



## **VICE CHANCELLOR'S TRANSITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE**

### **CONFIRMED MINUTES**

A meeting of the VC'S Transition and Retention Taskforce was held on **Wednesday May 5<sup>th</sup> 2021** from **2.00 to 3.30 pm in KW-UG 17** and via **Zoom**

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### **1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

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#### **1.1 WELCOME**

Simon Bedford (Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming members.

#### **1.2 ATTENDEES**

Professor Simon Bedford, PVC Learning Futures (Chair)  
Natalie Bradbury, Director, Student Retention & Success  
Michael Burgess, Chief Student Experience Officer  
Assoc. Prof. Jo-Anne Chuck, Head of Teaching and Curriculum, Learning Futures  
Dr Colin Clark, Project Officer, Learning Futures  
Lizette Delacy, Director, Data Integrity, Quality & Operations  
Lynnae Venaruzzo, Head, Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL), Learning Futures  
Leanne Yard, Associate Director, Office of Competitive Intelligence and Analysis

#### **1.3 INVITEES**

Linda Taylor, PVC (International)

#### **1.4 APOLOGIES**

All members present—No apologies received

#### **1.5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were accepted, with minor corrections.

#### **1.6 ACTION SHEET FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

To assist members with monitoring and controlling the work of the Committee, the current action sheet (incorporating items arising from previous meetings) was discussed.

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### **2 NEW BUSINESS**

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#### **2.1 Update on Senate Education Committee: T&R Progression Strategy (JC & LY)**

Leanne Yard and Jo-Anne Chuck reported to Senate Education Committee on behalf of the Taskforce. The purpose of this presentation was to inform the committee of the terms of reference of the task force and to get endorsement of the work to be carried out by schools to improve T&R outcomes. Aligning T&R schoolwork to the T&R strategy and using LF and other areas of university for support was endorsed, including a reporting schedule.

Schools agreed to nominate and undertake work on two units, courses or themes using the T&R strategy and nominate a metric to assess the results. These will be sent to LF by the 21<sup>st</sup> May to review and facilitate cross university support.

The Education Committee will receive updates from the Schools in August and November 2021, and an overview of their transition and onboarding plans for 2022.

The presentation also covered the STARS and START programs and data access. The chair noted that the reception from the Senate Education Committee was positive.

Further discussions centred on updating the strategies and some work on impact on flexible learning on T&R.

**See Attachment 2.1**

**Actions:** Colin to gather responses from schools and to work with school-based staff to connect with appropriate areas of the university to implement the strategies.

Colin to investigate literature concerning whether flexible learning and need for support improves transition and retention.

Jo to update T&L strategy to make online learning more explicit.

**2.2 Formation/Revitalisation of STARS Network/Community of Practice (JC)**

Since the restructuring in 2020, STARS coordinators have not been evenly spread across schools, so the network requires reformulation and refreshment. An academic lead STARS coordinator will be appointed. An International STARS coordinator should also be considered.

It was also discussed that a research project on flexible learning would be a suitable project under the START umbrella ethics approval.

**Action:** Simon to appoint an academic lead for the STARS network.

**2.3 International Students—Response to concerns raised (Linda Taylor, PVC International)**

Linda is interested in following up on Annual Course Reports (ACRs) and appropriate thresholds to understand International students at risk and units with high attrition.

It was noted that retention strategies must recognise the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) act relating to the management of international students. ESOS recommends one international student advisor per 1000 students, and Western Sydney University currently does not have anyone in that role. Linda discussed the appointment of a STARS coordinator for international students to fulfill this role

It was discussed that the best allocation of resources for international student retention remains to be determined, and whether there should be a separate strategy for international students or via integration into existing frameworks such as Western Success.

**Action:** Colin to invite the new STARS Network academic lead to next meeting.

**2.4 Update on Western Success (Michael Burgess / Natalie Bradbury)**

Western Success will appoint a new manager in the near future. The service has been active, with regular calls to students in addition to targeted campaigns such as

outreach to students in Myanmar. There is potential for further outreach to students in other COVID-19 hotspots such as India.

High priorities include:

- improving communications and support around release of results and gathering information on appropriate referral people in schools;
- a wellbeing pilot with the Behavioural Insights Team, which has Commonwealth funding for a project with Western Success, involving text nudges on themes such as gratitude;
- targeted at-risk and exam calls;
- piloting the Advise module in the School of Business and The College in collaboration with the Advise team. This would involve Western Success providing oversight and guidance on the triggers for intervention.
- assessing the integration of the Advise module with Western Success, and its suitability for this purpose.

A project scope is to be finalised by the end of May 2021.

Government changes next year under the Jobs-Ready Graduate Package mean that domestic students deemed not to be genuine students on the basis of low completion rates (passing less than 50% of courses) will lose Commonwealth funding for study. This has implications for progression policy and GPA-neutral measures.

**Actions:** Natalie to keep the Taskforce updated on Western Success / Advise

Jo to request Assessment Committee to ensure units have early summative assessments to inform Western Success

## **2.5 Develop Data Sources, Learning Analytics and Business Intelligence to Support Retention Planning (NB/LY)**

Competitive Intelligence and Analysis (CIA) requires guidance on the metrics that would be useful for the work of the taskforce, as opposed to those used by schools at a lower level of analysis. These may include proportions of students undertaking Hyflex delivery, on campus delivery, and the times of day they study. Student achievement is also important in addition to retention. The group also reviewed T&R data as at May 2021

Leanne Yard presented a new visual on R&T for the committee to consider. Currently the metrics captured on CIA dashboards for School review (see Attachment 2.5) include:

- numbers of offshore/onshore students
- numbers of international/domestic students
- enrolment flux (weekly numbers of unit, course, school or university enrolments)
- undergraduate / postgraduate
- historical comparisons with 2019
- unit grade distribution
- tracked retention over time
- stacked bar charts showing categories of attrition/completion/retention as proportions of students ever enrolled

It was noted that graphics should take into account students on leave of absence, those who never attend class and those who change university. Better understanding

why students leave will assist with understanding the effects of different retention strategies.

At present, WSU is not lapsing students who repeatedly enrol then drop out just before census, but will commence lapsing students again soon. It was agreed that an outreach campaign should be implemented to reach out to understand why these students have disengaged before we lapse them.

**See Attachment 2.5**

**Action:** Simon and Jo to write research questions of interest to the Taskforce to guide the selection of data.

Leanne and Michael to discuss standardisation of categories for consistency across services.

**2.6 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday June 2nd 2.00–3.30 pm in KW-UG.17 and via Zoom.