REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Contents

Executive Summary

This paper provides a scan of interesting ideas and activities that support the student experience at ten international and domestic universities that have similar characteristics to The University of Queensland (UQ). The student experience, which encapsulates different facets of university life affecting the experience of students, can be conceptualised through three interconnected themes: teaching and learning, opportunities and place.

Teaching and learning encompasses key teaching and learning activities such as curriculum renewal and blended learning. In this area, universities are:
   o Restructuring the curriculum to give students opportunities to broaden their studies, experiences and skills outside their discipline area.
   o Engaging students as participants, co-creators and change agents in curriculum renewal processes.
   o Investing in blended learning technology and expertise, particularly in the areas of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and ePortfolios.

Opportunities focuses on international, work and community service activities that complement and enrich what students learn in the classroom. In this area, universities are:
   o Continuing to build comprehensive internationalisation strategies to give students a diversity of global experiences.
   o Integrating work experience into learning, especially in the areas of entrepreneurship and leadership.
   o Encouraging community service and volunteering through face-to-face and online initiatives.
   o Providing formal recognition of students' global, work and community experiences.

Place acknowledges the importance of creating a sense of community through infrastructural investment and student support services. In this area, universities are:
   o Constructing a range of residential, sport and cultural facilities, often with a focus on environmental sustainability, and consciously seeking to connect these new facilities to teaching and learning.
   o Developing streamlined, personalised student support services that take into account all of the students' interactions with the university's systems and processes.
   o Providing integrated support services to indigenous students that emphasise succeeding academically and building a sense of community.

Introduction

The student experience, which encapsulates different facets of university life affecting the experience of students, is influenced by a range of factors including curriculum renewal, blended learning, internationalisation, employability, community engagement, campus facilities and student support services (Staddon & Standish, 2012). Learning, the first pillar of UQ's Strategic Plan 2014-2017, addresses the issue of the student experience by "ensuring that students remain at the heart of what we do" (UQ, 2014, p. 6). The plan focuses on four core areas: attracting and retaining students, providing an enriching teaching and learning environment, being recognised as a national leader in innovative online learning, and developing well-rounded highly sought-after graduates.

This paper provides a scan of interesting ideas and activities that support the student experience at ten international and domestic universities across three interconnected themes that influence the student experience and align with UQ's strategic plan: teaching and learning, opportunities and place. The paper is not designed to benchmark UQ against other institutions; rather it provides a range of ideas to support the student experience that may warrant further investigation depending on the needs and interests of different stakeholders at UQ. The paper aims to act as a springboard for potential student experience project and program ideas. Any ideas drawn from the paper will need to be further investigated to identify evidence-based best practice in that particular area.

Like UQ, the selected institutions are long-standing, research-intensive, comprehensive universities with large numbers of students ranging from 25,000 to 65,000. As outlined in Table 1, they are generally ranked in the top 200 of various global university rankings, with some universities receiving five+ stars on QS Stars, a rating that provides a wider picture of an institution's qualities including employment rates, sports facilities and community engagement (Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2014a; Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, 2014b; Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014).

#	Selected University	Country	QS Star	QS World University Ranking	Times Higher Education Ranking	Academic Ranking of World Universities
0	The University of Queensland (UQ)	Australia	5+	43	65	85
1	The University of Melbourne	Australia	-	33	33	44
2	The University of Western Australia (UWA)	Australia	5+	89	157	88
3	University of Leeds	United Kingdom	-	97	146	101-150
4	The University of Nottingham	United Kingdom	-	77	171	101-150
5	Ohio State University (OSU)	United States	5+	109	68	64
6	Michigan State University (MSU)	United States	-	195	82	101-150
7	The University of Auckland	New Zealand	5+	92	175	201-300
8	University of British Columbia (UBC)	Canada	-	43	32	37
9	National University of Singapore (NUS)	Singapore	-	22	25	101-150
10	The University of Tokyo	Japan	-	31	23	21

TABLE 1 - OVERVIEW OF SELECTED UNIVERSITIES' 2014 RANKINGS

The three student experience themes, which influence each other and comprise multidimensional factors, are integral to fostering a student-centred university environment. As outlined in Figure 1, the first theme, *Teaching and Learning*, encompasses the academic and intellectual environment to which students are exposed, particularly through curriculum renewal and blended learning approaches. The second theme, *Opportunities*, focuses on enriching experiences in global, work and community contexts that prepare students for life beyond university. The third theme, *Place*, acknowledges the importance of creating a sense of community and support on campus through the construction of high quality social and residential facilities combined with effective student support services.
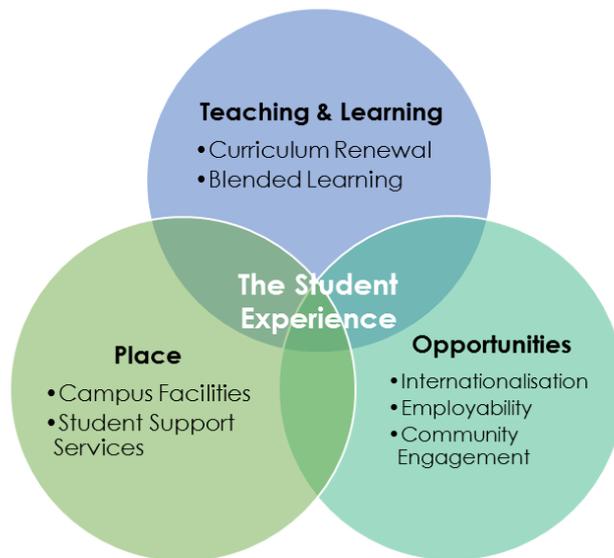
Theme 1: Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning, which includes curriculum renewal and blended learning, is a core component of the student experience. Universities' approaches to and processes around curriculum renewal have increasingly focused on students' learning experiences. Many of the universities under review have responded to this shift by restructuring their curriculum to give students opportunities to broaden their studies, experiences and skills outside their discipline area. Another trend points to proactively engaging students as participants, co-creators and change agents in curriculum renewal.

It is clear that technology will continue to play a critical role in teaching, learning and the student experience. According to Ellis and Goodyear (2009, p. 42), "technology use has been, and will continue to be, varied and idiosyncratic rather than uniform". Many universities have sought to fund and support a variety of blended learning innovations, with some funding being dedicated to eLearning champions across faculties. University-wide ePortfolios are popular, although they have received mixed results in terms of student satisfaction. MOOCs are also widespread with some universities adapting them to their own teaching and learning processes.

1.1. Curriculum renewal

Recent curriculum renewal processes in five universities have resulted in a focus on breadth requirements in students' undergraduate studies in order to develop well-rounded and adaptable graduates. Leeds calls these requirements Discovery Themes, which consist of a coordinated and structured series of elective modules within a degree that allow students to explore a subject, issue or skill outside their discipline area (University of Leeds, 2013a, 2015). UWA has instituted Broadening Units, which require all undergraduate students to enrol in areas such as languages, indigenous studies, study abroad, student exchange or other units outside of their specialisation (UWA, 2012). NUS is currently revising the general education curriculum for academic year 2015-2016 to include modules under the Key Pillars of human cultures and endeavours, quantitative reasoning, thinking and expression, and Singapore studies (NUS, 2014a).

The University of Melbourne curriculum model includes a breadth of learning requirement, which requires students to study and work across disciplinary boundaries, especially at the undergraduate level. The university's most recent annual report found promising trends arising from this reform; the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre first preference rankings placed four of the university's undergraduate degrees in the top ten most popular degrees in 2013 (University of Melbourne, 2013). Similarly, the University of Tokyo has had an integrated, broad curriculum for many years whereby students spend their first two years studying a wide spectrum of liberal arts courses to acquire foundational skills before specialisation (University of Tokyo, 2015).

1.2. Students as change agents

Universities' processes around curriculum renewal have increasingly sought to position the student at the heart of the teaching and learning process. As outlined by Dunne and Zandstra (2011), students can provide input to curriculum change by being *evaluators* of their higher education experience whereby they provide evidence to inform change, *participants* and *collaborative partners* in decision-making processes whereby they influence change, and *agents of change* whereby decisions for change are prompted by students. According to Coton (2014), students should have major involvement in internal and external quality processes and, as such, universities need to provide a variety of mechanisms to encourage involvement.

All universities have incorporated the concept of students as *evaluators* of their higher education experience by using standardised student satisfaction surveys. For example, the University of Auckland conducts an annual teaching and learning survey of a random sample of 10,000 students, which in 2013 found that 94% of first-year undergraduates were satisfied

with their overall university experience, a data point that assists in defining the direction of university reform (University of Auckland, 2013).

Some universities have gone a step further and consciously sought to engage students as *participants* and *collaborative partners* in curriculum renewal. For example, UWA runs an extracurricular program, recognised nationally with an Excellence in University Teaching Award in 2013, that provides undergraduate students with research experiences while giving the university context-relevant information to inform teaching and learning. In 2015, seven interns will focus on transformative teaching and learning, a strategic priority for the university (UWA, 2015a).

Two universities have given students the opportunity to have proactive decision-making roles as *agents of change*. Nottingham's Students as Change Agents initiative, launched in November 2014, enables students and staff to work together on strategic, school-based teaching and learning projects, such as co-designing curriculum, reviewing assessment methods and developing learning materials (University of Nottingham, 2015a). In a faculty-based program at Leeds, students work in groups to develop resources that have been identified by themselves or a staff member to enhance the curriculum. Examples of ongoing projects include podcasting of research seminars, improvements to educational environment, and evaluation of Open Educational Resources (Healy, 2014).

1.3 Blended learning

Most universities have invested in research and support initiatives to encourage innovative use of technology in teaching and learning. Six universities have created funding pools to support innovation in this area. For example, OSU, recognised by US News and World Report as the 32nd best online college for 2015, provides grants of more than $200,000 each year to support integrating technology into academic courses, implementing mobile technologies in the classroom and creating quality online and blended courses (OSU, 2015a). NUS' Learning Innovation Fund-Technology funds proposals from faculties, schools, certain courses with large class sizes and NUS start-ups with novel educational products. By July 2014, NUS had provided funding to 24 projects in the areas of 2D visualisation, 3D virtual environment mobile computing, gesture computing and web computing (NUS, 2014b).

Two universities have combined the use of blended learning champions with funding support. Leeds has funded blended learning academic champions across all of the faculties, while encouraging research on students' usage of technologies, such as tablet devices, educational apps, eBooks, MOOCs and lecture capture (University of Leeds, 2013b). For example, in one

study the university found that 73% of biomedical science students thought that the availability of lecture audio recordings did not influence lecture attendance and 90% of students concentrated more in lectures where audio recordings were provided (Morris, 2014). Similarly, UBC has hired flexible learning liaison officers to build faculty-facing linkages between their Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology and faculties and will centrally fund 40 projects reaching over 10,000 students in 2015 (Farrar, 2014; UBC, 2014a).

Massive Open Online Courses

MOOCs, courses in which "all content, exercises and assessment are delivered on-line via the Web with free access to anyone across the globe" have become increasingly popular (UQ, 2015). Since 2012, universities such as UWA, NUS, UBC, Nottingham and the University of Melbourne have partnered with international consortia to develop MOOCs. The University of Melbourne, for example, has about 20 MOOCs with a total of 348,220 enrolled students (University of Melbourne, 2014). Recently, they won a tender to provide four MOOCs and a capstone option in finance sponsored by investment company, BNY Mellon (University of Melbourne, 2015a). According to the university, MOOCs build the online teaching capability of staff, enhance their expertise in learning analytics and provide high quality online learning resources particularly for their online master's coursework (University of Melbourne, 2014).

Some universities have started adapting MOOCs to cater to their own students. Having joined FutureLearn in 2013, Nottingham developed Nottingham Open Online Courses (NOOCs) that facilitate direct engagement between the instructor and student using Moodle. NOOCs are taught entirely online, are open to all staff and students across Nottingham's international campuses, and make routine use of peer review and formative assessment (University of Nottingham, 2015b). Their first NOOC, Perspectives on Sustainability, was developed to build cross-campus interest in the university's sustainability agenda. With the support of 20 tutors and facilitators, 1,500 people enrolled and one quarter of these students received formal credit for the course (The Guardian, 2014).

NUS joined Coursera in 2013 "to introduce a new pedagogical experience for both NUS students, and learners all over the world" (NUS, 2015a). To this end, in 2014 they developed eight internal Blended Learning Online Courses (iBLOCs) that combine MOOC-style teaching with face-to-face interactive sessions. The iBLOCs, which cost S$765 per module, are comprised of foundation and bridging modules for returning full-time National Servicemen who want to earn academic credits before commencing their undergraduate studies (NUS, 2014b, 2015b).

ePortfolio systems

Several universities have university wide ePortfolio systems that allow both academics and students to use the ePortfolio in diverse ways. Nottingham has supported ePortfolios since 2012 because they "are student-centred, potentially transformative and disruptive and also can be used for very different purposes within the same institution" (University of Nottingham, 2014a). By November 2013, the university had 2,800 ePortfolio users - approximately eight percent of the total student population - with 100 staff supporting students and tutors within 13 pilot projects (University of Nottingham, 2013).

Universities are generally positive about the use of ePortfolio systems as a learning tool, although there have been some reservations about ease of use. UBC, which has had ePortfolios since 2003, now uses ePortfolios across various schools and supports an ePortfolio community of practice (UBC, 2014b). One ePortfolio study at the university found that 78% of students agreed that accessing ePortfolios when outside the school was easy and 66% thought that the interface was logical and easy to navigate (Garrett, Macphee & Jackson, 2013). In contrast, two UWA case studies found that 71% and 86% of students encountered some technical difficulties due to system slowness and display issues (Fisher & Stasinska, 2013; Stanley & Davine, 2013).

Some universities host platforms that go beyond basic ePortfolio capabilities. OSU, for example, has a multi-site WordPress platform where students can create public websites to support professional and educational activities at the university. In 2014, the university conducted a survey of more than 4,000 users and found that 89% of surveyed participants had a neutral or higher satisfaction rating, but only 17% of surveyed participants had attended the platform workshops that year. Only 18% of students used the platform as an ePortfolio, with a higher percentage of students using it as a personal blog (31%) or a research platform (31%) (OSU, 2014a).

Theme 2: Opportunities

The concept of Opportunities encapsulates the range of enriching experiences that universities can provide outside the classroom in order to prepare students for life beyond university. International experiences, such as study abroad, exchanges, internships and conferences, provide students with the opportunity to engage with the broader community and build transferable skills that will enhance their employability after graduation.

Work-integrated learning and other employment programs are also popular as a means for students to connect learning to the work environment. The surveyed universities generally have well-established work experience opportunities for their students. In particular, there are many specialist programs focusing on entrepreneurship and leadership skills, which are both considered critical for future employment.

Community engagement is another avenue for students to enrich their university experience. All universities encourage volunteer and community service opportunities, both through in-person support and online volunteer hubs that connect students to community organisations. More broadly, some universities have created avenues for recognising students' global, work and community achievements through academic transcripts and awards.

2.1. Internationalisation

All of the selected universities have large numbers of international students, and offer a wide range of well-established study abroad and exchange options. The University of Melbourne has the largest international population with 14,166 students (27% of the total student population), while the University of Tokyo has the smallest with 2,912 international students (10% of the total student population). On average, 20% of the universities' student bodies are international. Six universities have a significant overseas presence in countries such as China, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the United States. Nottingham has a particularly robust international presence with branch campuses in China and Malaysia, which educate 10,396 students, the equivalent of one third of Nottingham's student population (University of Nottingham, 2014b).

Many universities have sought to prioritise the integration of international experiences into their curriculum, thus making international opportunities a core part of students' studies. Key examples are:

- OSU initiated a range of new innovations that led them to receive the internationally recognised Simon Award for Campus Internationalisation in 2014. They developed the Global May study abroad program, which introduces first and second year students to four-week international experiences in seven countries, and the Global Option, which gives undergraduate students international opportunities without adding time to graduation (OSU, 2014b).
- MSU, which won the same internationalisation award in 2006, undertook similar reforms to become a "world-grant university" (Simon, 2012, p. 4). They developed an integrated matrix model to facilitate the internationalisation of their campus, whereby all degrees of an international nature are earned in departments and colleges, rather than in a central school for international study (MSU, 2015).
- The University of Melbourne's Overseas Subjects initiative allows students to study overseas as part of their major or breadth subjects. Examples include international travelling studios for architecture students in Chile, studying art history in Italy and undertaking a global business practicum in Thailand (University of Melbourne, 2015b).
- NUS' Study Trips for Engagement and Enrichment, which had about 100 students participate in 2013-2014, familiarises students with diverse global environments through a mix of classroom-based learning and experiential site visits (NUS, 2014b).

The above examples focus on outbound student mobility; however, UBC has taken an interesting approach to internationalisation on campus. Their new Vantage College, which accepted 187 students in 2014 with the view to expand to 1,000 students by 2017, is an eleven month residential program that combines first year college studies with academic English, orientation, mentorship and programming for international students. As the only international college of its kind at a top-tier university in Canada, it aims to "develop UBC's understanding of ways to support students with English as a second language" (UBC, 2015a).

2.2. Employability
All of the selected universities recognise the importance of enhancing the employability skills of their students to ensure that they succeed after graduation. Many universities have well-established work placement services. A notable example is UBC's Arts Co-op Program, which places students in non-profit, government and private sector jobs. The program grew by 14% in 2013-2014 to reach 375 placements with over 300 community partners who invested more than $3 million to employ students (UBC, 2014a). Program results are strong with 98% of employers recommending UBC Arts Co-op students, 90% of Canadian co-op graduates receiving job offers within one month after graduation, and Co-op graduates earning 12% higher salaries than non-co-op graduates (UBC, 2015b).

NUS has nurtured the connection between employability and internationalisation by offering an array of international work experience opportunities. For example, they manage the Global Talent Program whereby students and alumni go through a 12-24 week internship at multi-national corporations and are mentored by senior management staff (NUS, 2010). NUS also manages the Global Internship and Mentorship Program where selected undergraduate students are attached to member companies of the Singapore Business Federation to work on global and regional operations (NUS, 2010). Nearly 100 students embarked on international internships in more than 22 countries in academic year 2013/2014 (NUS, 2014b).

Entrepreneurship

One area of commonality across universities is the focus on enhancing students' entrepreneurship skills through business start-up programs. NUS is particularly active in this space. More than 100 companies received pre-incubation and incubation support through NUS Enterprise's various programs and facilities in 2013-2014 (NUS, 2014b). Support through the Start-up Validation Program assisted several start-ups to attract external funding of up to $6.65 million and others to be acquired by major companies. For example, Zopim, a live customer support chat widget, was acquired by San Francisco's Zendesk for US$30 million in April 2014 (NUS, 2014b). The Start-Up@Singapore business plan competition has attracted 3,600 teams and 11,000 individuals since 1999, leading to more than 100 start-up companies (NUS, 2014b).

Another successful entrepreneurship initiative is the University of Auckland's Spark, a voluntary student-led organisation that runs business plan competitions and free business advice seminars every year (University of Auckland, 2015b). The university won the New Zealand Association of Graduate Employers' 2013 Industry Award for providing the best university school careers services in New Zealand (University of Auckland, 2013). Similarly, Nottingham won the inaugural Times Higher Education Entrepreneurial University of the Year Award for "nurturing the most enterprising and globally minded graduates in British higher education" (University of Nottingham, 2014b, p. 28). Among other initiatives, their Haydn Green Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship provides students with business advice and mentoring, surgeries on start-up ideas, free office space, and access to facilities and competitions.

Leadership

To complement the focus on employability, some universities have developed leadership courses and activities for their students. The University of Auckland offers the 360° Leadership Programme for first and second year students (University of Auckland, 2015c). According to

the Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities (2014, p. 28), "the Panel considered the Student Leadership Programme and the Student Volunteer Hub to be excellent initiatives, the latter being the outcome of discussions between staff and students involved in the 360° Leadership Programme".

UWA runs the Global Student Leadership Program, an intensive capstone program focused on applying scholastic learning in an integrated, practical business focus and format (UWA, 2014a). The University Hall Leadership Program, which includes a weekend retreat for students, focuses on social and community leadership development to help new residents during their transition into the community (UWA, 2015b).

2.3. Community engagement

All universities provide opportunities for students to undertake volunteer placements and community service as part of efforts to expand their university experience. Of particular note, NUS aims to actively grow "community builders with a heart" through various volunteer and fundraising initiatives (NUS, 2014b, p. 48). For example, the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Program had 110 participants undertaking health, education and personal development projects for at least 100 hours with a social service organisation in 2014 (NUS, 2014b).

Similarly, UBC undertakes a range of community outreach programs for students to promote student success and expand educational enrichment opportunities. Participation in Community Service Learning, which provides hands-on experience for students to contribute to solutions on social issues, tripled between 2010-2011 and 2013-2014. Over 4,400 students in Vancouver were involved in community service learning in 2013-2014, and 44% of fourth year undergraduate students reported that they participated in a volunteer experience or community service learning while at UBC's Okanagan campus (UBC, 2014a).

Two universities, Leeds and Auckland, have launched online volunteer hubs. At Leeds, use of the Volunteering Hub website, which was launched in 2012-2013, has been steadily increasing, with more than 2,000 hits per week during peak times. The success of the Volunteering Hub has, in turn, led to an increase in partnerships within the local community. Over 2,000 students are actively involved in volunteering at the university (University of Leeds, 2014). The University of Auckland's volunteer hub, launched in 2013, connects non-profits to students and provides a channel for students to receive formal recognition of their volunteer work through the Leadership and Service Awards (University of Auckland, 2013).

2.4. Student recognition

Some universities have developed special awards or transcripts to help students document their international, work and community experiences. Nottingham's award-winning program, the Nottingham Advantage Award, offers students the opportunity to complete 2-3 modules from a choice of 130 courses on career skills, mentoring, cultural awareness, entrepreneurship and volunteering across the university's UK, China and Malaysia campuses. Since its launch in 2008 the award has grown each year, reaching a total of 2,000 graduates so far (University of Nottingham, 2015c).

Similarly, Leeds' Higher Education Achievement Record is an enhanced version of the university's academic transcript that offers a more complete summary of the academic and co-curricular achievements of their students (University of Leeds, 2013c). The University of Auckland's Leadership and Service Award gives students formal recognition of their achievements in leadership and community service undertaken outside of their formal program of study. Unlike other initiatives, this award only recognises unpaid, voluntary work (University of Auckland, 2015a).

Theme 3: Place

Place acknowledges the importance of creating a sense of community and support on campus. This is explicitly reinforced within UQ's Strategic Blueprint for Support of Technology-Enhanced Learning, which states that, "Best practice program and course designs will emphasise the physical experience for educational outcomes that can only be achieved by students participating or working with the instructor/tutor or each other in person" (UQ, 2012, p. 8). Muldoon and Macdonald (2009) found a strong link between academic success and time spent engaging in learning communities in residential colleges, thus reinforcing the importance of building high quality academic and residential facilities for students' use. Many universities have constructed a range of residential, sport and cultural facilities, often with a focus on environmental sustainability.

To complement this infrastructural investment, students often need support services, such as academic and career advising, social activities and emotional counselling, particularly when they are transitioning into or out of university. A few universities have developed streamlined, personalised student support services that take into account all of the students' interactions with the university's systems and processes and directly respond to their needs and interests. As part of these services, certain universities have provided integrated support services to

indigenous students that emphasise succeeding academically and building a sense of community.

3.1. Campus facilities

Most universities provide on campus housing to their students, however, the degree to which they connect the residential space to learning varies. NUS and UWA have most clearly created links between student accommodation and learning. NUS is currently piloting the Ridge View Residential College, a new residential learning experience for 200 undergraduates. The year-long residential program, which focuses on career preparation and student exposure to industry, will run seminars, visits and a mentorship scheme to provide students with opportunities to engage and interact with industry players (NUS, 2015c). In 2011-2012, UWA built University Hall with 500 rooms and a range of academic and social amenities to accommodate up to 750 students. According to the 2014 Annual Residential Survey completed by 210 students, one third of the students said that the hall greatly contributed to their academic achievement, while 21% said it made no difference (UWA, 2014b).

Other investments have focused on sports and cultural facilities to enhance the university environment for students and foster connections with the local community. For example, the University of Melbourne has 40 sport, recreational and instructional clubs with over 6,000 members. Student satisfaction is strong, with 79.4% of students rating the overall quality of sport and fitness facilities as good to excellent in 2013 (University of Melbourne, 2013). They also provided grants totalling $231,800 in 2013 to support culture on campus, including student theatre productions, lunchtime concerts and international festivals (University of Melbourne, 2013). Similarly, UWA has invested in a Cultural Precinct, which is "evolving into a spine of arts and cultural activities flexing through the campus" (UWA, 2014c).

Numerous universities have invested in ensuring that their campus is environmentally sustainable and sought to ensure that these facilities are connected to teaching and learning. Leeds developed a partnership-based sustainable garden, linking edible planting, wildflower areas and research pods to create a space which is open to staff, students and the local community. They are also developing the Living Lab concept, linking estate and campus operations with research and student education in sustainability. The university's sustainability work was recognised through a Leeds Architecture Award and Environment and Energy Award in 2014 (University of Leeds, 2014).

Nottingham invested in cycle facilities and new low-carbon buildings, and connected teaching and learning to sustainability through their Grand Challenge to include sustainability in

curricula (University of Nottingham, 2012). The university received first place in the 2013 Green Metric World University Ranking and won the Times Higher Education 2012 Award for outstanding contribution to sustainable development (University of Nottingham, 2014b). Similarly, UBC is investing $150 million in various "Campus as a Living Lab" projects, including pioneering sustainable building design and optimisation, bio-fuel technology and alternative energy sources (UBC, 2015c).

3.2. Student support services

All of the universities provide the typical range of student support services, including student clubs, social events and community activities. Three universities have sought to streamline their student support activities, often with a focus on incoming undergraduate students. UBC provides a personalised service for incoming students, whereby each incoming first-year student is assigned their own student service specialist who guides and assists them throughout their entire university career (UBC, 2012). As part of this approach, students with concerns are identified as early as possible through Early Alert and connected to supportive resources and services. In 2013-2014, 2,457 concerns from faculty and staff were registered. Twenty-seven percent resulted in a reach out to students and 92% of students accepted the offer to meet with an advisor (UBC, 2014a).

OSU runs the First Year Experience Program, a suite of activities, events, camps and development programs to help new students to develop the skills and connections required to meet the challenges they face both in and out of the classroom (OSU, 2015b). Part of the program includes the recruitment and training of First Year Experience Peer Leaders who support new students through year-round outreach and relationship development to connect them to people, resources and information essential for success in the first year of university (OSU, 2015c).

The University of Melbourne has been focusing on building self-service capabilities into student systems. In 2013, the university undertook the Enrolment Communications project that developed a set of online step-by-step guides, redesigned the enrolment web architecture and revised the student management system content. The result was a 75% drop in contact centre phone and email enquiries about enrolment and a more than 50% increase in student self-service through ask.unimelb, which experienced an increased hit rate of 75% in 2013 compared to the 2010-12 average (University of Melbourne, 2013).

In terms of directly engaging with students, the university developed the Student Connect program to provide advice and coaching on transitioning to university, career and further study

options to undergraduate students, targeting first-year students in particular. By the end of 2013, Student Connect had met over 3,100 individual students with approximately 95% reporting that they were clearer about their goals and how to achieve them (University of Melbourne, 2013).

Indigenous student support

Of the surveyed universities, UBC and the University of Auckland have the most comprehensive support services for their Indigenous students. UBC offers at least 116 courses with significant indigenous content, has expanded Aboriginal and expert research staff positions, manages pathway programs to help indigenous students gain access to university, and provides a suite of general support and wellbeing services such as the Aboriginal Portal, academic immersion programs, elder visits and scholarships (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2015). One institutional report notes that as a result of these efforts, "UBC has now become a preferred institution for graduate students in indigenous fields from across North America and the Pacific" (UBC, 2014c, p. 3).

The University of Auckland provides Maori and Pacific students with academic awards, information services, learning skills support, access and transition programs, career consulting and cultural events (University of Auckland, 2015d, 2015e). Their most recent audit report commended the university "on its long-standing comprehensive, systematic and informed approach to encouraging the access and transition of Maori and Pacific students to University" (Academic Quality Agency for New Zealand Universities, 2014, p. 18).

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