Case Study: Biology, University of Sydney

Students as partner app developers: CampusFlora

The initial premise of CampusFlora was to offer an online map the campus plants so make it possible for botany students to use living botanical learning resource (aka trees) outside of formal class time. And who better to ask to co-develop a Botany learning resource than a Botany student? Undergraduate Botany student, Lachlan Pettit, developed the first online campus static map focused on gymnosperms (n = 20) in 2013 in collaboration with Drs Quinnell and Pye. There was clear potential to address 'plant blindness' at a larger scale by offering access to information on all the trees on campus (n = 2600+) via an interactive map; and, when the decision was made to co-create a mobile app it seemed there was no turning back. CampusFlora has now become an m-Learning strategy that has turned our whole campuses into outdoor learning spaces for botany and ecology throughout the life science curriculum.

Undergraduates students have partnered at all stages of App design, development and deployment. Biology student-partners are experts in content and educational design (key contributions: photography, trail creation, maintaining the database), and Computer science student-partners are our experts in app development (key contribution: android app development and enhanced functionality). Arguably the most valuable outcome has been providing students with opportunities to co-author papers and to present the scholarship of this project at a range of fora within the institution, nationally and internationally. To date 10 students across the Faculties of Science and Engineering have co-authored and/or co-presented as members of the CampusFlora team. Continued develops of the app system as "OurFlora" are being undertaken under the mentorship of the CSIRO's ONPRIME program.

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