

TERTIARY EDUCATION MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE (TEMC) 2014 – *ADAPTING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT*

The 2014 Tertiary Education Management Conference (TEMC) provided the occasion for delegates from Universities and other organisations associated with Tertiary Education to take time out from their roles and focus on:

STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP

- Existing and emerging trends affecting the Tertiary Education Sector (international, national and local influences).
- Aligning strategic objectives to known and projected changes in the environment.
- Learning from successful leaders (internal and external to the Tertiary Education sector).
- Strengthening networks across the Tertiary Education Sector (within the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA) and the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM)).

MANAGEMENT

- Expanding knowledge through the wide spectrum of workshops spanning most areas of Tertiary Education including areas such as facilities management, policy, administration, human resources, organisational change, international, environment and pedagogical practice.
- Informal discussions and post-conference meetings allowing information exchange and more detailed analysis of operations.
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of new products and services available in the sector.



CHALLENGES IN THE AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR

A number of key presenters at the conference highlighted the challenges faced by our sector:

- The economic environment:
 - Strong Australian Dollar.
- The Political environment:
 - Fiscal tightening and changing regulation.
 - Opposite scenarios in some high growth economies (India, China, Brazil, Russia, etc.) increased funding and strong policy aimed at education sector growth.
 - Increasing competitive advantage for private institutions that aren't subject to the same level of restriction and transparency required by public institutions.
- International Relations:
 - Strain on international relationships stemming from international and national incidents and military involvement of Australia and international partners.
 - Increasing Terrorism threat.
- Increasing consumer expectations:
 - Flexibility of options.
 - Response quality and timing crucial.
 - Difficult to gather information – social media effective way of connecting with customers but difficult to collect/quantify/collate data.
- Technological change:
 - The rate of advancement renders management of this area critical.
 - Security of Information Technology and communications systems – intellectual property, etc. under threat.
 - Cost involved with being at leading edge.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STRATEGIES IN CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

A number of key considerations for the sector when developing strategies were discussed including:

- Timing and tempo:
 - Timing key strategies to coordinate with decision-making cycles of others.
 - Avoiding procrastination – don't neglect to make decisions or make them too late.
- Continuous Improvement.
- Consolidation of systems.
- Strategic Asset Management (SAM):
 - Innovative, forward-thinking solutions.
 - Space Management.
 - Design Standards.
 - Developing synergies in the transition from Capital Development to Operations.
- Strong financial management:
 - Financial literacy - difference between cost and price.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STRATEGIES IN CHANGING ENVIRONMENT continued...

- Strategies developed in context:
 - SWOT analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and leveraging each of these.
 - Environmental scans – influencing factors (national, global, etc.).
 - Innovative capitalisation of resources to meet needs and develop business areas e.g. “baby boomers” as volunteers, part time workers etc.
 - Industry demand.
 - Needs to be a stretch target.
 - Need for staff to subscribe to vision.
 - Analysis of risk:
 - Avoid confusing innovation with emulation.
 - Focus on our niche/points of uniqueness that attract business.
 - Awareness of risk appetite.
 - Think outside of risk paradigm.
 - Blame culture stifles innovation.
- Collaboration – lack of synergies becomes obvious to customer and leads to disjointed systems.
- Positive culture and framework for change.
- Periodical renew and refresh of strategy.
- Partnerships – externally through inter-sectorial pathways, etc. Internally between disciplines.
- Student and staff engagement –culture of inclusion/encouraging curiosity/welcoming/openness/collaboration/success/activities/cultural and traditional treasures.

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY (JCU) CAIRNS CAMPUS TOUR

Many of the elements of JCU’s success alluded to in Professor Sandra Harding’s presentation at the TEMC conference were apparent in the JCU Cairns post-conference Campus tour:

- Leveraging elements of distinction:
 - Rainforest – viewing platform and walking areas, arboretum, tropical disease research centre, building design emulating elements of tropical environment.
 - Maintaining sense of history and culture through moving a historical building from Cairns CBD to the Campus.
 - Reef – research facilities.
 - Indigenous – cultural displays integrated into building design.
 - Global connections with other tropical Universities.
 - Geographical diversity of Campuses and Research Centres.
- Clarity of vision – strong strategic intent articulated through the University Plan.

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY (JCU) CAIRNS CAMPUS TOUR continued...

- Local connections :
 - Industry.
 - Television documentaries.
 - CSIRO and other research organisations.
- Innovation:
 - Central Energy Tank at the top of the Campus –energy generation suited to climate.
 - Building design – energy efficient, aligned to climate, sustainability, lifecycle costing considerations.

On the board of Universities Australia, Professor Sandra Harding and her colleagues present the Higher Education perspective on education policy to the Australian government.

SUMMARY

A few key elements of successful leadership through the volatile environment ahead of Tertiary Institutions were highlighted at the 2014 TEMC conference:

- Awareness of the environment and emerging influences.
- Robust timely strategy that leverages strengths and ignites innovation.

The 2014 Tertiary Education Management Conference provided ample opportunity to gain knowledge and build networks to assist in these objectives. Supplementing this are TEFMA's ongoing resources and initiatives that support and encourage information exchange and development opportunities for its members.



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