The 2019 ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute

Report to the ACODE Executive

Professor Michael Sankey, Director ACODE LTLI

September 2019

About the event

The 2019 ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute (LTLI) was held at the Mantra Mooloolaba Resort on the Sunshine Coast between 18 - 22 August. This is the third time we have used this venue and it continues to offer us everything we need, in beautiful surroundings. A record 49 participants were registered and attended, representing 23 higher education institutions and two vendors.

The Institute also attracted a record number of sponsors (5); PebblePad, Catalyst, Microsoft, Blackboard and ECHO360. Their support is not only greatly appreciated but also as a testament to the growing reputation of this event within the higher education sector professional calendar of events. Three of these sponsors also joined us at the event, which was much respected by all. Each gave a short presentation closely aligned with the theme for the event.

The Faculty were amazing again this year. In addition to the Director, we had eight full-time and one part-time Faculty engaged in the event. This Faculty was the most senior (in role, not age) that the LTLI has enjoyed thus far. We also welcomed Dr Scott Snyder from the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), accompanied by some of the Learning Spaces staff from the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C-SALT), who provided an update on some of their new learning spaces they are building on their new North Morten campus. It should be acknowledged that USC has been a strong supporter of the LTLI on the three occasions we have held this event on the Sunshine Coast, and we are greatly appreciative of their support and engagement.

Dr Scott Snyder, USC

LTLI Faculty

Faculty members were chosen on the basis of their knowledge, experience and expertise in the area of learning technologies leadership. In addition to their mentoring roles, each faculty member also gave a presentation aligned to the Institutes' theme.

Professor Denise Kirkpatrick
DVC and Vice-President (Academic). Western Sydney University

'Making a Career out of this'

Professor Ian Solomonides
DVC (Academic and Students). Victoria University, Melbourne

'Taking the lead in adopting technological change through thought leadership'

Professor Shirley Alexander. DVC and Vice-President (Education and Students). University of Technology Sydney

'Flipping over the blended and physical space'

Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott. Higher Education and Sustainability. University of Western Sydney

'Making the right choices for your Institution'

Professor Kylie Readman
PVC (Education). Murdoch University

'Covering all your institutional bases and encouraging those who follow'

Professor Dominique Parrish
PVC Learning and Teaching. Macquarie University

'Building staff capacity for Tech Enhanced Learning'

Professor Michael Sankey
2019 ACODE Institute Director
Griffith University

'Disruption in TEL the way of the future and the way to go'

Professor Peter Nikoletatos
Industry Director, Education. TechnologyOne Corp
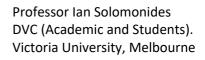
'Looking ahead: Where is Technology taking us'

A/Professor Stephen Marshall
ACODE President and Director of Centre for Academic Development. Victoria University of Wellington.

'Quality, Quality, Quality and Benchmarking your Practice'

A/Professor Philip Uys
Director, Learning Technologies.
Charles Sturt University

'What students are saying about TEL'

The quality of the Faculty and visiting presenters for this Institute was again particularly strong and provided participants with a professional learning experience second to none. That these leaders from within our sector would take five days out of their already busy schedule is a testament not

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only to their level of commitment they have to feed into and encourage the next generation of leaders, but also to the high regard in which this institute is held within the sector.

Making the Case

As in previous years, the program was based on a 'Making the Case' scenario. Participants were arranged into seven teams of seven people and required to 'make the case' as per a set of guidelines and a project brief. To help them make a start with this, each team was assigned a faculty member, on a rotational basis, to guide and mentor the development of their cases. Each

of the Faculty also assumed role pseudonym that replicated various roles within the typical University Senior Executive Group and acted as provocateurs within those roles in each of the groups, when it was their turn. Throughout the course of the event the groups had nine formal group work sessions, but all met outside these times to continue working on their cases.

Supporting this there were eleven presentations provided by the Faculty covering a range of topics relating to both, leadership in the learning technologies area within the Australasian sector, to further inform how the groups would ultimately pitch their 'case'. The appended program provides a list of the presentations and the presenters.

The seven groups approached their task of 'Making the Case' very seriously and worked extremely hard. All groups put in very long hours in developing their presentations. This was demonstrated in

the quality of the actual group presentations and the supporting executive summaries which can be found on the 'Making the Case' website. The quality of the presentations was reflected in the difficulty that the Faculty had in deciding on a 'winner'. There is, in situations like this, the need to make some formal judgments around which group had ultimately made the most compelling case. In this case it was 'The Unstoppables' (pictured) who provided this. But, as we have seen in the past, ultimately the decision was very close with the consensus

among Faculty was that all the groups had performed extremely well.

The overall success of the Institute lies with the level to which each participant, as an individual and in their groups, engages with the Making the Case scenario. The realism of the case and its relevance to the participant's academic and professional life is critical to the level of engagement. This year, it was again decided that the scenario should be based on a real world (though fictitious) example of the Federal Government wanting to establish a new Integrated University (or Campus) and Coordinated Education precinct in the area of Ormeau in the Northern Gold Coast

region of Queensland, some 45km south of Brisbane and 35km north of the centre of the Gold Coast.

The contributions of Faculty to the scenario structure was a significant factor in enhancing participant engagement in the Making the Case deliberations. These contributions provided the nexus between the scenario and the 'real world'. This is important, as the Institute participants came from a wide range of roles and a significant number were not in a position to clearly see the big picture in their own organisations. Nonetheless, the scenario meant that the groups had to consider and address, in a logical and practical way, many of the 'real world' issues that impact on technology and leadership issues in their Institutions and more broadly.

At the end of the day, it is clear from the feedback received through the evaluation instrument (see below), from observations, and from feedback received from Faculty, that the overall quality of the presentations, fully engaged the participants and helped to make it a very successful, challenging and valuable event.

This final evaluation was completed by all the participants, and a summarised version of this evaluation is appended to this report. This survey supports the very positive feedback provided by participants on the final day of the Institute and reinforces the important contribution this institute makes to both the individuals involved and, as a consequence, the institutions they represent. This is not to say that the Institute can't be improved. It can, and later in this report some areas have been identified for improvement and should be considered when developing the program for LTLI 2021.

Support

A major contributor to the success of the Institute is the support provided by Susan Brosnan, as the Executive Officer for the Institute, working closely with Karen Halley, the ACODE Executive Officer. Susan's experience and expertise in the planning process and managing the day-to-day organisational details is a key contributing factor to the success of the Institute experience. Her support for me as the Director was exemplary. She managed all the bookings, set up and managed the registration information, was responsible for the publicity and recruitment, liaised with the venue, faculty, visitors and participants and generally kept me, as Director, fully informed and on track throughout the build-up to the event. Karen's support role was also critical and extremely valuable, maintaining the critical liaison between the ACODE Executive, the President, Susan and myself. She also played a major role in a range of organisational details including overseeing the financial process. Again, as in previous years, Susan and I were provided important technical support during the event, by the very capable Tim van Drimmelen, from USQ.

I would again like to acknowledge the support and participation of our sponsors; PebblePad, Blackboard, ECHO 360, Microsoft and Catalyst. We were delighted to have the involvement of these organisations and I believe they have received commensurate benefits from their involvement.

The Mantra at Mooloolaba again proved to be an excellent venue for this event, it has proved to be a convenient location, relatively easy to get to for most participants it offers excellent surroundings and easy access to extremely pleasant scenery. The catering, facilities and logistical support from the resort, although not perfect, was certainly on par with other conference venues. By all accounts, the participants and Faculty were largely satisfied with their rooms, many of which has recently undergone some refresh.

The full LTLI cohort for 2019

Observations and recommendations for LTLI 2021

As has been the case in the prior Institutes, the workload is extremely high for the participants. There is essentially and deliberately an information overload from both the Faculty and visiting presenters. In addition, there are online resources provided to support both the making of the case and the presentations. While the high workload is intentional, and it is designed to ensure that all teams have access to as much relevant information as possible, there may be other ways to transmit more of this foundational material prior to the event.

Recommendation: it may be worth facilitating a preliminary, or preparatory webinar to help participants warm-up to the activity prior to arrival.

This is partly reinforced by participants suggesting that the time allocated to them was a bit too short to do all they had to do. This feedback is consistent with previous years, and some adjustments were made to front-load the speaking, providing more time nearer the end for group work. This is despite adding an additional half a day to the program since the 2015 LTLI.

Towards the end of the program we did rearrange some of the sessions to allow groups longer sessions together, and this was noted in the feedback as being a good move by some participants.

Recommendation: This method should be considered next time, along with other ways to provide larger blocks of time together on making their case. This could mean bunching up a couple of presentations earlier in the day (not all the time).

In addition, there were a number of other practical suggestions put forward in the feedback which I believe should be considered in developing the next iteration of the Institute, not the least being the notion of providing additional leadership principles and mentoring opportunities.

Although much better than in 2017 the gender balance of the full-time faculty was still somewhat skewed to the male side.

Recommendation: It is recommended that there be at least one less male and one more female be included on the full-time Faculty in 2021.

It is important to ensure that the program should remain intensive to encourage effective use of all group members in a division of labour and to give participants experience in working under strict time constraints.

There were many comments relating to the quality of the wiki site in the Moodle environment being a little clunky. This is consistent with how work environments are now working in tools such as Microsoft Teams.

Recommendation: look to implement a more contemporary workspace for group work.

The Directors Perspective

This is now the third time that I have been the Director, I again found the experience challenging, exciting and extremely rewarding. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process and couldn't have been happier with the input, engagement and collegiality of the Faculty. But most of all, it was the commitment and enthusiasm of the participants that made the event the success it was. They worked extremely hard, were collaborative, fully involved, took the whole exercise very seriously and produced excellent outcomes.

This year I introduced a few more fun activities into the program, to open up more creative and social opportunities. One of particular note was the Fish and Chips on the foreshore sponsored by PebblePad (pictured), this was very much enjoyed by all. We also enjoyed a few competitions each day, designed to get people out into the environment, prior to spending the day hard at work.

It will be important for ACODE to now follow-up with the promotion of an Alumni network with participants from this and previous iterations of the Institute. The ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute: 2019 was, in my view, a great success and I believe continues to make a

significant contribution to the Australasian professional development landscape in technology enhanced learning and teaching.

I would like to thank the ACODE President, Stephen Marshall and the ACODE executive for the opportunity to direct the Institute and for the support and direction that they gave me prior to the event. I was delighted that we had the President present at the Institute as this sends a really good message about ACODEs commitment to the Institute.

The last words should belong to the participants themselves, drawn from the evaluation instrument:

- I was very inspired by the presentations from the Faculty and got a lot of value from them. It has left me feeling inspired to change some of my practices and has given me some really good food for thought. It's a unique opportunity to get that much expertise in one room, and all the faculty members I spoke to were very open to questions and discussing things outside the group work and about leadership in general which was great.
- The very detailed groupwork and the high quality of the Faculty. Very inspirational!
- Takes you to the next level in collaboratively solving T&L problems
- The generosity of spirit from faculty and delegates, learning from the faculty - their stories, and suggestions, ideas, encouragement - truly amazing. And the chance to apply what we are learning - the case.

Conclusion

The ACOE LTLI is in a strong place and the need for this style of event is clearly evidenced by the enthusiasm shown by our member institutions getting behind this event in such a wholehearted way. With a few minor tweaks next time, there is no reason to think that this activity will not continue to go from strength to strength. Though this and the other key events ACODE run in our calendar, such as the mentoring scheme, the benchmarking activity and workshops and the forums, ACODE is providing real value back to the sector. It is hoped that the ACODE Executive in the future will want to continue running this event for as long as the need for professional development focused on leadership in the area of technology enhanced learning is still required by our member institution.

Thank-you to all involved; Participant, Faculty and Sponsors.

Appendix 1: Program
Appendix 2: Summary of Evaluation