First-Year Experience “Think Tank”

On Thursday 12\textsuperscript{th} August, the UOW First-Year Experience (FYE) Working Party hosted a morning “Think Tank” event which drew 58 participants from across the UOW community, including all faculties, ASD, ARD, Careers Service, UniAdvice, WCA, URAC, and the Library. The “Think Tank” was structured to encourage participants to provide insights, experiences, and advice with the aim of capturing what we already do, or what we could improve, so as to provide a first-year experience that ensures our first year student cohorts are sufficiently familiar with what services are available to them and what is expected of them.

“Think Tank” participants were asked to consider the four themes of:

- **“Choices”** (what support do we offer in regard to ensuring students are pursuing the most appropriate degree/subject to fulfil their expectations, how can those services be improved, how do we ensure all students are aware of the services available to them);
- **“Co-Curricular”** (ensuring we capture and market to all students what extra-curricular activities are available to them at UOW, and how those activities will enhance their university experience and beyond);
- **“Curriculum”** (including initiating procedures to map how course curriculum provides students with all aspects of the UOW graduate attributes); and
- **“1st year Coordinator check list”** (a benchmarking exercise to initiate faculty-based check lists to ensure our first-year coordinators are equipped with, or have the resources available to them, to facilitate a positive first-year experience for students).

One of the “Think Tank” sessions involved a “Student Panel” where five UOW students, at various stages of their university degrees, presented stories of their own first year experience at UOW: two of the students had begun study at satellite campuses before moving to the main campus therefore their first-year experience had been two-fold; another student had deferred study by week 3 of her 2009 first-year, returning in 2010 with insight and fortitude to continue her degree; a student from China had come to UOW to pursue his doctoral research thereby experiencing a transition from full-time employment to returning to study, leaving his family behind in China, finding accommodation, and experiencing a steep learning curve with his command of the English language.
FYE “Think Tank” Groups

Since holding the “Think Tank” event, the four themed Working Groups, i.e. “Choices”, “Co-curricular”, “Curriculum”, and “1st Year Coordinators” have all had at least one meeting to deliberate on ideas already put forward and to refine strategies for improvement. The four groups have been asked to provide suggested Actions and Recommendations by 1st November 2010. Those Actions/Recommendations will be forwarded to the First Year Experience Working Party for consideration and implementation.

The membership of the Working Groups is as follows:

“Choices” group: Christine Dimmer, Martin Smith, June Aspley
“Co-curricular” group: Melissa Zaccagnini, Felix Lanceley, Fran Walder, Lauren Miller, Brett Lovegrove, Sally Rogan, Jenny Walsh, Melissa Erray
“Curriculum” group: Margaret Wallace, Tracey Kuit, Bronwyn James, Lynda Cooper, Holly Zhu, Lisa Carrington, Justin Cain-Bloxsome, Chris Brewer
“1st year Coordinators” group: Glennys O’Brien, Edwina Ellicott, Jane Warren, Peter Thomas, Tricia Forrester
“FOCUS ON 1st YEAR @ UOW”
A show-case of good practice

Thursday 4th November 2010
2.00 – 4.00 pm
Lecture Theatre 20.5

INVITATION

Are you a Co-ordinator of a 1st year Subject at UOW? Or, are you a Co-ordinator of an Undergraduate course, or a Faculty Co-ordinator?

If you do have a Co-ordinator role, and particularly a role that involves teaching 1st Year at UOW students, we invite you to be part of the UOW inaugural “1st Year Co-ordinators” Show Case and Forum.

Share with your colleagues and peers one or two example/s of your innovative teaching practices that have been designed to enhance the university-learning experience of your students. You will have 5-10 minutes to present your teaching activity/ies.

Recipients of recent ESDFs (Educational Strategic Development Funds); ALTC grants (Australian Learning and Teaching Council); or OCTAL Awards (Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning) are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences in relation to teaching and learning, particularly with regards to the first year experience.

If you would like to be part of this exciting first-ever “1st Year Co-ordinators” show-case please contact June Aspley (june@uow.edu.au; or X4533) to discuss organisation and arrangements and to confirm your presentation requirements (ie power-point, web-based, slides, video etc).

For further information on the UOW First Year Experience Working Party, and/or FYE events and activities, please contact June Aspley (june@uow.edu.au; or X4533)