THE FUTURE OF LEARNING
Learning2014 – the best of online and on-campus learning

A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY
Making uni work for you

LAWS OF NATURE
The subject proving science and law aren’t worlds apart
THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

PROFESSOR SHIRLEY ALEXANDER
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Teaching, Learning and Equity)

I can think of no other time when there has been as much public discussion about the future of higher education as there is today. For some, traditional higher education is about to be disrupted by free online education. For others, there are questions about the size of the public investment in a system they believe largely results in private benefit. But, as always, debate is a good thing, for at the very least, it causes us to reflect on what we value – in this case, the role of universities in the 21st century.

On one side of the debate is the view that the recent rise in availability of free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) will have a disruptive influence over higher education. It’s now possible for anyone with a smart device (computer or phone) to enrol and participate in a subject from universities such as Stanford and Harvard. The prospect of a free Ivy League education is very attractive to many.

However, these are early days in the world of MOOCs. Statistics coming from these initial experiments reveal attrition rates of around 90 per cent, underlining the difficulties of online learning alone. They also reveal the great majority of MOOC participants already have a formal university-level qualification, perhaps suggesting the need for a higher level of prior tertiary learning.

After much consideration, we believe the future of higher education at UTS lies in the seamless integration of the best of online learning with high quality face-to-face learning experiences. If students can learn something just as well online as they can by sitting in a large lecture theatre, then that’s what they should be able to do.

There are many aspects of courses, however, that can’t be learned online. These require face-to-face contact and our new campus has been designed to maximise opportunities for this kind of learning. We’ve also been embedding capabilities like problem solving, communication skills and inter-cultural competence in the learning of the content of our disciplines. If Australia’s labour market is going to compete on quality, these are the kinds of capabilities our graduates need to have. We are calling this initiative Learning2014.

The articles in this issue provide excellent examples of what Learning2014 is all about. Mel Edwards’ subject (page 9) refers to a ‘flipped learning’ approach, where students engage with subject content (videos and reading articles) before coming to class. They then engage in group problem-solving exercises in class which help them gain a deeper level understanding of the content.

Similarly, science and law students enrolled in the cross-disciplinary subject in Environmental Law (page 16) read cases before coming to class and then participate in group problem-solving activities. By preparing presentations from each different perspective, they assist their peers in gaining a deeper understanding.

After reading this issue I think you will see the experiences students have on-campus at UTS can’t be replicated online. One of my favourite pieces of advice to teachers thinking about their students’ experiences is: “Any university, course, lecture that can be replaced by a MOOC, should be”. At UTS, much of what we do cannot.
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discover, engage, empower, deliver, sustain
“When I was in first year it was a massive shock; it was like, ‘I’m not getting told what I should be doing, I’ve got to figure it out by myself!’”

Five years on and Master of Architecture student Michael Ford is helping other students facing the same uncertainty.

He is just one of the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building’s peer mentors (there are up to 100 mentor positions in the Peer-Tutoring in Architecture program). Though the idea itself isn’t particularly revolutionary, Student Experience Director in the School of Architecture Jo Kinniburgh says, its results are.

“Our students come here never having studied architecture before; most of them with no idea what it really is. They’re committing to a five-year degree with a whole global culture of architecture that valorises overwork and all-night working sessions.”

“So, for us, it’s really important that one: they experience success very early on so they can start to believe they have what it takes, and two: they feel really supported when going through that transition.”

The program, which was first introduced in 2007, operates each semester for three hours a week over 12 weeks.

Kinniburgh says, being a peer tutor “is not for credit – course credit – or for payment, but what we do instead is offer a leadership and professional development program for our exemplary upper-year students.” Continued participation in the program earns each student a certificate of recognition for student leadership, and for those who outperform, a certificate for Recognition for Outstanding Student Leadership or a School of Architecture Award. But the real benefits, says Kinniburgh, are more immediate.

“I think it’s probably of even more benefit to the students who are peer tutors than it is to the students who are helped, but I don’t think the students who are helped would see it that way.”

Current first-year architecture student Nicholas Duggan agrees. “The peer tutors were the perfect antidote to the fear of the unknown during my first semester at uni. They offered great advice on both subject specifics and general uni life as only someone that has recently gone through it can.”

As part of a 2013 UTS Learning and Teaching Grant, Kinniburgh is “in the process of developing feedback mechanisms for the peer tutors so they get verbal and written feedback on the things they are doing really well, and the things they could develop more.”

However; “despite what we tack onto it,” says Kinniburgh, “the experience of peer tutoring itself is possibly the biggest learning curve they’ll have, because what they are doing is exactly what you do in design leadership in practice.

“You’re given a team of people and regardless of how talented or experienced they are or not, you have to extract a project in practice. You have to learn how to inspire people, how to give them confidence to believe in themselves, so they will design at ‘their best level.”

Ford agrees. “It’s definitely helped my leadership skills. I’ve learned how to communicate with people, which is really important because as an architect you’ve got to sell a design to a client; you’ve got to be able to talk to any individual or group.” Additionally, says the aspiring architect, the peer mentoring program “builds a better school environment”.

“It’s collegial – someone who’s learning can learn through someone who’s already gone through the struggle. It goes to a brother and sister level of learning, rather than the parenting level.”

Sometimes, he adds, it just helps “having someone there who can say, ‘Seriously, just calm down it’s ok, it’s fine; you’ll be fine’.”

Jessica Wang
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/International Studies

Photographer: Fiona Livy
Architectural works by: Michael Ford and Phil Nashed

Comment on this article at UTS: NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/08/peer-support
LOST

When journalism and international studies student Alexandra Blucher went to China for a year of in-country study as part of her degree, she experienced much more than delicious food and Facebook withdrawal.

The 2011 experience granted her a job opportunity that kick-started her career and changed the course of her life. After spending two semesters in Kunming, Yunnan in China’s southwest, Blucher knew it wouldn’t be her last visit to the country.

“Before you come here, you have no idea what it is like, especially the rural areas.”

Yunnan, which borders Burma, Laos and Vietnam, is made up of ethnic minority groups. It’s one of the reasons Blucher chose to live in the area. “It’s a fruitful place for conducting research and living in general. As part of my international studies degree, I conducted primary research on charitable giving among the middle class in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province. This involved case studies, media reviews and surveys. I also did assignments on homosexuality in China and on HIV in Yunnan, particularly on its borders with South-East Asia where a lot of drug trafficking takes place.”

But it wasn’t all work. Hitchhiking, tea houses, trekking and indie music gigs also littered Blucher’s 12 months, enhancing her desire to stay in the country she had grown to love.

Though Blucher admits she knew only basic Mandarin before embarking on the trip, she picked up the language quickly through her studies at Yunnan Normal University and day-to-day living. “You take it for granted when you’re at home. When you’re living somewhere where you’re speaking a second language, getting around doing your daily things is just that little bit harder.”

In November 2011, Blucher discovered a radio reporter position was available at China Radio International (CRI), based in Beijing. She went for it, and got it. In February 2012, at the end of her in-country study, Blucher returned home before heading back to China in May, this time not as a student, but as a journalist.

While presenting and reporting on CRI’s flagship new show – The Beijing Hour – was a dream role, Blucher says it wasn’t all smooth sailing. In addition to coping with bouts of homesickness, in the dead of winter, when she was rostered on to work on the 7am edition, the young journalist would wake at 3am and head into work in minus 17 degree Celsius temperatures.

“But the benefits definitely outweigh the negatives,” says Blucher. “It’s such a fascinating society.” During her time at CRI, Blucher has reported on important national issues such as the disparity between urban and rural health and malnutrition in impoverished villages. And, though she’s enjoyed learning more about the culture she loves, the young journalist believes the biggest benefit has been the head start in her career. In June, Blucher returned to Australia to take up a role as a Rural Reporter for ABC Radio.

“My experience working in Beijing, at CRI, definitely put me in good stead for getting the job.

“It’s been a big change – working in one of the largest cities in the world, to then one of the smallest, but I’m really excited. It’s an opportunity I couldn’t pass up.”

Sally Tucker
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)
Photograph supplied by: Alexandra Blucher

AND FOUND)

IN TRANSLATION

Comment on this article at UTS NEWSROOM newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/08/lost-and-found-in-translation
As Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production) student Emily McDaniel prepares to graduate, she shares her experiences of what uni is really like and why she’s excited to be finishing her three-year degree … six years later.

University isn’t what I imagined it to be. During my first tutorial of media arts and production, the class was led through the technical production suites at UTS. We looked through each room with impressive and terribly intimidating hardware, wondering how we would ever be comfortable using such equipment. Little did I know that at that moment I was looking at my habitat for the next five years.

The first time I received my access code for the media production technical suites was a pretty big moment. It gave me the digital key to the fabulous and frustrating world of video and audio editing. From that day onward, I would be found in the sound suites on most days, and nights (often until midnight), obsessing over insignificant details and conducting weird sonic experiments.

Before long I had experienced a long list of technical issues, computer errors and accidentally deleted files. However, despite my numerous failures and countless meltdowns, I persevered and found myself comfortable at the hub of technology. The production suites became a really interesting space to share ideas, work out the tricks of the trade and get help from other students.

I believe the one common denominator all university students share is the desire for change. Often it’s a personal change, but occasionally we seek something bigger than that.

As a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri Nation, in central NSW, I feel my biggest success so far has been what I have been able to share with my community. Learning to be comfortable and confident with media technology has allowed me to work with Aboriginal communities to record and preserve their stories and culture. But my time at UTS has not been straightforward, rather multi-directional. My timeline of tertiary education was not linear years of study followed quickly by countless knocks on the door from prospective employers.

But in the end, it actually worked better for me to have a flexible learning timetable. Throughout the course of my degree I worked part-time as an art educator at the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Art Gallery of NSW, so I reduced my study to two subjects each semester.

At one point I delayed my study for a year to work on the Biennale of Sydney. In retrospect, that was a really important decision and one that I certainly do not regret. I will be finishing my degree this semester. However, I don’t really feel that I am about to enter ‘the work force’, as in many ways, I’ve been a part of it for the last five years.

I have come to realise that to potential employers, experience, whether paid or not, is equally as important as academic transcripts. This past semester I completed one subject whilst working full-time as an assistant curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of NSW.

Graduation will not be a daunting transition for me and I put that down to the level of professional experience I sought in addition to my study. The great thing about university education is that it’s actually made to work with you, not against you.

Another contributing factor in my success has been the support of Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning. Apart from providing me a pathway into university (in fact I wouldn’t be at UTS if it wasn’t for them), Jumbunna and its support staff were great problem shooters and a wonderful source of encouragement and academic support.

University can tend to feel like a sea of unknown faces. What Jumbunna can do for Indigenous students is to introduce you to friendly people and provide a comfortable study space where you have the opportunity to meet other like-minded students. I strongly believe that the best support for students is support that comes from other students. I encourage all Indigenous students to go to Jumbunna, say hello and introduce yourself.

So I come to the end of my three-year degree, six years later. I feel that I am not leaving as a filmmaker, audio engineer or radio producer; but more importantly, as a passionate creative with the practical skills to apply my knowledge.

What I have come to learn is that university is not about passing subjects and turning up to class. It’s about creating and embracing memorable learning experiences. Of course, part of that is meeting the academic criteria, but don’t forget to seek out the possibilities and potential opportunities offered by the university beyond the lecture theatre and tutorials.

Find out what equipment or facilities you have access to and use them. Take the time to ask questions and learn from the tutors, staff and technical support officers. Then, before you know it, you will have built up a level of practical experience that will make the transition to employment less daunting and more exciting.

Emily McDaniel
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production)
Photographer: Josephine Bhim

Comment on this article at
UTS NEWSROOM
In an unassuming office on level 4 of Building 10, the way in which childhood cancer is understood and treated is being revolutionised. The benefits are being felt not only by clinicians and patients, but UTS students as well.

The revolution is all thanks to Director of the Knowledge Infrastructure Laboratory (KIL) in UTS’s Centre for Quantum Computation and Intelligence Systems Dr Paul Kennedy, his colleagues and students. The researcher and academic is combining data mining with his passion for the health and happiness of children with cancer.

“We’re trying to better understand how to treat children who have several cancers: leukemia is one, neuroblastoma is another and rhabdomyosarcoma – a cancer that originates in the cells that develop into skeletal muscle – is the third,” he says.

As part of his work, Kennedy is analysing over 40,000 genetic attributes, including gene activity and DNA sequence variations, identified in tumours from over 200 cancer patients to find trends in the biology that explain how the tumours are growing. The data is then used to predict treatment relapse with an aim to inform the clinician’s decisions during patient management.

"Data and graphs are not necessarily very helpful in directing individual patient treatment, so we need to find out how clinicians make their decisions and what kind of information is useful for them. We want to tailor the predictions to make them actionable for a particular patient."

Kennedy’s colleague Adjunct Professor Dr Daniel Catchpoole is responsible for converting the data into these more actionable items. He says, “I need to basically make this complex information accessible to clinicians and to the real domain; to open up that opportunity for clinicians to actually learn something from all that complex information.”

Catchpoole believes the ability to understand large amounts of complex data is essential in cancer diagnosis. “What we are seeing in the last couple of years is the need, not just the value, but the need for people with understandings of complex data and computational programs.”

It’s an attribute the KIL team are also instilling in their undergraduate, masters and PhD students through guest lectures given by Catchpoole and by allowing students “to work with simplified versions of the datasets, so they get a feel for the complexities and challenges of analysing real-life datasets.”

Catchpoole says, “There is a real need for people with computational skills, who know how to write code and data, who are also learning about the biological domain and health domains, so they can actually talk with each other and learn from each other; get the two things working together.”

One individual combining these skills is Iranian-born PhD student Siamak Tafavogh. After completing his undergraduate and masters degrees at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus, he chose to complete his PhD at UTS because “it’s one of the few universities around the world that offers opportunities in bioinformatics”.

Tafavogh’s research is focused on medical image processing of neuroblastoma tumour tissues. The aim of his research is to enhance the accuracy of diagnosis for the infant cancer of neuroblastoma. He’s using medical image processing tools and computerised classification rules to explore approaches that perform quantitative and qualitative analysis on the tumour tissues.

“This type of research where you mix or combine two different things, especially computers and biology, you cannot find it anywhere else,” says Tafavogh.

Catchpoole agrees. “A lot of people are looking at how to do data mining, but no one that I have seen is doing the sort of stuff we are trying to do.

“We are really focusing on the application side to demonstrate how we can open up this work to a real-world situation, to effect real people.”

Siobhan Kenna
Bachelor of Arts Communication (Journalism)/International Studies
Photographer: Josephine Bhim

Comment on this article at
UTS: NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/08/from-data-to-diagnosis

Siamak Tafavogh, Dr Paul Kennedy, Dr Daniel Catchpoole

In a bid to revolutionise the way subjects with large student numbers are taught, Future Learning Fellow and Business School Senior Lecturer Melissa Edwards is cultivating a groundbreaking concept called 'the flipped classroom'.

Edwards, who coordinates and is part of the team that teaches Integrating Business Perspectives (IBP), is currently prototyping the program in the subject. Edwards' aim is to create an active learning environment where students can more effectively and meaningfully engage with information and their teachers.

"I think the most important thing for enhancing the learning experience through the flipped classroom is helping students develop an awareness of their own capacity to be independent learners," says Edwards. "Rather than having the expectation that you'll be loaded with content when you come into a lecture, we'll be talking to students about how, as an active learner, they use their opportunity at university to make the most of the content they gather, analyse and synthesise."

While many UTS academics have been using the flipped learning concept to some degree, Edwards says it's not yet common practice. That's something she hopes to change. As a part of her project, Edwards is working to create an engaging online platform where students can access more resources, "like a TED-Ed exclusively for UTS students," she explains.

The one-stop-shop will enable students to watch videos, read journal articles and interact with others undertaking a particular subject. And the platform, says Edwards, will be more knowledge-focused than Facebook, YouTube and other social media.

UTS Sessional Academic and IBP tutor Laurence Wainwright is also experimenting with this learning style. "In these classes we break away from the traditional way of doing things and have intensive group activities, speed-friending sessions, guest speakers, TED videos, a strong emphasis on body language and critical thinking."

"We’re shifting to a model where technical knowledge is becoming less important, and soft skills are becoming more important; where co-creation and collaboration are replacing traditional linear ways of solving problems."

But, Edwards says, the move is not without its difficulties. "Some students don’t want to be active learners; it can be ostracising for some. But, we’ve found once they have engaged with it, they come to really love it!"

First-year business student Chris Hubble agrees. "Other tutes feel like they are checking your homework," he says. "I guess some people need that, but my IBP tute is a much more engaging environment."

"I feel as though I really understand the concepts and how they relate to the world. Discussing and workshopping content helps me to engage with the ideas as opposed to just rote learning facts."

Edwards, who is currently in the process of testing and experimentation, hopes the new project can start to be fully implemented across the subject during Spring semester. "I’m excited about the potential for young people to engage in programs in a meaningful way. This will awaken them to their potential."
In the media, much has been made of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. But are impersonal, online classes really the ‘wave of the future’? At UTS, Learning2014 – with its emphasis on group learning, global experience and new technologies – is combining the best of online and on-campus study and providing students with the hard and soft skills they’ll actually need once they graduate.

“Our students are just as likely to be working in Asia or Europe as they are in George Street. We need to prepare them for that,” says Head of the School of Architecture Professor Anthony Burke.

Located within the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, the school offers students a range of international experiences they can take advantage of during their degree. There are three-week study tours to the United States during the summer break (available to up to 25 students across all stages of their degrees), as well as five international travelling studios, each year in the masters program, to cities such as Paris, Berlin, Los Angeles, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

The faculty, says Burke, is all about “organising events around architecture culture making. We get involved, we are very experimental, and are pushing all the boundaries.”

Architecture student Alexander Rizzo agrees. “The School of Architecture’s approach can be described as inclusive, collaborative, flexible and outcome based. Competencies developed through iterative design – like model making and computer coding – as well as the proficient application of representation through computer aided design software and a holistic understanding of the effect on metropolis and affect to the individual, are key focuses facilitating introduction into Sydney’s wider design culture.”

UTS’s formal and informal learning spaces are just as important. “A key point of differentiation from other institutions is that all design students across the faculty share the digital labs,” says Rizzo. “The opportunity to share conversations and ideas across the faculty encourages a culture of interdisciplinary learning and injects a fresh approach into architectural learning and the profession.”

Industry experience is also integral in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Second-year journalism student Margot Kelly says, “UTS has a very practical focus. From day one you’re writing stories, interviewing people and doing real-world journalism. From the very start you’re encouraged to get internships, and I know a lot of other universities don’t push that until maybe third year, by which time UTS students have done five or six.

“I’ve already done one internship at Grainger TV – it’s a documentary production company. Luckily for me, that internship has now turned into a full-time, paid job.”

Kelly says UTS has built an outstanding reputation within the industry for its journalism degrees. “UTS has got all the things here to help you get a job and be really prepared for the workplace.”
Part of that, she says, comes from the fact that many lecturers are contactable outside office hours and resources can be accessed online.

Director of the Communications Law Centre Professor Michael Fraser agrees. “There are outstanding people in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences who are well respected in their industries. “This means students learn about the most recent developments from a leading authority and, when they graduate, their qualifications are well regarded in industry and the wider community.”

A flexible, practical and personal approach to learning is a hallmark of the Faculty of Law.

“Our bachelor’s course is very student focused. The faculty has made a commitment to small groups in our foundation subjects in the law degree, with a maximum of 30 students per class,” says the faculty’s Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) Bronwyn Olliffe.

She says the smaller groups enable students to better know their peers and teachers and for teachers to get to know their students. Many subjects integrate face-to-face classes with online learning, so students are also able to combine their work, study and social lives.

Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Laws student Sophie Chandler concurs. “The course allows flexibility in lecture times, so you can personalise your study or do electives in Summer school. I’ve been able to choose subjects that fit in with my business degree, so I can coordinate my timetable nicely. There are also lots of night classes available, which makes it easy to balance uni with other commitments.

“Meanwhile, the smaller class sizes are great for facilitating discussion, debate and critical thinking about issues, which helps our understanding. With less people the teaching is more personalised and interactive, so we can get more help where we need it.”

The faculty also sets itself apart from other law schools by offering the Brennan Justice and Leadership Program. The voluntary program, which has over 1200 participants, encourages students to go beyond the curriculum by taking part in social justice lectures, discussion groups and voluntary service.

Personalisation of a different kind is taking place in the Faculty of Health. Last June and July, as part of BUILD (UTS’s international leadership development program), 40 Bachelor of Nursing students were granted $2000 to experience nursing in China or Thailand first-hand.

“This trip gives students a first-hand insight into how global economic development shapes health care in the developing world,” says Director of Undergraduate Nursing Aileen Wyllie. “The experience also incorporates group work and opportunities for students to interact.”

Third-year Bachelor of Nursing student Emily Baldwin is all for global experience. “It changes your entire approach to nursing and your appreciation of what we have and the resources available to us. The fact that UTS has created this opportunity for us is just fantastic. Being a registered nurse is a great asset both locally and internationally – registered nurses from Australia can work in many overseas countries and foreign aid organisations or as members of the Australian Defence Force.”

State-of-the-art technologies are also allowing students to experience situations they would otherwise be unlikely to encounter. Clinical simulation labs feature robotic patient simulators that allow students to undertake life-like patient care. And, just like in a hospital, in these labs, group work is a key component.

“As nurses we absolutely cannot work as individuals,” says Baldwin. “We have to work as a team, so group work is really important in enabling us to have a lot of the skills – including communication, active listening, team work, responsibility and accountability – that we’re going to need when we start practising as nurses.”

The latest technologies are also transforming learning in the Faculty of Science. 2014 will herald the opening of the faculty’s new home – the Thomas Street Building. It will include Australia’s first super-lab, equipped with the latest technologies and will enable over 200 students to work in the same space, at the same time.

Professor Les Kirkup says technological advances continually enhance his labs and lectures. “Recently, I’ve been working with first-year students to develop an experiment based on CSIRO’s cutting edge work on organic solar cells. I do a live hook-up in the lecture so the students can actually listen to, talk to, and question the researcher who is in another part of the country. It’s a way to draw students into science and ground-breaking research that’s happening – and to put a face to the research.”

Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Science student Liana Pozza agrees technology is a key component of her degree.

“By using the most current equipment, science students are able to complete a relevant and applicable degree for use in today’s workforce. “It’s really practical in that we get to use the labs every week and in the labs we use the latest technology to answer our scientific questions. We conduct water sampling, soil
Likewise, group work is vital to Pozza who hopes to one day work as an environmental researcher. “We’re all working together to achieve a common goal, so you get a lot of practice working with other people.” Kirkup says group work helps to prepare students for a future in science. “You will be expected to work with people from all sorts of backgrounds and with all sorts of interests and priorities. So the earlier you can get some of that experience, the better.”

Gaining early experience is a hallmark of the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology’s Bachelor of IT (BIT) program. IT student Chris Pike will undertake two, six-month, full-time industry placements during his degree.

“The placements prepare me by exposing me to the real problems businesses face,” he says. “We meet with a wide range of top IT companies, allowing for opportunities of both internships and grad jobs.”

“I recently completed my first six-month internship at CSR – one of the largest manufacturing companies in Australia. I was apprehensive, that after only one semester of uni I wouldn’t quite have the skills needed for this job, but the staff at CSR were really supportive. I ended up learning lots of new skills on the job, much quicker than if I was just studying at uni.”

One of the best parts of the degree though, says Pike, is that “UTS provides you with a strong understanding across a range of IT subjects and then allows you to specialise with its broad choice of majors. I’ve been able to determine where my strengths are and tailor my subject choices to benefit that.”

Dean of the faculty Professor Hung Nguyen is proud of the co-operation within the faculty and with industry. “We collaborate extremely well and we try to do things that are actually useful and beneficial to people.”

“Through the Industry Advisory Network, senior executives of companies come in and work with us once every two months,” says Nguyen.

Yet another example of the faculty’s dedication to practice-based learning and industry engagement is the development of the new Broadway Building. Due to open next year, the building will accommodate the faculty’s 350 staff and 7500 students and is set to feature numerous interactive learning spaces.

Another new building set to open in 2014 is the much-anticipated Frank Gehry-designed, Dr Chau Chak Wing Building.

“OUR GRADUATES GO IN AND HIT THE GROUND RUNNING, AND THE FEEDBACK WE’VE HAD FROM EMPLOYERS IS THAT OUR GRADUATES ARE MUCH MORE EMPLOYABLE.”

Deputy Dean of the UTS Business School Tracy Taylor says the building, named after the Chinese-Australian businessman who donated $20 million in support of the project, will “encapsulate the school’s vision for knowledge, creativity, innovation, boundary crossing and sustainability.”

The same traits are at the heart of the school’s approach to teaching and learning. “We’ve always been known for our practical degrees,” says Taylor. “Our graduates go in and hit the ground running, and the feedback we’ve had employers is that our graduates are much more employable.”

She says, part of their success comes from their close partnerships with Australian and international business and the strong industry experience of academic staff.

Business and law student David Konstantopoulos believes it’s these kinds of experiences that give UTS students an edge. “The industry experience of lecturers means we’re offered a practical approach to the learning experience. “It’s practical because the lecturers and tutors constantly attempt to apply the content material to workplace scenarios, so we’re prepared for life in the workplace. This will hopefully allow for an easier transition into the workplace once I graduate as I will be aware of what skills and behaviours employers want and how to actually apply these skills.”

Eloise Liddy, Angela White and Sarah Carlisle
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)
Photographer (C Pike, L Pozza): Josephine Bhim
Photographer (E Baldwin, M Kelly, D Konstantopoulos): Fiona Luyi
Photographer (A Rizzo): Anna Zhu
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UTS's Faculty of Health is closing the gap on Indigenous health practice by introducing the Aboriginal yarning circle tradition into the classroom and academic practice. Indigenous understanding is integral to preparing graduates for the major disparity associated with Indigenous health in Australia, says Lecturer Claudia Virdun.

According to the 2013 CSIRO Australian Health Review, the burden of chronic disease in the Aboriginal population is two-and-a-half times that of the general population and Indigenous Australians are more likely to experience a reduced quality of life as a direct result of ill health.

With huge challenges inherent in such statistics, the faculty needed a way to ensure non-Indigenous teachers were “culturally competent,” says Virdun. Instigating the traditional storytelling and discussion forum seemed ideal.

“The idea for the yarning circles came from our Indigenous members of staff who suggested we needed a safe space where people could talk about any fears, any questions in a very open environment,” she explains.

“We’re able to bring up any questions or concerns in a forum where we have Indigenous experts who can guide non-Indigenous staff to an improved understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

“Ongoing colonisation and racism are vital determinants impacting the health of Indigenous people,” adds Virdun. “We’re very committed to supporting all of our staff and students to develop knowledge and skills that will enable meaningful engagement with Indigenous people.”

The first monthly yarning circle for teaching staff took place in May this year. Fourteen staff attended, asking questions about how to ensure integration of Indigenous information in a culturally safe and relevant way. The second yarning circle held in June focused on increasing awareness of Aboriginal identity and what that really means.

Yarning circles have also been introduced as a method of working with students. Lecturer and Student Yarning Circle Coordinator for the Faculty of Health Angela Phillips says, “The best way to compare it is to the knights of the round table. Everyone is coming together on equal footing and everyone shares knowledge.”

Phillips says the faculty is “leading in a lot of ways” – they’re the first to introduce yarning circles into UTS curriculum, and to encourage Indigenous academics outside the university to join these conversations too.

“In the Contemporary Indigenous Health and Wellbeing subject for undergraduate nurses, instead of having your normal lectures and tutorials, we call them yarning circles.”

She adds, “Not only are we creating a safe environment for the students to learn in, but also creating a safe environment for the teachers to teach here.

“In a yarning circle, there’s no one person who is more knowledgeable or more senior than another. So we’re actually role modeling what is occurring in Indigenous communities.”

Virdun agrees. “This is a valuable and important lesson that students and staff are working together to achieve. We want all our graduates to leave UTS with an understanding of cultural competency and how this contributes to the physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.”
Blake Library has been open for two hours, yet students still straggle through the plastic barriers, equipped with books, mobile devices and a shot of coffee. There are plenty of seats and the silence of the upper floors is punctuated with the rustling of flipping pages and fingers typing on keyboards.

“Most people have their lectures and tutorials in the morning, so they will come to the library in the afternoon to get in a good study session.”

Chantell Basiacik, UTS Library Student Rover, Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Media Arts and Production)/International Studies

11am

Students are already hitting the bean bags under the stairs on level 2, desperate for sleep or a short rest. Some opt to study, computers on their laps, strangely awake in a sea of sleepy, glazed faces.

“I wanted to sit somewhere that would be comfortable and quiet; the bean bags are great. I used to go to the Tower to sleep, but I might just come back here more often.”

Kate McEwen, Bachelor of Nursing

12pm

The UTS Knit Wits set up a knitting club near the library foyer. This weekly knitting club, founded three years ago, is comprised of UTS students and staff who knit individual woolen patches that are sewn into blankets. Many of these blankets are then donated to providing warm blankets to wrap off hypothermia for those students who are too cold to buy their own. Wrap with Love—a charity dedicated to providing warm blankets to ward off hypothermia for those who cannot afford to buy their own. “They end up all over the world. Some people bring in a bundle of patches and others knit them here. Last year, we did 18 blankets.”

Rosemary Wilson, Lending Services Assistant and Wrap with Love Coordinator

1pm

Not all library users are located on campus. “On a typically busy day, between noon and 1pm, nearly 1000 people will access the library’s website, but only 33 per cent of those are on campus. We have ‘flipped our services’ so that two-thirds of the students remotely access resources – like books, journals, databases, YouTube videos and librarians – while the rest come into the library to use spaces for group collaboration and individual study. Even so, more than a million people come through our doors each year.”

Sally Scholfield, UTS Library Director of Education and Research Services Unit
The library is rapidly filling; seats and computers are scarce. “It’s always hard to find somewhere to sit, especially towards the end of semester. It’s frustrating when someone puts their bag in front of a computer, but they’re not even there.”

Leonora Haron, Bachelor of Midwifery

2pm

The UTS City campus’s Blake Library may have been around since 1984, but in today’s digital age it has transformed from a place of quiet, solitary study into a hub of research, group work and even sleep.

3pm

For those who are smart enough to book ahead, the group study rooms are a welcome respite from the buzz of noise on the lower floors. Tucked away on levels 3, 4 and 5, they offer insulated spaces for group work and private study.

“You get to talk and discuss and you don’t get into trouble for talking. But rooms are always fully booked. We wish there were more!”

Charlotte Yau, Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Business

4pm

The library is still crammed with students wandering between the shelves, looking for a space to study. Some opt for the small, comfy chairs that are scattered around level 3. In this part of the library, students are still in a ‘talking zone’, but they are saved from the buzz of the library.

“It’s a lot more comfortable and this way we can spread out our notes and not be confined into a small space at the desk. And also, sitting on those hard-baked chairs for a long time can be really annoying. You can stretch your legs here.”

Esra Capa, Bachelor of Construction Project Management

Rachel Worsley
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)/Bachelor of Laws
Photographer (library stacks, bean bag): Josephine Bhim
Photographer (computer study area): Anna Zhu
Photographer (Learning Commons, Special Collections Room, Create Space Room): Fiora Sacco

5pm

The upper floors remain the best place for individual quiet study. On level 4, the silver desks are filled with people; pencil cases, laptops and even午餐boxes. It’s so quiet you could hear a pen drop on the carpet. “Downstairs it’s a bit noisier and it’s better to get a seat here. Sometimes, if I’m stressing, it helps.”

Chelsea Delahunty, Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Social Inquiry)/Bachelor of Laws

6pm

As evening draws near, many students head home before darkness falls and the cold starts to bite. The atmosphere is like 10am again, although some are still huddled over their books seemingly glued to their seats since the library opened, and probably will be until it closes at 10pm.

“It’s more productive use of time at night. If I stayed at home, I would just be on Facebook. But in the library, there are other people working around you and it’s completely silent.”

Erin Mangan, Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts in International Studies

Comment on this article at UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/08/a-day-in-the-life
**LAWS OF NATURE**

Scientists and lawyers are worlds apart, right? Think again. At UTS, the cross-disciplinary subject Environmental Law is taught to both law and science students. Senior Lecturer Dr Sophie Riley and Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Laws student Jessica Tanna explain how the subject is helping to equip students, on both sides, with a deeper understanding of the issues involved.

**DR SOPHIE RILEY**

I always learn something from every class, and as a teacher, it’s very rewarding. When I’m teaching environmental law to my law students, I love it because we get students from so many different backgrounds; they’re able to bring some really practical elements to class discussion. This year, for example, we’ve got someone who works for the Environmental Defenders Office and we have one student who is in charge of looking at waste management for a large company, so we all learn from each other.

The challenge with my science students is to get them interested in law. I give them cases that show how important the science is to the way these cases get to court and then to show them how the law interprets the science within the boundaries of the legislation and law.

In Environmental Law, we’re trying something where science students are presenting material that explains the science in terminology that even a lawyer can understand, and the law students are explaining the law so the science students can understand it. What I’m doing is actually posting the presentations on UTSOnline for the other students’ subject. So they don’t formally communicate with each other but their material is available to the other. I think this is important because in the real world, as a lawyer, you’re going to be talking to clients who probably don’t want to hear what you’re saying and scientists are going to be faced maybe with the same issues, so it’s important that you’re able to communicate really complex ideas in simple terms.

The content for both classes is roughly the same, but I’ll tweak the course to suit the students; we try to think about what they need to know. When we’re teaching law to the science students, we usually start off with an introductory class because they won’t know even the basic principles – what we mean by common law, statute law and the impact of the Australian Constitution on environmental law. Whereas, the law students already understand all these things.

The assessments are very different. The science students are given a short mid-semester quiz. They are short definitions of legal terms to make sure they do understand the basics. Then they do a presentation in class and there’s also what we call a hypothetical they have to answer. The law students have got separate class participation, a presentation, a reflective journal on newspaper articles and a research essay. So, the law students are expected to be much more analytical in what they do.

I think both science and law students are interested in the same sort of things – the lawyers that are doing the subject are interested in protecting the environment, and so are the scientists. Sometimes I think maybe they come away from the subject a bit disappointed because they realise, at the end of it, it’s about regulators having enough information to make policy decisions. Sometimes the environment is the second thing they think about; economics often comes first.
Teaching a law-based subject to a group of science students isn’t easy, but Sophie builds on the knowledge we have about the environment to help us understand the importance of environmental law.

For example, when we present cases on environmental law to the class, we have a heavy focus on the science behind the issues, whereas the law students have a stronger focus on the legal issues. Sophie then shares our presentations with the law students and their presentations with us. So, students from each discipline gain a deeper understanding.

The most interesting part of the subject is the fact that the class is taught with an emphasis on student participation. We get into groups and discuss hypothetical problems, present cases and environmental issues and concepts to the class, as well as ask and answer questions that spark discussions amongst us all. It allows us to share our ideas and perspectives with one another and provides an in-depth understanding as to why environmental science is an integral aspect of environmental law. Quite simply, scientific evidence of the importance of the environment enables us to understand the value of the environment and why conservation is so important.

It encourages a broader style of thinking in terms of seeing the big picture. This kind of discussion-based learning makes it easier to understand how a number of different concepts, such as sustainable development and intergenerational equity, can all be applied to the same issues – from biodiversity protection to climate change.

From being in a class that encourages participation and discussion-based learning, I feel as though I have become more comfortable in expressing my ideas and opinions with fellow classmates and with the teachers. And I’ve made some great friends in the subject too.

After I graduate in 2015, I hope to work in the field of environmental law or environmental consultancy. I know this subject will help me once I get into the workforce because I have learned how various pieces of legislation, like the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, are used and applied to a number of different environmental issues such as threatened species protection, wetland conservation and protecting both national and world heritage areas.

Jocelyn Bechara
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)
Photographer: Josephine Bhim
The diversity of Latino cultures and the richness of the Spanish language have an undeniably captivating quality. For Associate Professor Paul Allatson, however, his interests in Latino cultures in the USA lie more specifically in the Spanish-English linguistic hybrid, known as ‘Spanglish’.

After completing undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in history, Indonesian studies, art theory and practice, and English, Allatson completed his PhD at the University of NSW in US Latino cultural and literary studies.

His interest in the fusion of English and Spanish dialects developed while completing his English degree, during which he also learned Spanish. Allatson was introduced to a number of texts composed by Latino writers living in the United States and was fascinated by their border-crossing qualities as they “code-switched”, or moved between English and Spanish.

“They were doing really interesting things with language, blurring English and Spanish, suggesting a completely different vision of what the USA means for people of Mexican and/or Latin American origin,” explains Allatson. “Encountering texts that switched codes just opened up a new world I previously hadn’t really taken much notice of.

“The first Spanglish expression I came across was ‘I’m going to vacumear la carpeta’ which means ‘I’m going to vacuum the carpet’. But, in Spanish, ‘la carpeta’ really means ‘folder’ and ‘vacumear’ doesn’t exist. It’s a case of someone inventing a verb out of an English word and then also inventing a noun,” says Allatson.

“The rules of Spanglish still basically follow the grammatical organisation of either English or Spanish, or both in combination, so it becomes quite complex. Speakers of Spanish for example may use an English word and modify it, thereby making up all sorts of odd words in a kind of new language, and vice versa. It’s a very common phenomenon in US popular culture and music, especially Latino hip hop.”

It’s an experience students learn first-hand in Allatson’s colourful lecture for the subject Text and Context. Far from a staid, stand-and-speak type of lecture, Allatson has his students recite a performance poem by the famous Mexican-American performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. “They’re performing in Spanish and English and they understand it somehow. They understand that it is in fact possible to mix English and Spanish together and generate meaning.”

While it’s easy for monolingual speakers to feel detached from this phenomenon, Allatson says language interactions are evident in Australia as well. “There’s been a long history of borrowing and adapting English words among immigrant communities; moreover, in effect we are all also constantly border-crossing whenever we shift between different registers of a language.

“Spanglish in the USA is just one example of a new language forming before our eyes.”

Arabella Peterson
Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Journalism)
Photographer: Josephine Bhim

Comment on this article at
UTS:NEWSROOM
newsroom.uts.edu.au/news/2013/08/speaking-spanglish
Gouri Das rushes around the library, piles of paperwork in one hand, a telephone to her ear in the other. Her eyes dart around the room; her whisper-soft voice betrays her intensity. She commands attention.

The 18-year-old’s no-nonsense attitude and aspiration for success gives her little time for interaction outside of studying a Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Laws degree. Her solution? The Legal Method and Research study group.

Das created the private Facebook group in March. It’s a collaborative space where members – fellow students Das invites to join – can share study notes, exchange ideas, critique each other’s work and socialise.

Unlike traditional face-to-face study groups, says Das, “Facebook adds dynamism to the situation.

“It’s also the most advantageous method of communication, as people often have conflicting timetables. The beauty of Facebook is that everyone is susceptible to checking it multiple times during the day.”

Though the social media site is often denigrated as a great source of procrastination and an avenue for ‘cyber stalking’, Das believes it has its educational advantages, including being easier to use than other online education forums.

"With Facebook, one can sign in for an indefinite period of time.

"It also allows for candidness. On the online forum one has to read over various comments in great detail, lest they be criticised for any flaws – the study of law is dreadfully particular. But in our study group, genuine interaction is actively encouraged.”

Fellow Facebook user and Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Arts in International Studies student Erin Mangan agrees. "It's very efficient, and accessible to everyone, so we know who is involved and when and where we're meeting – online. Plus, at any time during the day or night, we get to share our completed case notes, so everyone else can read them and provide constructive criticism.”

While Das admits she prefers solitary study, "I know that if I was devoid of Facebook, then I wouldn’t account for other perspectives. My rational and logical train of thought is very one directional and I don’t account for divergent perspectives – which is a requisite in the study of law.”

The aspiring lawyer is also the first to admit the collaborative approach to understanding law has shaped the way she views her classmates.

"In the classroom and lecture context, one doesn’t get to learn personalities and individual idiosyncrasies of a person, but on Facebook one learns their mannerisms, their likes and dislikes, their writing styles, and their mechanisms of thought. It’s very interesting.”

Krystal Ford
Bachelor of Arts in Communication | Journalism
Photographer: Josephine Bhim
The UTS City Campus Master Plan is a $1 billion investment in the university's campus that will transform the way we teach, learn and research at UTS.

Next year, three buildings – the Broadway, Thomas Street and Dr Chau Chak Wing Buildings – are due to open. The new buildings will increase the number of collaborative classes integrating face-to-face learning with the latest technologies.

Also set to transform Ultimo is The Goods Line – a 500 meter long elevated public park that will physically connect Central Station through to Darling Harbour and will run right behind UTS's City campus.

"The Goods Line will create a destination urban space and provide a collective platform for the surrounding neighbours – including UTS, the ABC, Sydney Institute of TAFE and the Powerhouse Museum – to come together and positively transform Sydney’s emerging creative quarter in Ultimo," says Lead Designer and Director of ASPECT Studios Sacha Coles.

Image supplied by: ASPECT Studios