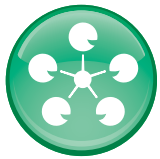


## Domain 5



## Networking

Scholars undertook activities and engaged in relationships that broadened their professional networks across the multiple levels of higher education. These activities and relationships enabled the scholars to engage with a wider group of senior leaders and explore the potential for leadership opportunities.

### Project Findings

In reviewing and evaluating the activities and experiences that comprise this domain, scholars reported that:

- Having contact with someone senior in the institutional hierarchy was extremely valuable and provided:
  - a broader cultural perspective of leadership across the institution and sector;
  - legitimacy within the faculty for the project;
  - an awareness of the cultural status of the sector (e.g. University agenda, DEEWR agenda, funding opportunities and requirements); and
  - greater opportunities for leadership roles and responsibilities outside the current sphere of practice.

*“It [contact with a senior leader] gives you credibility, it sometimes helps you get things through, it gives you a bit more smarts about the way to go about things.” (2007 Scholar)*

*“It is valuable to have contact with senior leaders because they’re the key players in change and if you don’t have them on board you are not going to go anywhere.” (2008 Scholar)*

*“They [senior leaders] have much more experience and I found their advice very useful.” (2008 Scholar)*

- Presenting at institutional and National forums (e.g. national roundtable, conferences) generates opportunities for networking.
- Implementing the faculty-based project and organising and facilitating the roundtable instigated opportunities for networking and enhanced scholar’s confidence to pursue and engage in external networks.

*“The senior leader now knows who we are and that’s always a good thing. He also knows we are committed to promoting teaching and learning across the institution and will be more likely to consider us for roles and responsibilities within the university in relation to this.” (2007 Scholar)*



# Domain 5

## Underpinning Theories and their Practical Application in the Project

The concept of communities of practice underpin this domain. The networking activities that occurred in the project transpired within communities of practice. The networking activities focused on: enabling individuals to share understandings, knowledge and responsibilities (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and encouraging the engagement of all members of the community (Carew, Lefoe, Bell & Armour, 2008).

Networks are important in communities of practice because they broaden the scope of experience and practice that can be considered in developing shared knowledge and understandings.

Networking activities that scholars engaged in included:

- meetings with: a strategic leadership coach, institutional leaders, senior colleagues, and senior academics from other institutions;
- presentations at institutional and national forums including the assessment roundtable; and
- development of relationships with key attendees at roundtable, exploring opportunities for future collaborations.



## Characteristics of Good Practice Drawn from the Interviews with Scholars

1. Invite key people to the roundtable who will be able to provide scholars with constructive feedback on their faculty-based projects.

*“The opportunity to invite and meet important people from higher education and to be able to target people we wanted to invite in a sense the bigwigs in assessment and higher education to the roundtable was great.” (2008 Scholar)*

2. Scholars identify and establish relationships with leaders in the field they are investigating in their faculty-based project.
3. Scholars forge relationships with key leaders in their institution.
4. Regularly communicate developments in the faculty-based project to leaders in the faculty and institution.
5. Actively source and present at relevant institutional and national forums.

## Key Challenges

Identification of appropriate and beneficial networks (e.g. conferences, leaders, departments, units) to establish and foster relationships with.

Scholar's confidence to approach and network with key and strategic leaders.

## Future Considerations

Devote time as a group to brainstorm a list of key leaders to develop relationships with, and strategic forums at which to engage and present. Initially these people and opportunities may be identified through a literature review.

Networking opportunities arise most commonly at conferences and in professional forums (e.g. work visits, sector meetings). Networking provides an opportunity for cross disciplinary associations that will advance learning and teaching. As such it would be beneficial to provide financial support for attendance at conferences and professional forums.

A more detailed overview of the presentations at the national roundtables and resources developed in relation to networking are available at:

[www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership](http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership)

## Associated Project Activities

**Activity 4:** National Roundtable: Presentation

**Activity 5:** Mentoring and Coaching

**Activity 7:** Cross-Faculty, Institutional and Cross-Institutional Communication and Collaboration

## References

Carew, A., Lefoe, G., Bell, M. & Armour, L. (2008). Elastic practice in academic developers, *International Journal for Academic Development*, 51 - 66.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge [England]; New York.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Additional information about communities of practice and an annotated bibliography is available from the GREEN Website at: [www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership](http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership)