

Concurrent Session A
Monday 12 September 2016
10.50am – 11.40am



Session 3
La Trobe 101: A Practical Orientation Program for Staff in Response to Organisational Change
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Gina Pederick, is a skilled business administrator with over 25 years' experience in corporate, manufacturing and public sectors. In her role as Executive Officer in the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional), Gina is responsible for ensuring the resourcing, management and reporting of regional campus operations and strategy. She works collegially with the divisions and colleges, Heads of Campus and other senior managers of the University in the coordination and management of regional academic delivery, service provision, and community engagement across La Trobe University's regional network.

Nicole Humphreys, College Executive Officer, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce Working in business and higher education, Nicole has over 10 years' experience in corporate communications and employee engagement. Nicole supports the College Pro Vice-Chancellor and General Manager by managing a number of projects for the College and leads communication and engagement activity for the College's professional and academic staff. Nicole takes great pride in her work and is motivated by both the satisfaction that comes with completing projects as well as the fulfilment that comes with helping others achieve their goals

La Trobe's vision is to 'be a university known for excellence and innovation in relation to the big issues of our time and for its enthusiasm to make a difference'. Essential to delivering this is the new College model implemented in January 2015.

With the new model, we had the opportunity to strengthen our service offering, focus on improved ways of working and finding innovative and effective ways to support staff post-restructure.

With a majority of professional staff in new roles or in different teams, many staff found themselves on unfamiliar ground; their previous knowledge of who did what and who they could call for assistance was now out-of-date. The complex systems network and accompanying issues also came to the forefront; with new touchpoints for academic staff and former smokescreens lifted.

Staff juggled supporting the successful transition to the College model, whilst continuing business as usual. Huge effort was put in to ensuring smooth operations (as recognised in our College's 2015 DVE award for excellence in School and Faculty Management from ATEM) and considerable work continues to improve our systems and processes across teaching, administration and research. We had the opportunity to rethink how we could prepare all staff – new and old – for Semester 1 2016.

La Trobe 101 was conceptualised and developed in late 2015, to launch well ahead of Semester 1, 2016. It is a practical orientation program for staff, focusing on key systems, processes and teams. It includes:

- An online resource hub hosting:
- a collection of simple, one-page 'cheat-sheets'

- short instructional videos
- O-week for staff events held across five campuses including:
- Drop in information sessions on key systems and processes (54 sessions held across five campuses over eight days)
- Meet and greet tables hosted by key service teams

The program design, with a considerable remit across the majority of services teams, had to consider a number of elements:

- Ensuring relevant content for staff (professional, academic, new, continuing and casual)
- Including ability tailor for all our campuses
- A big win for the program was senior endorsement to pay casual academic staff to attend and engage in training
- Best timing
- We needed staff back from holidays and casual staff on campus
- Buy in from the service teams who would present information sessions and host meet and greet tables (with many also required to travel to the regions)

These were addressed by a robust and organised communication and engagement project plan, including some integral elements:

- Establishing a working group with key representatives from all service teams and campuses.
- Engagement and promotion from the Vice-President Administration executive team – inclusive of all of the leads and Directors of the service teams
- Allocating coordinators from service teams to source speakers and table hosts
- Early face to face engagement with these teams was critical. Once the idea was explained there was a huge amount of good will and positive response: staff could see there was a real need for this and that it would ultimately help their teams

The events ran in February 2016, backed up by the online resources. Over 500 staff attended across our campuses (our Vice-Chancellor even tweeted live from the event!). Anecdotal feedback on the day was extremely positive; with a number of information sessions completely full.

We surveyed attendees for basic statistics and feedback and found information sessions were rated highly. Feedback included:

- Meet and greet tables had a good atmosphere. The event had a warm and welcoming environment. People were willing to offer assistance and it was a good chance to speak with colleagues from different areas.
- I liked both approaches: short lecture presentations and the meet and greet to obtain additional information. The staff orientation concept is an excellent idea, as a new academic staff member I appreciated being introduced to the University's services and systems in a few days.

The events were as much a networking opportunity as they were training and professional development. Staff developed a deeper understanding of what services other teams provided.

La Trobe 101 has prompted our service teams to rethink and reshape their training and resources. The program will continue to support staff as the 'go to' resource for key information on systems, processes and teams. Its continuity will continue to produce a connected value amongst staff, whilst contributing to service effectiveness and orientation. Its integration into our Organisational Development framework will help facilitate a broader shift in staff culture.