

Context

The Australian National University

Within the Australian National University as a whole, a driver for the original project proposal was the new performance management arrangement being implemented in the university. This shift entailed 'assessors' making judgements about excellence in teaching and learning. It created an imperative, from CEDAM's perspective, for the university community to develop a discourse about teaching and learning practices in ways that enabled it to be evaluated and assessed.

A restructuring of the university in 2005 into seven 'colleges' moved responsibility for educational quality and standards to senior management within each College, with central university units, including CEDAM, as the academic development unit, offering support to each College and its senior managers, and to the staff teaching and researching within it.

During 2006-2007 Carrick's objectives of sector wide valuing and recognition of teaching has infiltrated the ANU mindset, as staff and management became more cognizant of achievements in this area, and of the need to celebrate these achievements. More recently the profile and influence of a few key Carrick Award winners is also subtly shifting the university landscape so that senior management are more open in hearing and having input from the teaching award winners more generally 'as an expert group'. This change goes hand-in-hand with the need for the University to better understand, evaluate, document and articulate its teaching practice and standards, and the changes occurring with, for example, a more flexible approach to teaching.

The University's structural shift to a college model of organization did disrupt pre-existing networks and groups associated with teaching and learning, and there was a considerable level of shakeout and uncertainty as new networks took time to form. This had a significant impact on progress in Year 1 of the project.

The University has not really debated the impact of changes in promotion policy, in part the project had hoped to produce some research that might contribute to such a debate, however the research did not proceed due to staffing workloads and changes in research partner responsibilities.

The change to the college-based structure and the project's informal, distributed approach to leadership capability inhibited any embedding of project outcomes in organisational strategic development plans. The intention to link the project to University executive planning through strong engagement with key senior staff on the project Reference Committee was not realised. The Reference Committee, chaired by the DVC and attended by the PVC (Community) did not continue to meet throughout the second year of the project. In part this stemmed from competing work demands on both the DVC and the PVC which gradually diminished the energy and engagement of the membership. This shift in engagement indicates the project team was unsuccessful in conveying the value of their investment in the project. Two factors influencing the drop-off in engagement were the project's long lead time in getting communities of practice off the

ground and inadequate scoping of how the Reference Committee could contribute to project realisation.

The project team also underestimated the complexity of translating the theory of project intention into reality within academia. The increasing workload in the ADU resulting from Carrick initiatives has constrained available staff time. CEDAM has in the past based much of its service provision on a model of on-demand one-on-one resourcing, reliant on its in-house expertise to foster and embed capability, and capacity within and across the ANU Colleges. The demands arising from the model of engagement for the *Promoting Teaching and Learning Communities: Institutional Leadership Project* resulted in a longer time being needed to operationalise the project.

The experience of this project has necessitated the CEDAM as an academic development unit rethinking its model of service provision and this is reflected in the Carrick *Promoting Excellence Initiative* grant application.

Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods (CEDAM)

CEDAM applied for the Carrick Institutional Leadership project funding because there were a number of activity streams that seemed to converge appropriately for this application. For many years CEDAM has run and developed courses such as Academic Leadership and Management (EDUC8007) and in applying for this project it was thought that such a course could be built on and extended.

A further emerging discourse within CEDAM has centred on ‘academic practice’—which moves beyond professional practice and the needs of an individual practitioner to the university context of academic practice as a situated, historical and cultural reality underpinned by norms, values and actions. The Australian National University was also actively supporting the emergence of learning communities and CEDAM proposed that there was a potential to explore the intersection of ‘practice’ and ‘community’. A further, albeit naïve shift, at this point was to the concept of communities of practice, as a potential base for evolving tacit knowledge and practices.

The Carrick Institutional Leadership grant application was therefore an action research proposal to consider how communities of practice could resource leadership capacity development for excellence in teaching and learning within the university community. As it built on the course model on leadership as developed by CEDAM it also proposed to provide supporting resources asynchronously via a website.

As has been noted in previous reports to Carrick there were some difficulties with the complexity of the project’s conceptual framing and the practical roll-out of its early phases. The challenges encountered in implementation are not confined to CEDAM, as other Leadership projects have outlined similar issues. The significant ones for us have been changes in the project team, particularly the academic staff, difficulties in integrating the project activity into the overall cycle of CEDAM’s work and the scholarly interests of participating staff and the competing work priorities for the unit, in part generated by The Carrick Institute. This point is further discussed in the *Cultivation and Propagation Section* of this report.

The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

This project was funded as one of the first two 'leadership' grants offered by The Carrick Institute, just as the Institute started operation. When Carrick was set up, it was aware, through negotiations in the sector, that previous granting bodies such as the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT), CUTSD; the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development and Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) had not been able to disseminate the findings from project as widely as they hoped (see Carrick's 'Dissemination, adoption & adaptation of project innovations in Higher Education' 2005). The Carrick Institute started to think that a focus on promoting leadership in teaching and learning could provide some solution to this problem.

During the course of the last two years both the Leadership projects and Carrick's general influence on the sector has been enormous. The impact has been amplified by the complexity of the Carrick offerings and by coincidence with the emergence of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund results. The offerings by Carrick include not only the leadership grants, but other grants, fellowships, teaching awards and discipline initiatives. The Carrick agenda has changed the work of academic development units, put money into areas of university work that were previously poorly supported and, perhaps, valued, and focussed the sector's attention in ways that have not been previously seen. This context has assisted CEDAM in implementing the *Promoting Teaching and Learning Communities Project*. Historically the Australian National University processes have been preoccupied with research rather than teaching and learning. Carrick interventions and initiatives and the ADU (CEDAM) and ANU teachers 'success' in Carrick initiatives has assisted the University to shift its thinking in ways which are new for it.