

## **Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources**

### **Learning and Teaching achievements in 2006**

For a small Faculty, with approximately 25 teaching academics, we believe we have a very high level of activities in the area of Learning and Teaching. We have particularly identified the area of research-led teaching as the strength of our Faculty. Being a small faculty, we need to focus our energy to achieve real outcomes. Over the last year the focus of our L&T efforts was on expanding our work in the area of elearning. This effort is clearly visible in the outcomes of the last two years. In relation to the objectives listed in the L&T operational plan for 2006 we have achieved considerable outcomes.

*Objective 1: To improve teaching in the Faculty and the learning experience of its students*

#### **Results**

- Increased results in the Good Teaching Scale to 3.6 (up from ~3.4) and Appropriate Assessment Scale to 3.6 (also up from ~3.4). Appropriate workload scale is stabilised around 3, which we consider a good score as it is the median. The Clear Goals and Standards scale indicated a smaller increase to 3.5 (up from 3.35). Overall all USE scores have been rising steadily since 2004, which is a reflection of the increased effort of the Faculty in the area of L&T (Shared with Objective 2).
- Successful cooperation with the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Veterinary Science in a showcase on Research-Led teaching. Members of the Faculty gave 3 presentations and presented 3 posters highlighting some interesting work in this area in the Faculty.
- A webpage highlighting the Learning and Teaching activities of the Faculty was added to the Faculty website ([http://www.agric.usyd.edu.au/about/t\\_and\\_l.shtml](http://www.agric.usyd.edu.au/about/t_and_l.shtml))
- A new large TIES grant was obtained for 2007. This TIES grant is specifically aimed at additional WebCT development in the first year units and focuses on the development of problem based and research led teaching in first year (Shared with Objective 2 & 3)
- Two staff members completed higher education degrees: completion of a Masters in Higher Education (Dr. Willem Vervoort) and Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (Dr. Damien Field). One further staff member is enrolled in the Diploma in Higher Education, and new staff members have enrolled in the graduate certificate.
- One paper on L&T matters was published in Synergy (Dr. Dhia Al Bakri)

*Objective 2: To maintain and enhance the quality of the Faculty's programs*

#### **Results**

- Development of 47 new WebCT sites including “degree level” WebCT sites. This means that now 100% of all first and second year units and core units in 3<sup>rd</sup> and fourth year in our Faculty have WebCT sites and most other 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

year elective units also have WebCT sites. This was the result of a TIFF grant for 2006(S. Cattle, M. Harris, F. Muller) (shared with Objective 1).

- A new round of curriculum review has been initiated to be completed in 2009 and this specifically includes the mapping of generic attributes and course content.
- Generic attribute scores in the USE have stabilised around 3.6 after a couple of years ago scores were around 3.3, which we believe is a good begin.
- A new position was created and a Lecturer has been recently appointed to coordinate the field and laboratory teaching program in the Faculty. This will also specifically be aimed at generic skills and attributes.
- The Professional Experience program in the Faculty has been redeveloped into a unit of study focussing particularly on developing skills and relevant experience. The suggested unit includes the development of a portfolio by the students on their work experiences. This is combine with the development of a WebCT resource to support placement and research.

***Objective 3: To improve the educational and physical environment for students and staff***

- We have again had a successful first year parent evening which was well attended
- Eleven out of twelve students in the Chemistry tutoring program passed the first semester chemistry unit. The Chemistry tutoring program remains under review, given changes in the degrees and the integration at the Faculties level. The Maths improvement program was also run for the second time.
- A successful Landcare weekend was again run at Arthursleigh with 14 students. This year we have been working on further integration of the Landcare activities into the first year teaching program.
- Review of the show cause/students at risk policy, but this now needs further review.
- Refurbishment of Land and Water Laboratory has started in late 2006.
- All computers in the Watt computer teaching laboratory were replaced. Further upgrades and an increase in the computer numbers is planned for 2007.

***Teaching awards in 2006***

- Dick Jackson award for Postgraduate teaching to Dr. Robyn McConchie
- Dick Jackson award for Undergraduate teaching to Dr. Dhia Al Bakri