a successful ADU/CLTs offer?

• A two-way conduit between the executive leadership and the practitioner

• A resource aggregator and a force multiplier

• The information and innovation aggregator

...ensuring that lines of communication and forums for discussion are not left to chance, that discussion is informed, led and the information flow curated
Acknowledgements

• *Benchmarking Performance of Academic Development Units in Australian Universities* – Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD), January 2011

• *A Guide to Support Australian University Teaching and Learning Centres in Strategic Leadership for Teaching and Learning Enhancement* – Australian Learning and Teaching Council, March 2010

• Questions, comments and feedback?

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