

BULLSTAMP ahead for multiversity

TIM DODD

Despite the financial crisis engulfing the higher education sector, four NSW universities are planning to push on with a new "multiversity" to teach STEM disciplines in western Sydney that will open for students next year.

The new institution is being planned through the NUW Alliance, whose membership — the University of NSW, the University of Wollongong and the University of Newcastle — will grow in number with the addition of Western Sydney University.

NUW Alliance chief executive Matt Gijzelman said the four universities would work together to deliver courses in the four STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

When it opens next year, the multiversity — which is likely by then to have a new and more memorable name — will be housed at the University of Western Sydney on its Werrington and Kingswood campuses.

In 2026, it is planned to relocate to its permanent home, a new 6000-student campus to be built in the aerotropolis, the economic hub near the new Western Sydney airport that is under construction.

Western Sydney University assistant vice-chancellor Andy Marks said planning for the new multiversity was being reshaped as a "recovery exercise" from the economic slump of the coronavirus pandemic.



An artist's impression of the aerotropolis, where the multiversity will be built near the new Western Sydney Airport

This could mean a strong emphasis on "rapid-fire" short courses that could quickly give people new skills that were in demand in the workplace.

Dr Marks said the multiversity also would be able to amplify government infrastructure stimulus in the economic recovery by delivering training in infrastructure-related and engineering disciplines.

He said the four universities were committed to the new campus "but that can't happen without support to get us through this current phase".

"One of the critical things is for government to recognise the critical role for universities in the recovery," Dr Marks said.

Mr Gijzelman said the multiversity would work closely with the industries that were expected to be attracted to the new airport hub, training students in the skills that business needed and focusing on business-linked research.

The NSW government has signed memoranda of understanding with the aerotropolis to include work placements for students and use the expertise of business to help students learn.

Mr Gijzelman said he wanted students to be able to walk out of the door of the new institution and into the door of any business in the area.

But without training, the economy faced a devastating double whammy of skills shortages and an unskilled generation that would be condemned to indefinite unemployment, Gijzelman had to do.

In the face of this crisis, the commonwealth, state and territory governments agreed that changes were needed to encourage the establishment of new apprenticeships and to stimulate employment opportunities.

That was 35 years ago. Now unemployment is once again soaring. Businesses affected by the sudden demand shock are laying off staff as contracts fall through.

A generation of school-leavers faces an uncertain future. Businesses simply don't have the certainty to commit to apprenticeships.

A survey of our members suggests about 3300 apprentices and trainees around Australia face having their employment cancelled.

For many, that means they'll not only be unemployed but also without a completed apprenticeship — and therefore unemployable when they start looking up.

Skills shortages, already acute in some industries, will become widespread. This is a different type of challenge to the previous financial crisis, because social-distancing and remote-working requirements mean many hands-on jobs can't be taught in the same way any more.

However, it's just as critical. We know that people who stay connected to the workforce are better able to bounce back after a recession. Job losses can easily become permanent if hard and soft skills are not maintained.

The long-term cost to the economy is high, but the long-term cost to the individual is immeasurable, leading to lower confidence, higher rates of mental health issues and social dysfunction.

So it is absolutely vital that we find creative solutions to help the young people who are at risk of losing their vocational education placements.

Group training organisations have managed to rotate about 40 apprentices who have lost their positions from businesses that could no longer hold on to them into new roles with businesses that are able to sustain their apprenticeship.

In good times, rotation ensures the apprentice learns the full range of skills they will need to become a fully qualified practitioner in their field.

And in uncertain times, as well as in sectors where employment cycles can vary by season or year, rotation allows for high levels of flexibility.

The rotations are just a drop in the ocean, but they're a start. A range of support packages, including the 50 per cent wage subsidy for businesses employing apprentices announced by the government last month, will help it.

These measures will help us through this crisis, but there are some important lessons from the aftermath of the 2008-09 global financial crisis that we should also learn.

After 2009, apprenticeship and traineeship numbers never fully recovered. To prevent a similar lasting slump, we need to start thinking about how we can re-engage with employment and youth to initiate new apprenticeships from next year onwards and ensure Australia's workforce has the skills that power our economy.

During the past 35 years, close to 30 new schemes that ran parallel to group training have been dreamt up and funded, but only group training has a proven track record of solving the challenges using the best evidence accumulated across that period.

The uniquely Australian model has been recognised around the world for its exceptional flexibility and ability to develop high-quality graduates.

Now that the economy has sustained the greatest shock in living memory — possibly the greatest of all time — it is time to get back to basics.

We need to go all-in on the measures that will get people into work. A generation of school-leavers depends on it. Our economy depends on it. The future can benefit from the experience of the past.

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Time to bump up fees and boost the number of domestic students

As it stands, our universities can't compete globally

RICHARD HOLDEN

The COVID-19 outbreak has made it clear that Australian universities depend on Chinese students for a significant proportion of their revenues.

This isn't news to anyone in the sector, but it does highlight how events beyond the control of universities can cause serious disruption.

And it has triggered renewed calls for Australian universities to diversify their revenue base — perhaps by targeting more students from countries such as India and Indonesia.

Of course, many universities have begun to diversify among international students, have contingency plans for the current events, and have used the boost in international student income during the past decade to invest heavily in teaching and research.

But the best thing Australian universities could do would be domestic diversification — enrolling larger numbers of Australian undergraduates.

With only 77.3 per cent of Australians holding a bachelor's degree or above, compared with more than a third of the US population, there is plenty of room to do so.

He said it could change the type of courses offered. It might see us pivot the STEM focus towards more health-related technologies, he said. "We want to make sure we can re-skill people rapidly."

Domestic fees at Australian universities aren't a little below those of our international competitors — they're way below.

At world-leading universities such as Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale and Princeton, tuition is more than US\$50,000 a year (\$87,000).

Even US universities less well known to Australians, but with which our best universities are definitely direct competitors, charge more than US\$50,000 a year.

Think Boston University or the University of Michigan. Out-of-state tuition in the heavily subsidised University of California system is still about US\$43,000 to \$40,000 for international undergraduates.

The hard truth is that it is not possible to provide a world-class education for \$15,000 a year. We are in a global marketplace not only for students but for the best faculty members to teach those students.

And our competitors have the resources — through tuition and endowment income — to attract the best faculty members. This includes Australians who do their PhDs overseas and, more often than not, stay overseas because of the resources available to them there.

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Our HECS-HELP is maintained and not eroded in any way. This requires a commitment from the federal government, but it's an easy one to provide.

Yes, the amount of student debt outstanding will rise, but the government can borrow for 10 years at less than 1 per cent.

That's actually negative, adjusting for inflation. And the federal government isn't giving up any revenue, it's just collecting it when students earn a certain income.

Moreover, the additional skills students acquire will drive higher future incomes, and with it higher tax receipts.

In addition, some proportion — maybe 10 per cent — of undergraduate places should be tuition free based on economic need.

We owe it to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to ensure we can provide access to higher education while maintaining a world-class system.

Australia has an outstanding university system. But it simply won't remain that way if we try and compete in a global marketplace for students and faculty members without the appropriate resources.

The expansion in the international student market in recent years has made higher education one of our country's largest exports. That's a good thing. But we can no longer pretend that the level of domestic student fees is sufficient to provide world-class education to Australian undergraduates.

It's time to end the cross-subsidy and pave the way for domestic diversification of our student body.

Richard Holden is professor of economics at UNSW Business School. The opinions contained in this article are his own and do not reflect official University of NSW views.



Holden

Diego. Trying to compete with one-fifth of the fees is like trying to out-step with a fork.

That said, Australia is rightly proud of our egalitarian ethos and tradition of providing access to higher education regardless of a student's socio-economic background.

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And now for the good news...

A new survey by university ranking agency QS has good news for Australian universities, finding that only 5 per cent of international students who originally intended to study in Australia before the coronavirus outbreak have abandoned their plan to study overseas.

Also, only 5 per cent of those planning to study here in Australia have changed their plans and now intend to study in a different country.

In a statement about the survey, which collected responses from 14,416 prospective international students with plans to study overseas, QS said 85 per cent of those originally intending to study in Australia still planned to study abroad.

It also found that 56 per cent of the Australia-preferencing students planned to defer their study for a year because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Furthermore, the virus does not appear to have persuaded students that they should shift their studies to online. QS said "not a single Australian applicant" said the disruption caused by the virus was causing them to look to online options.

Not surprisingly, the survey also found that foremost in students' minds at the moment was paying for their study. Asked what they needed more information on as a result of the coronavirus, 38 per cent said funding and scholarships.

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Charles Sturt University
Chair, Academic Senate

The Charles Sturt University Council invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for appointment as the Chair of the University's Academic Senate under section 16 of the *Charles Sturt University Act 1989*. This position also holds membership on the University Council.

The Chair, Academic Senate reports to the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor and manages the functions and responsibilities of the Academic Senate, the principal academic body of the university.

- Fixed two-year term, part-time (22.5 hours per week)
- Academic Level D/E (or equivalent)
- AUS\$4,989 to \$109,362 p.a. (plus 17% superannuation)
- Location to be determined on appointment (remote work arrangements available)

To view the information for candidates and apply, visit csu.edu.au/jobs.

For further information, contact **Cassandra Webster**, University Secretary unises@csu.edu.au | Ph: 0412 114 636

Applications close at 5.00pm Wednesday 29 April 2020

香港中文大學
 The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Applications are invited for:
Department of Educational Administration and Policy
 Professor(s) / Associate Professor(s) / Assistant Professor(s) (Foundation in Education and Policy Studies in Education)
 (Ref. 200000BB)

The Department of Educational Administration and Policy is one of the four academic departments of Faculty of Education of CUHK. The Faculty of Education (<http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk>) is an international center for professional training and research in education. The Faculty is ranked 18th internationally in the subject ranking in education in 2019 Times Higher Education. Further information about the Department is available at <http://www.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/eaep>. The Department is seeking to recruit distinguished scholars for appointment at various postgraduate levels in the areas of foundation in education and policy studies in education.

Applicants should have (i) excellent academic qualifications including a doctoral degree in policy studies in education, sociology of education, philosophy of education or related discipline; (ii) a strong research background in areas that will contribute or add to the existing strengths of the Department; (iii) a track record of programmatic research and publications; (iv) potential to obtain competitive research grants; and (v) strong commitment to excellence in teaching and scholarship.

The appointees will (a) teach undergraduate and postgraduate courses; (b) supervise postgraduate students; (c) bid for external competitive grants; and (d) assist in administrative matters. The appointees are expected to play a key role in teaching and research initiatives in foundation in education and policy studies in education.

Appointments will normally be made on contract basis for up to three years initially, which, subject to funding and mutual agreement, may lead to longer-term appointment or substantiation later. Substantive appointment can be considered for candidates of full Professor rank with proven international academic standing and leadership, and an exceptional record of research and scholarship.

Applications will be accepted until the posts are filled.

Application Procedure
 Applicants should complete the online application form and upload a full curriculum vitae with details of three referees.

The University only accepts and considers applications submitted online for the posts above. For more information and to apply online, please visit <http://career.cuhk.edu.hk>.

香港浸會大學
 HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

President and Vice-Chancellor

Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) invites nominations / applications for the position of President and Vice-Chancellor of the University, tenable in September 2020 or soon thereafter.

The University is looking for a dynamic leader who is able to lead the transformation of the University at a pivotal moment in its history. Energised by a new 10-year *Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-28* and with its ambitious *TalentGo* global faculty recruitment initiative fully under way, HKBU is poised to transform itself into an institution with an international reputation for excellence.

The University
 Founded in 1956, the University encompasses eight Faculties/Schools offering a range of academic programmes leading to the award, including bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, with a student population of around 22,000. HKBU has an academic and teaching staff strength of about 1,000, which will be increased as a result of the successful execution of the *TalentGo* initiative. As part of the *Institutional Strategic Plan 2018-28*, the University is expanding its research strength and infrastructure rapidly. It has expanded its global recruitment of students and staff over the last few years and has entered into teaching and research partnerships with leading universities around the world. Beyond Hong Kong, the University has established the Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University International College, a unique liberal arts college in Zhuhai as well as research centres in other parts of China.

Further information about the University can be found on the website at <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk>.

The role
 The President and Vice-Chancellor, assisted by the Provost and three Vice-Presidents, is the chief executive and academic leader of the University, and reports to the Council for the overall academic development, research and institutional advancement, financial management and future strategic direction of the University.

The person
 The Council seeks to appoint a visionary, inspiring and dynamic leader who is a scholar with globally renowned academic achievements and possesses a successful track record of management experience in higher education at a senior executive level.

The candidate must have an international outlook, a strong commitment to education and teaching, with the vision of the University and a mission to lead the University to further excel in identifying, research and service. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with demonstrated leadership qualities in community building, good governance practices, people management and crisis management are important. Capability of building international, regional and local networks with relevant sectors of the community, including those within and without Hong Kong, would be an advantage.

The term of the first contract will normally be five years and will be renewable subject to mutual agreement.

Application/nomination procedures:
 Interested parties are invited to send their applications or nominations to Heidrick & Struggles at Suite 408, Two Pacific Place, Hong Kong or via hkbu@heidrick.com. Applications should include a cover letter and a detailed resume.

The University reserves the right not to fill the position or to fill the position by invitation. The information provided by applicants will be used solely for the purposes of considering their applications and all personal data provided will be kept confidential. All personal data provided will be destroyed in due course. Review of applications/nominations will begin from April 2020 unless otherwise notified.

Hong Kong Baptist University is committed to creating a diverse environment and is an equal opportunity employer

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