CAREER DEVELOPMENT LEARNING (CDL):

CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRANSITION ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE – SOCIAL INCLUSION, FYE, ENGAGEMENT, SATISFACTION, RETENTION AND POSITIVE GRADUATE OUTCOMES

CDL is the focus of the work of Careers Central, providing specialist services which complement and supplement core teaching and learning activities in the University. Its programs include the provision of career information, individual careers counselling, workshops, Work Related Learning (WRL) and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities, and employment services.

CDL consists of the following elements:

- Learning about self
- Learning about options
- Learning about decisions
- Learning about transitions

The Benefits of Career Development Learning

There is a growing body of literature on how CDL contributes positively to:

- Social inclusion;
- Participation rates;
- Student motivation and retention;
- Completion rates;
- Employability; and
- Positive graduate outcomes.

The following extract from the 2009 Final Report of the ALTC supported project carried out under University of Wollongong leadership by the National Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (NAGCAS) provides evidence of the value CDL provides:

Career development has potential to produce benefits with respect to social equity and human capital (Access Economics, 2006; Council of the European Union, 2009; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004a; Watts, nd). The benefits of career development learning may be considered at the level of the individual, the organization, and society, over immediate, intermediate and long-term time frames (Watts, 1999a). Whilst there remains some scope to clarify different measures of outcome for each of those levels (Maguire, 2004), there is considerable and long-standing evidence indicating the benefit of career development to individuals (Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; Holland, Magoon, & Spokane, 1981; Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004a; Purcell et al., 2008; Sexton, Whiston, Bleuer, & Walz, 1997; Swanson, 1995).

The relationship between career development and social justice is explicit within the career development literature internationally (e.g., S. S. Hansen, 2003; Hartung & Blustein, 2002; Irving, 2005; K. M. O’Brien, 2001) and there is an emphasis upon how career guidance should contribute to public policy apposite of social and economic outcomes (e.g., Herr, 2003; Hughes, Bosley, Bowes, & Bysshe, 2002; MclVeen, in press; Watts, 2000, 2002, nd; Watts, Sweet, Haines, & McMahon, 2006). Specifically, in the career development literature there has been an enhanced focus upon the career development needs of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those who have experienced rural isolation or lower socio-economic status (e.g., Brown & Lent, 2005; Diemer, 2009; Diemer & Ali, in press; Diemer & Blustein, 2006, 2007; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008; Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; Niles, 2002; Packard & Babineau, 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Scott & Ciani, 2008). The extensive longitudinal Future Track project in the UK indicated the
importance of career guidance in individuals’ choices of university studies, and that issues of access to quality career-related information were an important dimension in decision-making (Purcell et al., 2008).

Within the Australian higher education sector, career development and university career services are seen as pivotal in the work of access, equity and social justice (McIlveen, Everton, & Clarke, 2005).

Griffith researchers Wilson and Lizzio (2006) and ALTC Fellow Billett have made important contributions to the literature on student engagement, retention and professional transitions. Wilson highlighted the importance of vocational purpose to the FYE. Billett promotes the ‘agentic learner’, (2006) where the individual is provided with professional agency, via control of the nature and quality of their life – including their education and its interface with lifewide contexts. Clearly CDL has an important role to play in this arena – as Watts underscored in his post NAGCAS ALTC Symposium paper, referring to CDL as placing students at the heart of the learning process.

The study on the FYE in Australian Universities 1994 - 2009 (James, Krause and Jennings, 2010) highlighted the need for universities to devise strategies to identify and monitor student purpose and reasons for attending university due to the connections to retention, satisfaction, academic performance and engagement amongst non traditional cohorts. In addition, females, students from rural areas and from low SES all placed significantly higher priority on the career outcomes of their courses.

**CDL, Student Engagement and Graduate Outcomes across the Sector**

The following international and national instruments highlight the importance of CDL to student engagement and to graduate outcomes: the AUSSE; AGS (Graduate Destination Survey & CEQ); the International Student Barometer; and University & Beyond.

At an institutional level, the Student Experience Questionnaire, and Getting Started, as well as the national and international surveys, all underpin student reliance upon, and expectation that, sound and effective CDL will be available throughout the university experience.

**CDL, adding value to WIL**

The Final ALTC Report which scoped the value CDL could bring to WIL (McIlveen et al, 2009) made the following recommendations:

1. It is valuable to provide a wide spectrum of workplace experiences to facilitate student uptake.
2. Opportunities need to be created and curriculum development needs to occur, where learning tools and resources are developed to ensure wider access to career development learning within work-integrated learning models.
3. The scope of service learning, and many other extra-curricular activities, has to be fully optimised and exploited for student learning.
4. Students’ engagement in paid work roles, such as casual and part time work, also needs to be fully addressed in terms of its capacity to broaden students’ learning opportunities.
5. Including extra-curricular and paid employment will provide a richer source of experiences for transformational learning through reflection and articulation, and for incorporation into future academic, career and life planning.
6. To facilitate this wider spread of activity and improve student access, consideration needs to be given to strategies to monitor and validate student involvement, such as informal transcripts, or the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement.
7. If workplaces are to obtain the best outcomes from work-integrated learning, then career development support needs to be explicit and articulated in the workplace for students and employees.
8. To foster improved inclusion and participation rates, resources need to be identified which are pinned to diversity practices which facilitate appropriately designed and embedded CDL in curricula and increased opportunities for placements.
9. To enhance further developments and program innovations and development of widespread good practice, funding and recognition programs are required to foster stronger collaboration and...
sharing processes. An associated issue is the pressing need to provide professional
development to university staff in the disciplinary fields of career development learning and
work-integrated learning.
10. Many of the recommendations listed above point to the need for expansion of resource
allocation to the sector to support career development learning, employability enhancement
and workplace learning initiatives.

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