Concurrent Session J
Wednesday 14 September 2016
11:10am – 12:00pm

Session 3
Full Frontal – How Exposed Are You? When Your Staff Become Your Students

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Nicole Berta has worked with Western Sydney University since 1992. Working in areas such as Student Administration, PG Research and Campus Safety and Security, Nicole has gained experienced in many different aspects of university administration, giving her a very rounded view of the experience for staff and students.

Whilst working in the Student Experience portfolio, Nicole has assisted with many of the online form development projects, including the Advanced Standing eForm, Pathways credit eForm and the direct online application. She has also won an award for Excellence in University Sustainability, whilst with Campus Safety and Security for the introduction of the Bike Patrol. Currently working in Admissions, Nicole is also studying part time in the Executive Master of Business Administration at Western Sydney University.

Robyn Causley has been working in Student Administration since late 1989 and in that time has worked at 3 higher education providers. Currently, Robyn is the Admissions Manager at Western Sydney University, encompassing admission of Domestic undergraduate and post graduate students, development and operationalisation of alternate pathways programs.

During her time at Western Sydney, Robyn has implemented system and process improvements across diverse areas of the Student Administration portfolio. Some of her major accomplishments include the implementation of an online application system, electronic processes for advanced standing applications assessment and precedents.

Robyn is the recipient of an award for Excellence in Professional Service for her contribution to the Blue Mountains Stay On Track program and a Commendation for Excellence in Professional Service for her contribution to the introduction of an online enrolment system.

Many universities employ their own students in casual or temporary roles. The students working at universities frequently provide feedback on university activities and appropriateness of communications, but this feedback is often informal and localised to the area in which the student is working. There may also be a perception that these students do not actually understand the complexities of the sector, so their feedback can be underestimated, or dismissed.

However, when you have long standing members of staff enrolling in courses, it is much harder to dismiss the feedback they provide on the basis of lack of understanding the complexities.

One of the buzz phrases around in the sector at present is 'student centric'. How do you stack up in being student centric when your student critics are also your staff? What opportunities are there in leveraging the student experience of your staff? These staff deliver your reality in their jobs, but have a front row seat to hear the rhetoric. As they see both sides, their input can be vital in achieving real change.

We recently enrolled in post graduate studies at our own university and some of the things we discovered about communication and understanding the needs of students were surprising/distressing/embarrassing/empowering. The challenge now is feeding our experiences into the continuous improvement processes of our university.

We have learned so much about how small changes can have a big impact on students and their experience. Some seemingly benign changes can result in feelings of anxiety, stress, confusion and frustration. Conversely, decisions that are agonised over, have multiple committees working on them and are big budget spends for a university are unremarkable in the eyes of many students.

Time to tell all, the good, the bad and the ugly. There is plenty to talk about in all three categories. Our presentation will focus on our key learnings in the areas of communication and general service, including the effectiveness of point in time communications, how many emails a week are too many, the perception of bias when staff 'out' themselves in class and the moral obligations (perceived and/or real) of staff to uphold the policies and rules of their university.