“Motivated for Glory”: Partnering for student success in starting a first year at Melbourne

Oral, Students as partners

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Abstract:

This presentation will focus on the outcomes of a successful new transition initiative at the University of Melbourne aimed at improving the student experience for entering first year undergraduate students across the institution. Drawing on recent scholarship in the First Year Experience in Higher Education (FYHE) focussed on the importance of early engagement practices and a whole-of-institution approach to transition pedagogy and student success (Kift, Nelson and Clarke, 2010), First Year at Melbourne provides peer-to-peer learning in small, facilitated, cohort-based groups to harness student readiness for and expectations of engagement in the pre-commencement period. Drawing on data from individual student evaluations and institution-wide surveys, as well as responding to peaks in student enrolment and service expectations, a peer-to-peer outreach campaign contacted every entering undergraduate first year student (n. = 7508) to invite them into a First Year at Melbourne appointment. Over 4,000 students booked appointments with dedicated first year advisers or a trained student peer. Conversations focussed on transition topics such a curriculum choice and breadth options; expectations of intellectual and social agency as well as academic engagement; and opportunities to develop skills for employability. How students felt about their experience entering the university and the key issues identified in interviews provide a basis for further exploration of how dedicated, early programming can improve student transition.

Biography:

Catherine leads a team of students and staff who partner with students to build their responsibility, capability and employability through a range of development and engagement programs. A range of student-centred programs focus on transitioning students at key points of their university journey, including new students entering the university learning and social environment; supporting and sustaining special cohorts such as Students At Risk, Under 18 international students; and optimising opportunities for students building their leadership and volunteering profiles. These programs assist students to build their skills, extend their experiences, articulate their employability, and achieve their educational, personal and career goals.