

From Outreach to Engagement: Fostering Civil Society Through Educational Partnerships

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Abstract

The University of Western Sydney is a relatively new public metropolitan university. In the year 2000, UWS underwent a major restructure whereby one of its five level one strategic themes became Regional and Community Development and one of its central aims became “to link arms with community, public services, industry and business across the region of Greater Western Sydney in order to exchange knowledge, harness community expertise and energy to mutual benefit, and to contribute to the region’s development, prosperity and social capital.” (University of Western Sydney Strategic Plan 2001)

This paper outlines the phases that UWS has gone through to move from a university focused on spasmodic and uncoordinated outreach to one that is truly engaged with its community. Two examples of educational partnership are used to illustrate the way UWS, as a New Generation Australian University, is embedding coherent purpose and strategic direction in its community and regional partnerships: Co-operative Programs and the Innovative Technology Network.

UWS is a relatively new public metropolitan university, established in 1989. Based in the region of Greater Western Sydney (GWS), it is already the fifth largest university in Australia. It serves a large, rapidly expanding urban and industrial region with 1.8 million people, half of Sydney’s population and one tenth of Australia’s. UWS, like its region, is a university of diversity operating through six major campuses and encompassing a land holding of 1,772 hectares. UWS employs two and a half thousand staff, 15 percent of whom are from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB). It has over 30,000 students, of whom 46 percent are from NESB. Of commencing students, 68 percent are the first in their family to attend university; while 25 percent come from low socio-economic backgrounds, 11 percent are international students, and one percent are indigenous Australians.

GWS consists of 14 local governments, covering nearly 9,000 square kilometres. It is the fastest growing region in Australia and one of the most culturally and industrially diverse, with more than 100 nationalities represented and significant manufacturing, service, and rural industries. 72,000 small to medium enterprises operate in GWS. It generates more than AUD\$58 billion (US\$32) in economic output a year, making it the third largest economic region in Australia behind the Sydney CBD and Melbourne. It

is home to 150 of Australia's top 500 companies and was the site of most of the venues for the 2000 Olympics.

A significant feature of Australian universities is that, with very few exceptions, they are public institutions, owned by the state governments but funded by the federal (national) government. Legislation governing UWS—the University of Western Sydney Act 1997—stipulates one of its major functions as:

- (a) the provision of educational facilities of a University standard, having particular regard to needs and aspirations of residents of Greater Western Sydney....

This was the first time that legislation relating to any Australian university was so specific in defining its regional commitment. In doing so, more directly than any other university in Australia, UWS was required to focus on its role in region development.

In a little over a decade the University of Western Sydney (UWS) has made substantial progress in giving effect to this legislative imperative and built significant partnerships with regional and community organisations and individuals. Those partnerships have been built from the top down and from the bottom up. Partnerships that will sustain university/community engagement over the long term require commitment from the top and the bottom. This paper explores the UWS experience from both perspectives. Part A describes three phases of the university's development and the adoption of regional and community engagement as a core function defining the university itself. Part B examines two examples of bottom-up programs that have gained central status within the university and become catalysts for further engagement.

Engagement from the Top Down

Although it is a young university, its short history, in terms of community and regional engagement, has been marked by three phases. During the early years individual staff, most with a passion for community links, developed programs that reached out to the community. There were successes and failures; some lasted the distance while others fell by the wayside. After nearly ten years as a federation of three semi-autonomous members, UWS underwent a massive restructure, abandoning the federation to form a unified institution. This provided an opportunity to rethink the very nature of the university itself. Just as that restructure was bedding down, the federal government announced a national review of higher education, causing UWS to engage in further dialogue about the nature of this university in the national higher education system. Each phase has played a part in shaping UWS and its attitudes and commitments to partnering with civil society.

Phase 1: The Early Years and Reaching Out

UWS has a complex history, operating in the early years as a federated network university, formed by bringing together three former Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), all with different cultures and backgrounds. This formation was possible as an

outcome of the expansion of the Australian higher education system and abandonment of the previous binary divide between Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in Australia. In response to the policies of the Federal Labor Government in the late 1980s, nineteen universities and forty-six CAEs became thirty-nine universities as a Unified National System. Not coincidentally this was a time of growing pressure from the population in the western suburbs of Metropolitan Sydney for their own university as a key institution to redress a perceived disadvantage of the population.

During this early stage of development, the network members were focussed primarily on community outreach. The approach to regional development or community engagement was spasmodic and uncoordinated. Outreach programs were not core functions, operating largely on the margin, developed on an *ad hoc* basis, relying very much on the personalities of their creators. No core funding was provided for such activities; rather, grants were sought from external sources and government agencies for their development and implementation.

This is not to say that this outreach was unsuccessful. On the contrary, several were very successful, building strong links into the community. Two such programs were the Co-operative Programs and the Innovative Technology Network. Although these programs were valued by some and were seen as innovative, neither received any serious university backing.

Phase 2: Internal Change and Review of Core Activities

The year 2000 was an Olympic year not only for the nation but also for UWS. It was amidst all that activity that the university began a major restructure to unify the three members of the federation. This required traumatic structural and organisational change. No longer were there to be three members operating semi-autonomously, with different cultures. While the drive for change was primarily functional it was also an opportunity to revisit the very heart of what sort of a university it wanted to be.

By that time, the issues of universities' approaches to community engagement and regional development were becoming increasingly prominent in international forums on higher education. There was a growing preoccupation with the embeddedness of universities in their regions and their roles as catalysts and contributors to the wellbeing and the economic vitality of communities. Institutionalising university-community engagement "...entails not only redefining scholarship and university culture in ways that promote engagement, but also modifying curricula, providing training for faculty and staff, and developing university infrastructure systems of accountability that sustain university-community engagement once it has begun" (Cavendish 2001).

Like many universities that have embarked successfully on similar journeys leadership came from the top. The Board of Trustees and the Vice Chancellor/President determined that regional development and community engagement were to be at the heart of the University. One of UWS's four key themes became Regional and Community Development and one of its central aims became to "link arms with

community, public services, industry and business across Greater Western Sydney in order to exchange knowledge, harness community expertise and energy to our mutual benefit, and to contribute to the region's development, prosperity and social capital" (University of Western Sydney Strategic Plan 2001).

This was a sea change; UWS was exploring new ground, a new culture, one of being more completely engaged with its regional and community development. This determination found expression in the university's mission statement, infusing it into its academic endeavour:

A University of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service to its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.

(UWS Mission—University of Western Sydney Strategic Plan 2001)

UWS acknowledged that the predominant approach of many universities had been to locate community service and partnerships in a centre attached to but not part of their mainstream activities. UWS incorporated regional and community engagement into the University's strategic plan and core activities, resolving to be at the centre of these developments, acknowledged both nationally and internationally, as a leader in the field. It has taken a whole of university and strategic approach to embedding the culture of community and regional engagement into the very heart of the university. Regional and Community Development became one of the five level-one strategic themes that provide the framework for all UWS future planning. This approach is synergistic with the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities in the U.S.

To provide leadership and substance to what could have been rhetoric, in 2001, the Office of Regional Development (ORD) was established. It was seen as pivotal to implementing and integrating the University's mission to its region. The ORD fulfils a catalytic and coordinating role in regional and community engagement, both internally and externally. Cooperative Programs and the Innovative Technology Network were integrated into the core activities of the ORD. No longer were they marginalised; they were now seen as flagship activities of higher-level engagement. Both programs were receiving increasing recognition across the region and were expanding.

More recently, the UWS Board of Trustees established the UWS Regional Council. This Council is the principal standing committee of the University dealing with its participation in strategic social agendas of the region such as health, housing, educational opportunity, equity, cultural diversity, employment, small business, women, and environmental management. Its role is one of monitoring and evaluating UWS, advocacy and development, promotion and communication, advice, and reference. The Vice-Chancellor/President chairs the Council, which is made up of twenty-five respected and representative members of the broader GWS community.

The Regional Council stewards the Regional and Community Grants Scheme. This new Scheme is a strategy to strengthen links with the community by providing an internal source of funding, allocated on a competitive basis to staff and their community partners, for the establishment of innovative projects supporting regional development and community engagement. For example, in 2002 the Scheme has funded a project in Developing Paucity Management, an action-learning network for managers of non-profit human services in GWS; it has also funded an Assistive Technology Seminar and Expo to enhance education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

UWS is exploring new ground; it is changing the culture of an Australian university to be one that is truly engaged with its community. This would not be possible were it not for the leadership shown and an understanding that building community trust takes institutional commitment and considerable time.

Phase 3: External Pressures for Higher Education Reform

In 2002, the Federal Minister for Education, Science, and Training determined to undertake a major Review of Australian Higher Education called Higher Education at the Crossroads.

It is now time for us as a nation to have the maturity to recognise that there is a need to meaningfully consider and conduct a debate of the policy options that lie before us in relation to reform to the way we administer, fund and support Australian universities. Our challenge is to conduct public discussion in a transparent manner free of the highly emotional and politicised language of the past. (The Honourable Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training. Ministers Message, 26th August 2002)

This Review has put considerable pressure on new universities such as UWS to maintain their positions as the traditional universities lobby for funding, particularly research funding, to be concentrated on the “successfully performing” institutions; that is, to them. This battle is being fought across the country, but the review has also provided an opportunity to advance the engagement conversation placing community engagement into the national and international forum. The UWS response has three dimensions: submissions to the Crossroads Review, fostering a grouping of New Generation Universities, driving a national conversation on engagement.

In one of its early submissions to the review, UWS made the point that “comprehensive universities undertaking focussed teaching and research that seek to enhance student choice and are engaged with their regional communities are critical to the development of Australia as a knowledge nation. Government needs to actively support the community and regional engagement activities of universities and recognise the significance of urban regions” (UWS Submission in Response to Higher Education at the Crossroads 2002).

At the New Generation s Universities Conference sponsored by UWS in June 2000, Professor Michael Gibbons, Secretary of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, commented that new universities are very well placed to be the drivers of the “new economy,” given “in a time of rapid change the comparative advantage passes to universities that are not overly committed to the established way of doing things.”

New Generation Universities such as UWS are now identified as part of an international group of universities that support the transformation of an education system, which fosters diversity and operates for the community’s benefit and is responsive to it in a contemporary world. This approach is in contrast to that offered by the “Big 8 Sandstones” in Australia, similar to the U.S. “Ivy League” schools.

UWS is committed to moving the agenda of the New Generation Universities forward in the Australian debate on higher education. This has meant a continued emphasis on UWS’s commitment to regional and community engagement. In September 2002, UWS held a National Forum on University and Community Engagement with Barbara Holland, Director of the National Service Learning Clearinghouse in the U.S., as the keynote speaker. This was the first of a series of forums proposed by UWS to support university and community engagement in Australia where international scholars will be invited to participate.

Following this inaugural forum, a roundtable was held for interested representatives from universities across Australia to discuss major issues and challenges related to university and community engagement. As a result of the roundtable a national interest group will be established. The aim of this group is to work together to explore and support community engagement in Australian Universities. UWS has agreed to take the initial lead in establishing this group.

Engagement from the Bottom Up

While high-level work was shaping attitudes and commitments among senior staff and the Board of Trustees, community-linked programs continued to operate. Although they did not form part of the higher-level debate and were not influential in decisions, they were in a position to become key elements of engagement in the new framework. Indeed, UWS is now considerably further down the pathways of engagement because these programs have given real expression of what could have been largely rhetoric. Two examples are presented here, written by their respective managers. Within these examples, observations are made and conclusions drawn regarding the outcomes, challenges and lessons learnt from the UWS experience of building educational partnerships.

Example 1: Cooperative Programs

In the early 1990s there was limited awareness in the region of UWS’s newly elevated university status and employers, in general, showed a distinct preference for graduates from the established sandstone universities.

In an attempt to redress this issue and to give UWS students some assistance in the competitive job market, the Head of Biological Sciences A/Prof Elizabeth Deane initiated the Summer Research Awards program in 1994. This program entailed students working on an industry sponsored research project over the summer vacation. Industry partners were only charged \$600 and UWS contributed a further \$600 so that students could receive a modest award of \$1,200. The program was, however, not promoted and was restricted to Biological Science students.

In 1994 A/Prof Deane successfully applied for funding from the Department of Education Employment, & Training (DEET) to start a Cooperative Education for Enterprise Development (CEED) program. The CEED program entailed Engineering and Science & Technology students working on a research project for the last three semesters of a four-year degree course. The program was meant to encourage Science and Technology students in a three-year course to continue for an additional Honours year.

The DEET funding was used to employ a CEED Program Coordinator in 1995 to set up the program and the unit was housed in the Business Development Office of the University. The CEED Program Coordinator was also asked to look after the Summer Research Awards program, as the programs were considered to be complementary: the CEED program is undertaken during the academic session, under academic supervision, and students receive academic credit for their research; on the other hand, the summer program is undertaken during the vacation period with students working independently, and no academic credit is received.

In the next seven years there were a large number of changes made: the CEED program was extended to students from all faculties; the three semester CEED model was found to have limited appeal and was replaced by a modular one semester program; and a number of other tailored programs for disciplines were introduced. The various programs were combined to form the academic session programs.

There were many changes made to the Summer Research Awards program, which was extended to students from all disciplines, the program was marketed extensively, and the UWS subsidy discontinued. Two more vacation programs were added: the Winter Research Awards program similar to the summer program, and an Engineering Summer Placement for Engineering students to gain their 12 weeks of work experience in accordance with the requirements of the Institution of Engineers.

To reflect the changes in the programs, the unit was renamed Cooperative Programs.

Goals of UWS Cooperative Programs

Whilst the form and content of Cooperative Programs has changed considerably over the years, its two goals have remained constant—namely to provide industry research opportunities for students (the underlying aim being to add value to UWS students to give them the edge in the competitive job market after graduation) and to build new, and strengthen existing, links with industry for UWS (the underlying aim being to

effectively manage relations with industry partners to develop further UWS-Industry collaborative ventures).

Operations and Quality Assurance

Since its inception, Cooperative Programs has administered a questionnaire to participants after projects are completed. The findings from these surveys and focus groups of the main players has led to many changes in the way the programs are managed to ensure there is quality assurance.

Some of the measures initiated for students include detailed guidelines, an intensive orientation, a special course in Project Planning and Business Communication, and an ancillary course in report writing, Cooperative Program student networks, and access to administrative support.

Quality measures for industry partners include streamlined administration with very little paper work to be completed, clear guidelines, and regular contact during the project.

For vacation programs it has traditionally been difficult to arrange interviews as it is during the exam period. Consequently, students are selected on the basis of their applications and academic record. Whilst this has usually worked well, some industry partners have requested that they be part of the selection process. We now permit industry partners to approve (or request a replacement) of the student selected by the university selection panel.

Recognising participants for their achievements is integral to Cooperative Programs. Students receive congratulatory letters for presentations or ongoing work, or whenever their industry partner informs us about some achievement. There is also a biannual Awards function, a mini graduation ceremony, when all participants receive certificates presented by the Deputy or Pro Vice-Chancellors.

Outcomes

Our feedback from industry partners, students, and academic supervisors has been overwhelmingly positive. The average feedback over the last five years indicates that over 90 percent of industry partners found the student to have the necessary skills, worked in a professional manner, and that the project was of a high standard.

Similarly, over 90 percent of students found the experience valuable and said they learnt new skills whilst working on their project. Many students stated that it was the most satisfying part of their entire university experience. Moreover, over 60 percent of students have obtained ongoing work (part time, full time, contract or casual) based on their project. This has been a very pleasing result, especially when our statistics indicate that over 70 percent of UWS students work whilst they study. However, most of these students are working in the fast food or retail industries, which may not be taken into consideration when they look for graduate placement. Cooperative Programs

has been able to provide a large number of students with the opportunity to work in a professional capacity whilst studying.

Besides the ongoing work, at least five Cooperative Programs students publish articles in leading journals annually, many attend professional training workshops, participate in seminars, and make presentations to professional bodies.

The benefits of Cooperative Programs to the university have been far reaching. Over 270 industry partners have participated in Cooperative Programs—the first contact with UWS for many of them. The projects have led to a number of ongoing ventures, collaborations, scholarships, ongoing research with major funding, graduate placements, and participation on the various boards and councils of the university.

Industry partners, besides obtaining a project of a high standard, gain in many ways. They have the opportunity to recruit a student whose performance is known, make contacts with UWS staff, access UWS facilities and enter into further collaborative ventures with UWS. A number of small organisations have informed us that they would not have been able to expand without the assistance of Cooperative Programs students.

Recently, the Program was nominated for inclusion in the soon to be published Compendium of Good Practice University-Regional Development Engagement Initiatives by the Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services.

The main challenge in the future is to expand the program so that more students can have these opportunities without sacrificing the quality of the programs.

Example 2: Innovative Technology Network (ITN)

The Innovative Technology Network is an association of local businesses and community organisations operating under the umbrella of the University of Western Sydney with the support of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development. The Network provides a monthly program of seminars and factory tours for small to medium enterprises in Greater Western Sydney. The enterprises are mainly manufacturers. The focus of the seminars and visits is technological innovation.

Participants

The ITN program primarily, but not exclusively, targets small to medium manufacturers. A recent survey showed that 50 percent of participants are from the manufacturing sector. Of these 24 percent are from companies with fewer than 50 employees and 14 percent from firms with over 200 employees.

Of the non-manufacturers who attend ITN events there is approximately an even breakdown between consultants, service industry people, university researchers, and government representatives. While, as noted above, the major purpose of ITN is technology diffusion to manufacturers, ITN has taken the position that there is much

value in bringing together manufacturers with educators, consultants, and government and service personnel.

Development of the Program

The University of Western Sydney established ITN in June 1997 with a two-year grant from the then Federal Government Department of Industry, Science, and Tourism. Under the contract, ITN established two Technology Awareness Groups, operating out of two of its campuses in western and southwestern Sydney. An Industry Advisory Committee was also set up to monitor the program of seminars and site visits and provide ideas for topics and sites to include in the program. Over the period of the contract a conference on “Creating the Innovative Enterprise” was held with the keynote speaker being a Boeing executive brought from the U.S. A forum on “Speeding up Innovation in Firms” featuring a U.K. academic was also organised in partnership with the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD).

On the expiry of the contract with the Federal Department in June 1999, the University entered into an agreement with DSRD to continue the program on a more modest budget. The agreement, which was to be renewed each year, was for the establishment of two Technology Awareness Groups (TAGs) and a program of 20 events over the year. Under the current contract one group is to be continued with a program of ten events.

Funding for the program comes from a grant from DSRD of \$20,000, in-kind support from the University, plus membership fees of \$550 per company member. Non-members are charged \$44 to attend an event. Our current membership is 22 companies.

Rationale for UWS establishing ITN

It is reasonable to question the University’s role in establishing ITN, as the program is not centred in the traditional activities of a university. If one sees a university as a research and degree-conferring institution then there is really little to justify UWS’s involvement. However, if one sees a university as a facilitator of post-school learning in the community then the role has legitimacy. It is our position that the University should be “the engine for learning” in the community and “the leading educational broker” for the wide range of learning activities.

Senge (1993) made popular the concept of the “learning organisation” where colleagues within a workplace share knowledge and educate each other in the areas of their expertise. The dynamic provided by such a practice creates an organization that is globally competitive and able to stay abreast of innovation and rapid change. UWS is certainly not the first to extrapolate this definition of learning to describe a community; and that is the aim of UWS: to develop and strengthen the learning community of Greater Western Sydney.

In such a community, networks are possibly the most effective mechanism for sharing knowledge and developing new skills. In establishing the Innovative Technology

Network, UWS has built partnerships with other educational institutions and alliances with a diversity of organisations. The only requirements are the desire to learn and the willingness to share. The key is cooperation and a generosity of spirit.

The Program and Purpose of ITN

The program ITN offers to its members includes seminars on technology and visits to innovative enterprises. Examples possibly provide the best insights into the program. In 2002 seminar topics have included: Profiting from Cleaner Production; Maintenance Management; Lean Manufacturing; and Six Sigma. Site tours have included manufacturers of electronics, aluminium products, fibreglass pools, and aeroplanes.

The *general aim* of the Innovative Technology Network is technology diffusion—that is, providing a learning environment for local firms to gain understandings of innovation and new technologies that can be applied in their organisations. Technologies are defined in this context as both the “hard” technologies of new equipment and materials and the “soft” technologies associated with process improvements and more efficient management methods.

The more *specific goal* of the ITN program is that participating enterprises will take up these innovations and new technologies and so become more globally competitive. Hence, they will be able to more successfully enter foreign markets and compete against imports on the domestic market. Import replacement might also be seen as an aim of the program.

Evaluating Outcomes for Business

In evaluating business outcomes for the ITN program responses were sought on a series of questions that can be clustered around three networking outcomes:

1. networking to learn about new technologies and innovative practices from those already applying them;
2. networking to make contact with university and business experts; and
3. networking to benchmark a company’s performance against industry best practice.

Networking to learn about new technologies and innovative practice was most highly ranked in importance and generally most successfully achieved. Over 80 percent of participants reported success in “gaining new ideas and perspectives” on innovative issues.

Networking to make contact with academic and business experts was ranked second in importance and achieved successfully by a majority of participants.

Networking for benchmarking was ranked lowest. It was interesting that although this objective had a low ranking, it was successfully achieved by 54 percent of respondents.

An overall evaluation of the program might be inferred by the result that ninety-six percent of respondents would recommend joining ITN to peers or business associates.

Evaluating Outcomes for the University

The University's expectation from ITN is that it will provide:

- a forum for academics to inform business of areas of research and teaching interest;
- a forum for business to inform academics of their needs and interests;
- a portal for business people to become more generally involved with the University; and
- an expression of the University's interest in shedding its "ivory tower" image and engaging with the community.

No formal evaluation has been completed to assess ITN's achievement of these outcomes. Anecdotal evidence indicates some successes. Specifically, ITN has provided an avenue for business people to become more involved with the University. The recent appointment of an industry advisory group has drawn on ITN participants. Also, there are growing incidences of academic expertise being applied to business problems. The University's establishment of a Nanotechnology group will enable business people to work with academics on the application of this emerging technology. These are some definite signs of success, but still much potential remains to be tapped.

Lessons Learnt

The experience of ITN has provided important insights into the process of engagement. The most gratifying lesson learnt from ITN is that there is a substantial reservoir of goodwill towards the University in the business community. Even business people with no university education themselves are in many cases eager to participate in university life. On a basic level this can be by presenting at a seminar or opening their factories as part of an educational program. At a more demanding level business people have shown an enthusiasm to be involved in advisory and planning committees of the University.

It must be recognised, however, that the business community is complex and multi-layered. A university initiative of engagement with its business community will be most successful if it is composed of varied programs. ITN is directed mainly at manufacturers and in particular at manufacturing directors, managers, and team leaders. UWS is currently considering programs to extend its engagement to include CEOs, young business employees, and other organisations associated with business learning. Successful engagement requires recognition of the diversity of need and contribution from the business community.

The issue of contribution from business also requires clarification. The level of knowledge and expertise in the business community can in some areas outstrip that residing in our universities. This can be particularly the case in areas of specific

technologies and process innovation. Recognition of this fact by universities prompts a more open and collaborative approach to engagement. The mindset must become one of sharing and reciprocity rather than condescending one-sidedness. Engagement is strengthened where there is a mutual respect for the contributions that can be brought to the relationship by both academics and business people.

Associated with mutual contributions is the need to bridge the values gap as a prerequisite for successful engagement. Business people are more impressed by the practical than the theoretical. ITN members are more likely to support a seminar by someone who has a proven record of achievement than a consultant or academic explaining the theory of an innovation. This does not preclude business people's interest in broader issues and the theoretical underpinning of an innovation, but the particular demands of business must be accepted. Those who can present the theory together with a record of practical achievement are highly respected and supported. Universities intent on engagement with business people must be cognisant of the propensity of business towards the practical and the importance to business of financial returns in the relatively short term.

Challenges

The Innovative Technology Network at the University of Western Sydney is an initiative to engage the University with its business community. The University's experience with ITN has been very positive in that it has revealed the wealth of goodwill and opportunity that resides in the community for closer links with its University. The success of further engagement rests on strengthening understanding between academics and business people and accommodating the differences in professional values, needs, and contributions. There is great diversity within business as there is in the University. Working with this diversity promises an exciting future for the University of Western Sydney, as it does for all those universities involved in developing the learning community. The cooperation and collaboration between universities and business strengthens both their roles in the community and contributes substantially to the civility of our society.

Conclusions

UWS's commitment to community engagement is strong. Now is the time to build on our strong foundation at two strategic levels:

1. Systematic cultural change

UWS will seek to secure core funding for engagement activities. As a first step towards parity of esteem, policies will be created for evaluating and rewarding staff undertaking such activities. There are still many staff at UWS to whom "engagement" is a concept not well understood. An education strategy will be developed to inform and enable staff to become better engaged.

2. Expansion of existing programs

A key initiative in 2002 is the development of service learning opportunities for the Colleges and Schools at UWS through Cooperative Programs. There is also an expansion of the Innovative Technology Network to develop specific key targeted technology diffusion networks, the first of these being a Nanomaterials Network.

Both of the above present UWS with major challenges, as does the establishment of a national interest group to explore and support community engagement in Australian Universities. Following from the recent UWS University and Community Engagement Forum, it is UWS's hope to provide leadership in creating a national network of engaged universities, similar to the Metropolitan Universities in the U.S.

UWS is ploughing new ground. It is in its early days and there is much to be achieved but its mission is firm and is shaping its identity as a New Generation University that is both an integral part of its community and a significant player in the national and international scene.

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