

## Enhancing Cultural Capability as a Graduate Attribute at the University of Tasmania

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### Review Article

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This paper delivered at the Cultural Competence in Higher Education: Dilemmas, Policies and Practice Conference at the University of Sydney in 2018 discusses the work in progress at The University of Tasmania (UTAS) to enhance graduate attributes and understandings and increase staff capacity. It explores a cultural competence framework developed for health and education - related degrees as well as arrangements in place to promote staff development for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives with a view to improving health and education services and outcomes for Australia's First Peoples. It describes arrangements at UTAS to provide insights into practice towards developing culturally responsive graduates. The approach taken is based on collaboration with Indigenous staff and community members and is Indigenous led. As there is a lack of scholarship on how the work of cultural competence is being carried out within higher education the strategies adopted at UTAS may be useful for others working in this space.

## INTRODUCTION

To address the poor health and education outcomes of Australia's First Peoples, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, we began by focusing our efforts at UTAS on ensuring that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, so that they can fully participate in the curriculum and build their self-esteem; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are embedded across the curriculum which is designed for all students to engage in recognition, respect and reconciliation of the world's oldest continuous living cultures, while also building the cultural capability of our graduates.

The National Centre for Cultural Competence (NCCC) at Sydney University has defined cultural capability as the ability to actively, ethically, respectfully and successfully engage in intercultural settings. It is based on valuing diversity for the richness and creativity it brings to institutions, groups and society. It requires ongoing awareness of and reflection on one's own cultural values and worldview and those of others<sup>[1]</sup>.

We are moving toward adopting the term 'cultural capability' and away from 'cultural competence' and 'cultural safety' that have been used in the past. We have focused our efforts as described above as Indigenous and other minority populations worldwide experience higher rates of disease, including poor oral health, than other populations, and the cultural competence of practitioners is increasingly being recognized as fundamental to health care and quality of life in addressing these disparities<sup>[2]</sup>.

There is a wealth of literature on the need for higher education institutions to develop the cultural competence, safety, responsiveness and capacity of staff and students but few examples of how this work is being done. This is affirmed by Ličen, Karnjuš, Bogataj, Rebec, and Prosen in their recent review of cultural competence in nursing which calls for greater methodological rigor in studies of cultural competence education for health professionals<sup>[3]</sup>. Our experience confirms there is no recipe or set of steps for the development of cultural capability as it a process that is situational, context-dependent and relational so we are unable to provide readers with a set of instructions to duplicate at their respective institutions, what can be shared is what we have done and how this fits in with the UTAS's whole of university approach.

Like water droplets on stone we are slowly wearing down resistance through persistently providing opportunities to engage with Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within courses, through professional development and at public events. Further explanation of this work follows, starting with some background information before moving on to outlining the strategies which have been introduced at UTAS.

Our journey toward a cultural capability perspective began several years ago with The University of Tasmania's Policy on Generic Attributes of Graduates. This specifies five generic attributes for UTAS graduates, one of which is:

- Graduates will be able to demonstrate a global perspective and intercultural competence in their professional lives <sup>[34]</sup>

This was an important goal to address the development of cultural safety, which was defined by the UTAS Project Working Party in 2004, 'as a practical process where attitudinal and behavioral change occurs as a result of information, education and experience' <sup>[4]</sup>.

The process of growing culturally capable graduates at UTAS involved Indigenising the curriculum by building on the attributes of awareness, knowledge, understanding, sensitivity, interaction, proficiency and skill, with a focus on the importance of cultural safety. This work guided by Cross, Davis, Campinha-Bacote, Diller, Mohan Muzumbar, Holiday-Goodman, Black and Powers (2010) led to the development and adoption of the following content requirements for all courses <sup>[6-9]</sup> :

- (1) nature and significance of culture;
- (2) general understanding of Indigenous issues;
- (3) exploration individual and dominant society values and attitudes;
- (4) critical examination of the relevant professional culture;
- (5) professional or vocational specific content and
- (6) skills for working with Indigenous people <sup>[12]</sup>.

In addition, the following key components were recommended for inclusion within courses:

- (1) knowledge of prehistory, as well as the historical and contemporary experience of Indigenous Australians, to develop understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories along with relevant state, national and international legislation and guidelines;
- (2) cultural reflection on personal values and attitudes and those of the respective professions, to explore and understand one's own values, power, and privilege and to examine the respective profession in Indigenous contexts; and
- (3) development of culturally appropriate skills and strategies, to build on the first two components through knowledge of culture, values and skills for the profession (this article has further information on the specific programs introduced for developing culturally capable graduates at UTAS) <sup>[12]</sup>.

Over time several strategies have been introduced to support cultural affirmation at UTAS including: A pre-degree bridging program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Flying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on each campus, along with Cake days, Community lunches, Indigenous film nights, Community barbeques which all students are invited to attend. Special events such as public lectures, forums and conferences are convened to show case Indigenous scholars and Indigenous role models. Indigenous knowledges and reflective writing have been included in course content and a cultural exchange program has been developed with the University of Northern Arizona. News of these events is shared via the Riawunna face book and our Aboriginal business website, **Table 1** outlines those active in 2018. These actions serve to enhance pride in Aboriginal heritage for our Aboriginal students and to increase the understanding of our non-indigenous students, who are welcome to attend the public events including film nights and lectures by Indigenous scholars.

**Murina Program** - A pre-degree bridging pathway course for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

*Reflective writing: journals:*

- daily and weekly entries.
- Murina pathway program.

*Special events:*

- On Country visits.

*Indigenous content:*

- Inclusion of Indigenous voices and texts are core in all subject areas
- Indigenous role models
- Indigenous course co-ordinators and tutors.

<p><b>Riawunna Centre</b></p> <p><i>Flags:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flown each day</li> <li>- Special flag raising ceremonies are arranged for significant events.</li> <li>- Flags are lowered to honour significant Indigenous deaths.</li> </ul> <p><i>Cake days held monthly.</i></p> <p><i>Special events:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Sorry Day, Mabo Day, NAIDOC.</li> <li>- Indigenous Literacy Day.</li> <li>- World Indigenous Peoples Day.</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources for students and teachers</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous role models:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous Head of Service</li> <li>- Indigenous Student Success Officers</li> <li>- Elders</li> <li>- Community members</li> <li>- Visiting artists &amp; writers</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous news:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Koori Mail</i> and <i>Indigenous Times</i> provided for students.</li> </ul> <p><i>Community barbeques.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one in each semester</li> </ul> <p><i>Cultural exchange program.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- one in each semester.</li> </ul>
<p><b>UTAS</b></p> <p><i>Special events:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Japanangka Errol West Lecture</li> <li>- Harmony Day</li> <li>- Diversity Week</li> <li>- Reconciliation Week</li> <li>- Manalargener Day</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous scholars:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scholarships</li> <li>- Workshops</li> <li>- Guest lectures</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous content:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Included as required for accreditation, e.g., medicine, pharmacy, social work, education.</li> <li>- For all new courses and as each course is reviewed</li> </ul> <p><i>Indigenous role models:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appointment of Indigenous Higher Education Advisor, 2014</li> <li>- Appointment of PVC Indigenous Research &amp; Leadership, 2015</li> <li>- Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Employment Co-ordinator 2015, to promotes employment and professional development opportunities</li> </ul> <p><i>Cultural exchange program</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous Cultural Education Exchange Program to Northern Arizona University from 2017.</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Strategies to support cultural affirmation at UTAS in 2018

The Footprints Pathway outlined in **Table 2** comprised of online learning resources was developed to assist ‘students to move from awareness to competence during their degree’ through completing all four components shown in the table <sup>[10]</sup>. The four components: Awareness, Integration, Foundation and Consolidation are recommended for completion on the journey to becoming culturally capable. Footprints Awareness is recommended for all students and Footprints Foundation in all discipline areas.

Components	Year	Key learning activity	Portfolio
Student survey	First and final year	Pre and post awareness component	
Footprints Awareness	In first year of degree	Come Walk with Us or Online Unit	Online discussions Reflective writing
Footprints Foundation	In first or second year of degree	Aboriginal Studies Unit or Foundation unit	Unit completion
Integration	Ongoing throughout degree	Curriculum to include Indigenous content and assessment	Work samples. Assessment and progression.
Consolidation	In final year of degree	Aboriginal Studies Units Health or Special Topic or Research Project	Work samples Research Project

**Table 2:** Footprints pathway.

Findings from the review of the literature about teaching cultural competence in dental education by Forsyth (2017) suggest that integration of cultural competency curricula using a combination of didactic or online training, community engagement, and reflective writing may increase the cultural knowledge and skills of students <sup>[2]</sup>. Rogers argues that critical reflection should take learners beyond colonial empathy to motivate them take agency and move toward social-political action to bring about transformations and break the destructive dynamics in relationships between traditional peoples and settler populations <sup>[14]</sup>. Given the importance of critical reflection, maintaining a reflective journal is a key element of the Footprints online modules along with sharing discussion posts.

In 2012 the Come Walk with Us program was introduced and has become a core component in many degrees including, education, social work, pharmacy, psychology, health science, medicine and nursing. Both programs are key to developing the above graduate attribute.

### **COME WALK WITH US**

The Come Walk with Us (CWWU) program was developed in consultation with Aboriginal people across Tasmania and the Aboriginal Education Unit in the Department of Education as well as other key stakeholders. It has been delivered to University students and staff, health professionals, government departments, TAFE and organisations across the state. Evaluation forms completed at the end of every session have indicated the program is successful and has changed people’s awareness of Aboriginal people their history and culture in Tasmania. The Come Walk with Us program which received a citation for outstanding contribution to student learning in 2016, focuses on issues that affect Aboriginal People in Tasmania from historical to contemporary times. The program is delivered as a three-hour workshop, is easy to understand and allows frank and open questions to be posed and addressed.

The CWWU program is an integral part of Indigenising the curriculum (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives) at UTAS. This is done using an approach, that aims to move students from awareness to capable, to produce mindful graduates who can be agents of change. This journey at UTAS involves the following:

- Cultural Awareness, which includes a general understanding of Indigenous culture, society and history;
- Cultural Safety, which focuses on cultural sensitivity and an equitable power balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
- Cultural Security, which relates to the legitimacy of cultural rights, values and expectations of Indigenous Australians (acknowledging and incorporating cultural differences through education, engagement and communication); and
- Cultural Respect, which is the recognition of and respect for the inherent rights and traditions of Indigenous Australians. It incorporates a holistic approach involving partnerships, capacity building and accountability <sup>[10]</sup>.

CWWU is an essential tool for addressing Cultural Awareness and Safety for both students and staff, while security and respect are addressed through the inclusion of integration and consolidation elements within courses. The program started with a health teaching focus but is now a metaprogram sitting across health and education and has expanded to other areas, including as a component of induction for new UTAS staff. It is certainly a good example of ‘from little things big things grow’ as demonstrated in **Table 3**.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of sessions for UTAS staff &amp; students</b>	<b>Number of sessions for other groups</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
2007	3	3	357
2008	2	6	283
2009	1	5	222
2010	5	3	273
2011	5	4	297
2012	6	3	269
2013	6	9	335
2014	11	3	474
2015	11	2	221
2016	10	5	350
2017	8	5	359
2018	13	8	440
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>3880</b>

**Table 3:** Summary of “Come Walk with Us” sessions delivered 2007-2018

Note - Other groups includes: Anglicare, Colony 47, Australian Education Union, Mission Australia, Bapcare, Primary Health Tasmania, Cancer Council, Royal Flying Doctor, and Diabetes Tasmania.

Transformative learning theory asserts that individuals must critically reflect on life events to change their beliefs or

behaviours <sup>[13]</sup>. The CWWU program assists participants in doing this, by engaging the participants as imagined Aboriginal people living in the nine nations of Aboriginal Tasmania prior to colonisation and taking them through the impacts of the subsequent policy periods by using interactive role plays of significant events. Also, involving Elders and community members in the sessions allows the sharing of direct experiences which moves learning towards increased social accountability, as the participants become aware of the real impacts of past policies and events which motivates them to take action <sup>[14]</sup>.

The aim of CWWU is to enable participants to 'experience' what has happened to Aboriginal people through history to understand how this affects the way Aboriginal people live and engage with other people today. The Blanket Exercise program in Canada a participatory history lesson provides a similar experience, it was also developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers and educators to foster truth, understanding, respect and reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples <sup>[15]</sup>.

At the end of each CWWU session participants are invited to participate in a yarning circle to reflect on their learning journey and to complete an evaluation form. These evaluation forms indicate that the program has changed people's awareness of Aboriginal people their history and culture in Tasmania as described in the statements below.

### Feedback from staff:

- The activity-based approach is excellent – well done – such a wonderful experience.
- A great opportunity to gain some fundamental knowledge of Aboriginal history.
- This journey dispelled some untrue stories.
- I needed my ears and eyes opened.
- It was great to learn more about Aboriginal history in Tasmanian. Very good for increasing awareness and consideration for including Aboriginal history and knowledge in my teaching.
- Should be compulsory for every Tasmanian.
- Workshop was well presented and a great opportunity to gain some fundamental knowledge of Aboriginal history.
- Thanks for today's session it was great value, a lot of the stuff I understood from my own work background which I tried to reflect in my feed-back but I just wanted to add that it was a really good introduction for those that have not had much exposure to Aboriginal culture and particularly Tasmanian Aboriginal history.
- This session is invaluable to a personal and intellectual understanding of the impact of: the colonisation of Tasmania on the Aboriginal people of this island; understanding NI [non-Indigenous] culture; and understanding the fluidity of ethics. It is also important for a fuller understanding of the rationale for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL] standards.

### Feedback from students:

- Thank you for demonstrating the intensity of this era in history.
- The map is powerful and thought provoking.
- The workshop has helped me to understand that I need to learn more.
- The history was related to real life stories/events – made it easier to understand. The activities made workshop interactive and interesting.
- Different types of interaction; group discussion, role play etc. makes the session lively.
- I liked the interactive 'journey' we were able to follow and be a part of, having us take a walk in their shoes.
- High levels of interaction, lots of questions asked which promoted active listening.

The general message is that the session is a powerful experience which has influenced them to become more informed and aware of Indigenous issues and motivated them to learn more beyond the classroom. The program has been extended across several degrees at the university and is in demand from external agencies. This demand is largely the result of UTAS graduates gaining employment in the sector and recommending the program for staff development in their respective agencies, a direct example of transformative learning in action as change agents.

The information provided on the evaluation forms indicates how they have responded to the session and alerts any gaps for future inclusion. The content has evolved over time in response to participant feedback and to include new significant achievements on the path to improving the health and education of Indigenous Australians. Since CWWU was first developed it has been revised and updated in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2017 to keep content current.

**The Health Policy Institute States** <sup>[16]</sup>

Cultural competency is at the core of high quality, patient-centred care, and it directly impacts how care is delivered and received.

Knowledge of cultural customs enables health care providers to offer better care and help avoid misunderstandings.

Evidence points to the pivotal role of cultural identity in shaping wellbeing for Indigenous Australians and other indigenous peoples around the world, and also because stronger cultural identity appears to promote greater participation and achievement in education and training <sup>[17]</sup>, it is imperative that our university courses are inclusive of Australia's Indigenous cultures and histories to enhance the successful completion of studies by Indigenous students so they can more readily provide for their families, contribute to their communities and the broader society. The CWWU program contributes to doing this at UTAS.

All programs and services for Indigenous Australians should be based on 'cultural respect – recognition and respect of the inherent rights and traditions of Indigenous Australians which incorporates a holistic approach involving partnership, capacity building and accountability' <sup>[10]</sup>. These ideas are further explored in the following section.

### DECOLONISATION

All the work undertaken at UTAS to enhance cultural capability is based on the fundamental need to address the larger project of decolonisation, which is required to enrich learning for all students.

According to Manathunga colonisation involved not only physical, military and economic invasion but was accompanied and justified on the basis of exporting Western knowledge, technologies and cultural beliefs to the world <sup>[18]</sup>. 'Colonial systems of power sought to eradicate indigenous systems around the globe. Learned societies and universities are heavily implicated in this' <sup>[19]</sup>. Decolonising education means engaging in a critical dialogue with difference and a first step is acknowledging black pain and anger throughout the postcolonial world. Wilson and Yellow Bird state 'Decolonization is the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation' <sup>[20]</sup>. Nakata claims that the displacement of culture and knowledge systems within colonial ideology had a far-reaching impact as Indigenous Australians were relegated to being passive recipients of Western knowledge while their knowledge systems were made invisible by global hegemonies <sup>[23,24]</sup>. Nakata also argues that 'Indigenous knowledges occupied the realm of the 'primitive,' and was (sic) seen as an obstacle to progress along the path to modern civilization' <sup>[23]</sup>. As a consequence of these past practices, Indigenous students are faced with an education process that strengthens the political and social status quo and does not reflect their histories or perspectives. To address these concerns, we need to create new ways for Indigenous and non-indigenous students to engage with and explore knowledge, especially the intersection of western and Indigenous knowledge systems, values and beliefs <sup>[24,40]</sup>

Coan suggests using Critical Whiteness Studies to 'assist white students to begin to appreciate the privileges they have been accorded simply because of the colour of their skin <sup>[19]</sup>. This is vital decolonisation work ... it's important that black students do not have to carry all of the emotional load of this deconstructive, decolonial work' <sup>[19]</sup>. And as Manathunga says with regard to tertiary education curriculum, 'We have to decolonise, we must critically re-read the canon and the archive against the grain to highlight exactly how black, cultural minority, indigenous peoples and indeed women have been and continue to be systemically 'misrecognised' and marginalised in universities. We need to strategise to do this, then genuine decolonisation can take place' <sup>[18,19]</sup>

Such decolonisation requires self-reflection, and an understanding of historical processes as well as pedagogical restructuring, elements which we are addressing at UTAS.

### DISCUSSION

At UTAS we are striving to create an environment that facilitates self-critical reflection and decolonisation of the mind and practices, by challenging personal assumptions of self and the students regarding others and ourselves; where Indigenous issues can be explicitly and critically discussed, as changing teaching practices cannot be achieved without self-critical reflection.

To change teaching practices, personal decolonisation is fundamental for Indigenising to take place, and if we want a university committed to Indigenising education, critical reflection and explicit inclusion of Indigenous issues in undergraduate and graduate courses is essential. An essential tool to help with this is the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist, developed by the Greater Vancouver Island Multicultural Society <sup>[25]</sup>.

Teaching and learning are a reciprocal practice <sup>[26]</sup>. Non-indigenous people need to understand their position of privilege as a non-indigenous person and the importance of becoming an ally in solidarity movements and struggles. While engaging in Indigenous learning and in processes of decolonisation requires deeper engagements, it also entails some experiences of discomfort. As learning is relational, it cannot occur in isolation within the university, as 'decolonising and indigenising cannot occur in isolation of each other' hence engagement with communities needs to be part of the process <sup>[27]</sup>.

The journey for growing culturally capable graduates needs to start the decolonisation process with self-reflection and requires ongoing engagement with Indigenous issues at all levels of education and within all communities. There are many useful examples of this from overseas, including that of Hanson 2018, who while working toward a decolonising and indigenising approach in education, appreciated the importance of privileging Indigenous ways of knowing and being. 'In the Cree language Elders called this *kêytê-aya*. *Kêytê-aya* teaches that it is important to begin any process by acknowledging our place of knowing and identifying who we are and our purpose. This is an Indigenous orientation to teaching and learning' <sup>[27]</sup>.

When aiming to decolonise and indigenise learning, teaching, research, knowledge mobilization, community engagement, and decolonising the academy are all part of the process <sup>[27]</sup>. These efforts speak to larger shifts in university cultures, research agendas, and the importance of integrating community, stories, knowledge keepers, relational structures and Indigenous epistemologies into the learning process. The sharing of experiences is intended to generate meaningful dialogue and questions for deepening the analysis around how and why decolonising and Indigenising learning is necessary and timely.

At the University of Regina it was decided a course in Aboriginal Adult Education would be a way of making space for Indigenous perspectives and this course would serve to increase understandings by examining 'the historical, cultural, social, and political experiences of Aboriginal people' <sup>[27]</sup>. This course, titled Trends and Issues in Aboriginal Adult Education, was made permanent in 2005, reflecting the University's commitment to change and to supporting First Nations content and perspectives. Indigenisation at the University of Regina is understood as 'The transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the university. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability' (Indigenous Advisory Circle, University of Regina) <sup>[28]</sup>.

Indigenisation calls for the collective learning of reciprocity and reconciliation, the qualities we need in Australia and are striving to achieve at UTAS. Our current strategies and practices to encourage a whole-of-university approach to advancing Indigenous higher education outcomes are helping to progress this work. A description and further discussion of the UTAS program and its core elements follows. These elements are influenced by the perspectives discussed above which form the basis for the overall program.

## STRATEGIES AT UTAS

Many of strategies introduced at UTAS have been influenced by the study of establishing good practice models of leadership by Miller (2008) <sup>[30]</sup>. This study made a number of recommendations, the first of which was:

That the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations works with universities to support Indigenous leadership growth, and that Universities Australia commits to supporting Indigenous leadership in universities by seeking agreement from Vice Chancellors to: Appoint an Indigenous Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) to initiate and champion distributive leadership practices, specifically to engage university management, Indigenous Education Centres, Indigenous staff, students, and the Indigenous community, in formally recognised decision-making partnerships, and the development of policy, management procedures and Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum <sup>[29]</sup>.

The appointment of a PVC Indigenous Leadership and Research at UTAS and formation of an Aboriginal Leadership Group have been important steps to progress the following initiatives:

### Development of a Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan of Aboriginal Engagement (SPAЕ) 2017-2020 and formation of an Aboriginal Leadership Group (ALG) and Governance Committee to oversee its implementation and progress have been important drivers <sup>[30]</sup>. The ALG is comprised of the PVC Indigenous Leadership and Research, the Aboriginal Higher Education Advisor based in the Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching and the Riawunna Centre's Head of Service, while the Governance committee includes seven community representatives who are all alumni of UTAS. The over-arching goal of the SPAЕ is to create a vibrant, visible scholarly Aboriginal presence at the University. The SPAЕ has 66 strategic actions across the following seven domains: Undergraduate; Teaching and Learning; Employment; Higher Degree Research; Research; Community and Governance.

Having a Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement has unified and focused efforts across UTAS to address the access, participation and success of Indigenous students. For the first time, responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is shared with all schools and faculties and is no longer the sole responsibility of the Indigenous Centre.

### Staff Development

Specific opportunities to facilitate the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in staff development with a view to improving health and education services and outcomes for Australia's first peoples have occurred. Human resources have identified attendance and participation at training sessions as part of orientation and probation of new staff. The training available includes:

- Footprints Awareness (online) and /or Come Walk with Us (face to face);

- The Kinship Module (to improve people's knowledge about Aboriginal people and as a teaching tool);
- Reconciliation Australia (2008) Share our Pride, (online learning) <sup>[31]</sup>;
- Indigenous Life Worlds: Local to Global, (UTAS online course);
- First-year Aboriginal Studies units (fees exempt for UTAS staff).

Also, new teaching resources have been developed and made available online to staff, including the Indigenous Health Theme Bank and the Aboriginal Tasmania Story Map accessible on the UTAS (2016) website <sup>[32]</sup>.

Another opportunity for staff development comes in the form of Teaching Matters, which is the major annual event for learning and teaching at UTAS. This conference, which recognises and promotes excellence in learning and teaching, now includes an Indigenous component. This is achieved through inviting leading national and international Indigenous educators and researchers to present as keynote speakers, to conduct workshops or forums and yarning circles.

### Indigenising the Curriculum

The appointment of an Aboriginal Higher Education Advisor in 2017 to the Tasmanian Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) at UTAS signaled growing support for the important work of Indigenising curriculum. Also, the University Teaching and Learning Committee now requires that Aboriginal and Indigenous cultural implications and content is addressed for all new proposals for units, subjects, courses and degrees. This is done in consultation with the Aboriginal Higher Education Advisor. Examples of courses involved during 2018 included the Masters in Dementia Care, Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Music with Hons, Bachelor of Media with Hons and the Associate Degree in Applied Health and Individual Support.

The introduction of Degrees of Difference <sup>[34]</sup> and the requirement to include two breadth units in all degrees has increased the opportunity to reach more students through the development of new units such as Living and Working with Cultural Diversity and Indigenous Life-Worlds: Local to Global, which foster a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories.

### Indigenous Research Leadership

The University of Tasmania recognises the importance of undertaking culturally appropriate research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and promotes policies regarding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Research Ethics for staff. This is achieved through representation on ethics committees and providing access to resources *via* the University Aboriginal Business website <sup>[33]</sup>.

In 2017 a formal collaboration between the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor Aboriginal Research and Leadership and the Research Ethics and Integrity Division of the Research Office resulted in the development and dissemination of a set of best practice guidelines for University of Tasmania researchers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data, people or communities. These are available on the UTAS website <sup>[35]</sup>. All researchers must now note that they have read the Guidelines and are asked to consult an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ethics Advisor (a volunteer group of Indigenous researchers within the University) before seeking ethical approval for their projects. These guidelines create a safer ethical place for researchers and community members.

### Relocation of the Riawunna Centre

Moving this Centre for Aboriginal student services from the fringe to the centre of the campus has increased its visibility and access. It has also facilitated participation by a larger number of students and staff in the activities it offers and has enhanced its status both within the University and the Aboriginal community. The Riawunna Centre for the past decade has hosted a range of activities annually to celebrate important events such as NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, Harmony Day and Equity and Diversity Week. It has also been active in recruiting and supporting Indigenous students to study at UTAS.

Improving access and participation at the University of Tasmania is now a whole of University responsibility, but the Riawunna Centre is the primary place of undergraduate student support and community outreach. The Centre aspires to create positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through educational experiences that build independent, resilient and confident learners supported through shared celebrations of culture and community. It is a culturally welcoming space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and community to meet, study and access academic, pastoral support, yarning circles, and community-based activities.

### Visiting Scholars and Yarning Circles

To increase the cultural understanding of staff and ensure the university offers a culturally safe and enriching environment, a regular series of seminars and events featuring Indigenous scholars from Australia and overseas are held. These presentations are open to University staff, students and Aboriginal community members and are advertised widely.

The introduction of yarning circles in 2018, held after each Indigenous public lecture has facilitated open discussion and understanding. For example, recent guest speakers have included:



Associate Professor Gregory Phillips a Waanyi and Jaru Aboriginal man, is a medical anthropologist with 25 years' experience in leading change. He developed an accredited Indigenous health curriculum for all medical schools in Australia and New Zealand, founded the Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) Network, and co-wrote a national Indigenous health workforce strategy.

Uncle Jim Everett – puralia meenamatta, is a highly respected Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder, historian, poet, playwright and activist. Uncle Jim has more than 50 years' experience as an advocate for land rights and recognition of palawa people in Tasmania.

Professor John Maynard a Worimi Aboriginal man from the Port Stephens region of New South Wales. Professor Maynard is currently a Director at the Wollotuka Institute of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle and Chair of Indigenous History. His publications have concentrated on the intersections of Aboriginal political and social history, and the history of Australian race relations.

Professor Marcia Langton AM is an anthropologist and geographer, and since 2000 has held the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. In 1993, she was made a member of the Order of Australia in recognition of her work in anthropology and the advocacy of Aboriginal rights. Professor Marcia Langton was also appointed as the first Associate Provost at the University of Melbourne in 2017.

The feedback from these events has been very positive from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. These guests have been important role models for our Indigenous students to foster interest in an academic career. They have also played a key role in educating staff and students about Australia's First Peoples.

### **Aboriginal Higher Degree Research Students**

The introduction of specific scholarships and having their own space on campus has encouraged more Aboriginal community members to commence post graduate studies. We now have three students doing Masters and five senior Aboriginal scholars who have commenced doctoral studies at UTAS. They are proving to be important role models and providing leadership for the undergraduate students.

### **Aboriginal Staff**

The University's Indigenous Workforce Strategy is contained within the Tasmania Strategic Plan for Aboriginal Engagement 2017-2020 on the UTAS (2017) website <sup>[36]</sup>. The development of an Aboriginal employment strategy and appointment of an Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator along with the introduction of internships in 2018 has assisted in increasing the number of Indigenous staff. All staff are invited to meet as a group twice yearly, this opportunity has fostered the development of strong networks, reduced isolation and improved wellbeing.

### **The Strategic Goal for Employment**

- To situate the University of Tasmania as the preferred employer for Aboriginal people to increase the full-time equivalent proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and non-academic staff across Colleges, Faculties and Divisions. Situate Aboriginal staff as an employee asset to the University of Tasmania bringing unique sets of cultural and community engagement strengths and opportunities.

### **This Goal has three key performance Indicators:**

1. Increase the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander so that Indigenous staff make up two percent of academic FTE staff and two percent of non-academic staff by 2020.
2. Retention and support for current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff demonstrated by a less than 10 percent separations of staff in any year 2017-2020.
3. Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff undertaking higher education so all staff either have a higher-level qualification or are progressing in tertiary study by 2020.

The strategies outlined have been developed collaboratively with Indigenous people and are now woven into the fabric of the University within student services, learning and teaching, research and community engagement, however Indigenous voice and involvement is needed in all areas of university business, including planning, building, finance, scholarships and employment. Some ideas to progress these matters follow, however further action and sharing of experiences is needed across the sector.

## **THE FUTURE**

Increasing the number of Indigenous staff across the University is critical for attracting and retaining Indigenous students as they provide important role models and are needed to bring Indigenous voices into the teaching and learning space which continues to be dominated by Western knowledges. This important work now has the backing of Universities Australia (UA) which made a commitment in its 2017-2020 Indigenous Strategy to focus efforts on growing the numbers of Indigenous academics

across the nation (Universities Australia, 2017) <sup>[36]</sup>. This strategy states, 'the task of ensuring the nation's universities reflect the long story of our country and its first peoples, both before and since colonisation, remains work in progress' and that 'in recent decades, large strides have been made. Australia's universities have begun to reflect the vast contribution to Australia – both foundational and continuing – of its first peoples and cultures, to foster deeper public understanding of that contribution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have guided these advances, leading university efforts across the country and partnering with non-Indigenous Australians to forge change. This work has sought to foster university cultures that lift Indigenous participation, celebrate Indigenous excellence, and recognise Indigenous contribution <sup>[36]</sup>.

Current literature suggests that decolonisation of education involves, the creation of Aboriginal places within the education landscape. This is reflected in New Zealand and Hawaii through the development of Indigenous schools and inclusion of Indigenous languages and teaching methods to improve education outcomes <sup>[37]</sup>. Also, within higher education institutions, the ivory towers of the colonisers, we have witnessed the ongoing struggle to create Indigenous space and place. 'The introduction of spaces that encouraged the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in higher education became a reality in the early 1980s. Since then, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and leaders have worked tirelessly to find their "fit" within the Western academy, which continues to impose a colonial, Western educative framework onto Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' <sup>[38]</sup>. Both Perry and Holt have been actively involved in the creation of an environment that privileges Aboriginal values, principles, knowledges and perspectives at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales. If we could progress similar outcomes across all our universities this would enrich learning for both staff and students.

It is important that we act on all fronts to indigenise and decolonise our universities, as focusing only on one aspect will not be enough. The critical framework developed by Ayana Allen although specific to teacher education could be applied to any discipline or to higher education in general <sup>[39,40]</sup>. This framework proposes the integration and mapping of culturally relevant pedagogy into education policies and programs, curriculum and instruction for both staff and students, through critical reflection, social justice action and critical questioning. Future university graduates must gain skills in critical reflection and critical consciousness to deconstruct the existing social order, to achieve this we must provide culturally relevant curriculum and we must work with Indigenous people to do this.

We need to create an environment within our institutions that facilitates self-critical reflection and decolonisation of the mind and practices, by challenging personal assumptions of self with the students. Indigenous issues need to be explicitly and critically discussed. Changing teaching practices cannot be achieved without self-critical reflection. Critical reflection and explicit inclusion of indigenous issues in undergraduate and graduate courses is essential if we want a university committed to indigenising education <sup>[41]</sup>.

Our work at UTAS is Indigenous led and strives to respond to community needs, this does not involve following a recipe, it is a process that is situational, context dependent and relational, so we cannot offer a set of steps for others to follow, but hopefully this paper provides readers with some insights into the complexity involved in developing culturally capable graduates. There is not one problem or issue to be addressed but many, and they are multifaceted relating to Indigenous staff and students and non-Indigenous staff and students and the institution itself. These issues are entangled with each other and the resolution of one has implications for the others, hence cultural capability is essential for the safety and success of Indigenous students, non-Indigenous students and staff. To progress this important work each institution must develop a working relationship with its respective Indigenous community and work together to develop their own policies, strategies, activities, approaches and administrative arrangements. Mihesuah and Wilson urge us to empower ourselves through 'the examination of what we can do to Indigenize the academy; to carve a space where Indigenous values and knowledge are respected; to create an environment that supports research and methodologies useful to Indigenous nation building to compel institutional responsiveness to Indigenous issues, concerns, and communities' <sup>[42]</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting on our achievements over the past four years, all the strategies listed above have contributed to making the University a more welcoming and inclusive place for our Indigenous students and staff and have contributed to increasing the knowledge of staff and students about First Australian peoples and histories. There is more which needs to be done to attract and support our people to come to university. We also have further work to do on educating all graduates to increase their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and develop the skills to become culturally capable at a personal and professional level. To do this, more time is needed to enable students to overcome resistance; to see relevance and importance of Indigenous knowledges and to become advocates in challenging racism so they can educate others in their families, workplaces and communities.

To achieve this, our future indigenised universities will be ones which focus their energy on creating a better future for Indigenous peoples. They will also need to be based on principles of cultural recognition and responsiveness to decolonise education and disrupt the ongoing legacies of colonisation. An important tool to assist in progressing this work would be a closer alignment of the Australian Tertiary Education Quality Standards with the following World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium <sup>[43]</sup> accreditation qualities that require:

An indigenous serving institution's /schools/programs/work:

- Is framed by the Indigenous philosophy (ies) of the native community it serves
- Integrates Indigenous culture, language and worldviews into programming
- Are being accomplished in a manner that merits the confidence of the Indigenous constituents being served <sup>[43]</sup>.

Working with First Australians is essential to change the culture of our respective universities, this work needs to be collaborative, based on true partnership and respectful ways of sharing knowledge.

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