

## SESSION SEVEN ABSTRACTS - Continued

<p><b>CODE:</b> SC81: M1 9.15am – 9.35am</p>	<p>Student Engagement is currently a topic of interest globally, the rhetoric being if we could engage our students more in the learning process, we could enhance their attainment and retention. Student engagement with learning is however a complex issue. Several factors combine to provide challenges for Universities to successfully engage all students effectively in their own learning: mass higher education, increased diversity of the student population; changing expectations of students and the potential of new technologies for example.</p> <p>Barnett and Coate (2005) argue for a curriculum for engagement – ‘a curriculum for engagement calls for a teaching that is likely to engage, to connect, to lift, to enthuse, even to inspire’. But what would a curriculum for engagement look like and do we have sufficient insight into how both staff and students conceptualise ‘the curriculum’?</p> <p>Some of the best information we have on student engagement comes from the surveys carried out over a period of ten years across Australian universities led by the University of Melbourne (Krause et al, 2005). From these surveys carried out on the first year student experience, which implicitly encompass ‘engagement with learning’, we gain a picture of what is being measured and how what we measure can inform our approach and response to providing a curriculum for engagement. However, this work in itself raises further questions: can we realistically measure whether or not our students are engaged? Do the surveys provide meaningful data? Are surveys the only approach to determining the way forward in designing and delivering a curriculum for engagement?</p> <p>Tamsin Haggis in her work on pedagogies for diversity (2006) suggests that we need to consider institutional factors that might militate against engagement for some students, such as the social environment that is provided or promoted, the potential for cultural alienation and the hidden costs of university level education. In addition, she suggests that language as used within different disciplines may initially be alien to some of our students depending on their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Laurillard (2006) believes that academic expectations are in themselves difficult to grasp. To ‘engage within a disciplinary context for example, students need to be able to apprehend the implicit structure of the discourse.</p> <p>How can we draw on the various strands of research relating to ‘student engagement’ to support academics in designing a ‘curriculum for engagement’.</p> <p>The aims of this session are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Explore some of the complexities of the notion of ‘student engagement’</li> <li>ii) Interrogate the idea of a curriculum for engagement</li> <li>iii) Seek participant involvement in shaping a potential research agenda on student engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>TITLE:</b></p> <p>Emerging perspectives on student engagement</p>	
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<p><b>CODE:</b> SC103: M1 9.40am – 10.00am</p>	<p>The challenges inherent in teaching and studying through distance education have been recognised by many (e.g., Bower, 2004; Peters, 2001; Willems, 2007). A range of specific issues can be identified which distance educators increasingly need to grapple with. These include issues of access, particularly as distance teaching moves increasingly online (e.g., Willems, 2004), and issues of equity and comparability (e.g., Gibb, 2006; Yang, 2006), where the challenge is to ensure that distance students receive an educational experience that is equivalent to that available to on-campus students. For educators interested in promoting the creation of learning communities amongst student populations, a further challenge is to bridge the divide between those students undertaking a course in a traditional on-campus mode and those studying the same course through distance education.</p> <p>In many institutions which offer both on-campus and distance versions of the same courses, parallel structures exist for the design and delivery of subject content which are mirrored by parallel sets of student experiences. It is often the case that distance and on-campus students have very little to do with each other, and despite studying the same course through the same institution, may have very few opportunities to interact with their peers and form broader communities of learning. This is particularly significant for distance learners who are often geographically dispersed and can experience their education as an isolating and individualised process.</p> <p>This paper reports on developments in so-called Web 2.0 technologies that present opportunities to bridge this gap (e.g., Deng and Yuen, 2007; Elgort, 2007; Jones, 2007). The use of Blogs and Wikis is discussed and two specific examples provided of their use in a social work degree course. In the first, less successful, example, first year students in both modes created critically reflective blogs as a piece of assessment. Students were then able to access, read and comment on each other’s reflections. In the second example, final year social work students worked collaboratively to develop a group wiki as an assessable task, where the groups involved were comprised of both on-campus and distance learners. This exercise produced significant outcomes in terms of bringing these two cohorts of students together and creating a community of learners that stood in stark contrast to many distance students’ previous experience of higher education. Students’ own reflections on this process are provided in support of these outcomes.</p> <p>The discussion of these examples focuses on the potential for Web 2.0 technologies to create opportunities for distance education and on-campus students to interact in meaningful ways and, through the design of collaborative learning activities, to begin to build communities of learning that transcend both geographical distance and the on-campus / off-campus divide.</p>
<p><b>TITLE:</b></p> <p>Building communities of learning: Using Web 2.0 tools to bring on-campus and distance education students together</p>	
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