2nd World Congress of Colleges and Polytechnics

THEME
Funding VET

WORKSHOP
The Entrepreneurial Institution

Torrens Valley TAFE

Entrepreneurial students come from an entrepreneurial institution

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OUR VISION

Creating choices for life through learning

OUR MISSION

- Provide individuals access to global careers through lifelong learning;
- Develop a highly skilled and internationally competitive workforce in partnership with local business and industry;
- Provide young people with wider choices for their future learning and work by integrating with schools;
- Develop mutually beneficial partnerships with the community.

OUR PRIORITIES

- **Business Development**
  We diversify our revenue base by delivering a range of innovative products and services in response to the changing needs of our clients and new market opportunities.
- **Flexible Learning**
  We ensure students have choices in what, when, where and how they learn and opportunities to develop key competencies.
- **Human Resource Development**
  We value our staff and ensure the maintenance of up to date skills and knowledge.
- **Information Technology**
  We apply information and communications technology to:
  - increase the flexibility of learning experiences;
  - increase access to global resources;
  - support our business decisions and processes;
  - incorporate e-commerce practices.
- **Partnerships and Advocacy**
  We work collaboratively with stakeholders, business partners, schools and universities, to increase lifelong learning opportunities and promote the role of TAFE.

OUR VALUES

- Access and Equity
- Innovation
- Quality
- Accountability
- Lifelong Learning
- Teamwork

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

- Information Industries
- Community Services
- Building Trades
- Business and Commerce
- Primary Industries
PROFILE

Torrens Valley TAFE (TVT) has gained a national and international reputation as a leader in responsive, innovative and flexible vocational education and training products and services. Operating across four campuses, Tea Tree Gully, Gilles Plains, Urrbrae and Cheltenham TVT, provides a variety of high quality entry and advanced level part-time and full-time courses to local and international students.

These courses include a number of local and statewide programs such as:

- Electronics
- Hair and Beauty
- Community Services
- Dental
- Veterinary and Applied Science
- Vocational Preparation
- Fashion
- Digital Media Design
- Horticulture
- Business Services
- Building
- Computing and Information Technology

The 2001 TVT student profile reflects the broad pattern of community demographics with 10,665 students - comprising a ratio of approximately:

- 55% female - 45% male,
- 11% non-English Speaking Background (NESB), and
- 6% with an identified disability.

Of these students:

- 79% attend on a part-time basis,
- 3% participate externally through off campus or online systems, with the remainder attending on a full-time basis.

Additionally, Torrens Valley is increasing the range of educational products and services marketed to corporate clients, on a fee-for-service basis. To this end, TVT has established a Corporate Salesforce to market and promote the range of educational products offered, using an integrated and cross-program approach. Many clients have commented on TVT's unique ability to provide services and training that cross the boundaries of traditional departments.

Further information is available on the TVT website at www.tvtafe.sa.edu.au

2000 - 2001 TOP TEN ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2000 Winner Flexible Learning Leader Scholarship
- 2000 Runner Up National Assessment Awards - Key Competencies
- 2000 Winner International WebCT Trainer Status
- 2001 Winner ANTA Flexible Learning Fellowship
- 2001 Winner International WebCT Exemplary Online Course Award
- 2001 Winner L'Oreal Trophy Next Generation Award
- 2001 Recipient Microsoft Associate Expert Award
- 2001 SA Trainee of the Year (Dental Assisting)
- 2001 Winner Adult Learners Week Award for Most Outstanding Program & Provider
- 2001 South Australian Training Provider of the Year Award
ENTREPRENEURIAL STUDENTS COME FROM AN ENTREPRENEURIAL INSTITUTION

WHAT IS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL INSTITUTION?

Images of risk takers undertaking exciting commercial ventures are usually conjured when entrepreneurs are mentioned. There are certainly elements of this within Torrens Valley TAFE: we are involved in a range of commercial ventures within Australia and internationally and these involve some risks. To be able to engage in these ventures however there needs to be a solid core business - a sustainable institution. In this paper I will focus on Torrens Valley TAFE's core business encaptured in our vision 'Creating choices for life through learning'.

An entrepreneurial institution nurtures its major clients. An analysis of sources of revenue for Torrens Valley TAFE [figure 1] and enrolments related to this revenue shows clearly who our major clients are.

Figure 1

TORRENS VALLEY TAFE REVENUE 2001

- Student Fees 10%
- User Choice 7%
- Fee for Service 8%
- Other Revenue 10%
- International Revenue 2%
- Government Funding 63%

Over the past three years revenue generated from fee-for-service commercial programs has more than tripled; New Apprenticeship Training [User Choice] has doubled. Even with these significant increases, perceived in a narrow definition as the entrepreneurial side of the Institute, revenue from these sources make up only 15% of the total Institute budget. Torrens Valley TAFE is planning to continue to increase its fee-for-service programs. Recognising the increased casualisation of the workforce, the increase in part-time employment, outsourcing and reliance on labour hire firms, we are not however expecting a significant increase in new apprenticeships.
63% of the funding is from government through a purchase agreement. Students from these government funded programs contribute a further 10% through fees and also contribute to other revenue such as childcare fees. This major client group are individuals generally not supported financially by employers.

They come to Torrens Valley TAFE:
- to gain a job or own business
- to gain promotion or extra skills in their current jobs
- to change jobs
- for their personal development

The learning experiences provided for these students draws on our educational values and philosophy of lifelong learning, access and equity, developing skills for life or key competencies, flexible learning and using information and communication technologies. They are the underpinning elements of our entrepreneurial Institute.

These are best illustrated by experiences of students themselves.

**MARK: ADVANCED DIPLOMA ENGINEERING (COMPUTER SYSTEMS)**

**A CAREER STARTER**

'I commenced my Diploma in Computer Systems Engineering at the Torrens Valley TAFE at the beginning of 1998. After completing various technical modules, the opportunity for full-time employment at Robway Crane Safety Systems became available through the Institute employment services facility. I negotiated a contract with my employer to allow me to continue my study with their support as my course was relevant to the job specifications. Within a year I was promoted to the position of head service technician where I was responsible for all areas of service, repairs and client interaction. After 12 months in this position I chose to return to full-time study in order to complete my diploma and advanced diploma. I was looking forward to taking more challenging and rewarding work experiences.'

Mark has just won a position with a leading Robotics firm. He attributes his success in a large part to study at Torrens Valley TAFE where he not only developed technical skills but as importantly developed key competencies or generic work and life skills which made him 'work ready'. The flexible learning environment in which he studied contributed significantly to the development of these competencies as in a student centred approach he, like other students, took control of his own learning, choosing what, when, where and how he learnt. Mark chose to fast track, completing his study more quickly than many other students. He took advantage of the faculties extended opening hours and a capacity to study at his own pace.

The recognition and promotion of key competencies has been a significant part of the ethos of Torrens Valley TAFE since its development. What were initially called enterprise skills were later confirmed by the Mayer key competencies reports as workplace competencies, essential to personal and business success. Student centred learning, strong links with industry and the inclusion of skills in communication, the
location and use of information, problem solving, teamwork and information technology were incorporated into the building design, course planning and range of courses offered within the Institute. Team based project work, a resource rich environment and use of information technology are evident throughout the Institute. Staff are involved in a variety of Institute, state and national research and professional development projects centred around teaching and learning methodologies which encourage students to become self directed skilled learners as well as competent in the skills of their chosen occupation.

Within the electronics and information technology program an assessment strategy for key competencies has been developed. This is now being presented as a model to other programs within the Institute. Until this assessment process was developed, the acquisition of key competencies by graduates of Torrens Valley TAFE was largely undocumented and informal despite the efforts of lecturing staff to provide opportunities and encouragement for students to develop these skills. Since the formation of our employment service in 1996 we have been able to gather feedback from employers who frequently comment that 'it is these skills that make graduates 'work ready' and 'able to hit the ground running'. Employers also comment that skills such as locating and using information, problem solving and working with others and in teams means the Torrens Valley graduates they hire become valuable members of the workforce because they are able to keep learning on the job and from their fellow workers because they have the 'soft skills' necessary for today's constantly changing workplaces.

The initiative of assessing key competencies, developed by Robert Denton, is now being benchmarked with work at Alverno College, Wisconsin, USA.

GEORGINA: DIPLOMA IN DENTAL HYGIENE
A CAREER IMPROVER

Georgina lives in Tasmania. She's completing the Diploma in Dental Hygiene through Torrens Valley TAFE while working part-time as a dental assistant.

Access to this program was previously very limited. It was conducted as a two-year full-time course requiring attendance at the Institute. Students, predominantly women, gave up employment usually as dental assistants and shifted home to take the course. As well as creating a significant financial burden, students' family relationships and social networks were frequently disrupted. As well as having negative impacts on students' lives it also affected their capacity to study.

The introduction of flexible learning methodologies now means that students can continue to work and live in their home state, studying both at home and then in intensive skills based workshops at Torrens Valley TAFE. Learning and communication technologies have given students accessibility to study from anywhere in Australia. On-line learning enables students to communicate with facilitators, support staff and other students. Communication is promoted through e-mail, bulletin boards, chat rooms, links to Internet sites providing access to international best practice, learning activities, learning guides and assessment tools. Torrens Valley TAFE has a Web CT on-line page where students can access the intranet to borrow learning resources, communicate with staff and follow course design and content. These on-line learning resources are also available to students who are studying on campus.
Dental hygiene requires the development of highly technical and specialist competencies, developed through clinical practice. Georgina attends intensive block training on campus for these competencies. The Institute works in partnership with the South Australian Dental service which operates a clinic on-site at the Institute. Patients requiring dental hygiene services are treated by our students. Under the supervision of qualified dentists during their campus based workshops. As a result of this partnership, the students also attend other dental clinics and the Adelaide Dental Hospital.

Georgina’s previous studies in dental assisting, and the skills she has developed in her work have been recognised thus reducing the time required for her to complete the course.

The Para Dental faculty works closely with staff within the dental school of the University of Adelaide. The Dental Hygiene program is now articulated with the newly introduced Bachelor of Oral Hygiene. University and TAFE students are studying and practising together. On completion of the Diploma of Dental Hygiene, Georgina like other students will gain significant credit transfer towards the bachelor of oral health and will have the opportunity to gain dual qualifications as a dental hygienist and as a dental therapist.

Increasing access to study and resultant career opportunities, recognising students’ skills gained through previous study and work experience, developing pathways from TAFE to University, and providing real choices in how, when and where students learn are all features of this program. They are features of an entrepreneurial educational institution.

BRADLEY: CERTIFICATE IV IN RACING-THOROUGHBRED
A CAREER CHANGER

"I was in and out of employment from the time I left school. I hated being locked up indoors and I just wanted an apprenticeship. I was the right weight and height and everything...and I got accepted into the course here. I virtually didn’t know what a head collar was and I didn’t know anything...I had nothing to do with horses before...they teach you right from scratch, absolutely everything.

I did the TAFE course and work experience, then John Hall took me on...within two months I was starting my trial rides which were every fortnight...Once I’d done that I got my ticket to ride...my ticket for provincial meetings which is anywhere outside of the city...and right out bush. I’ve had a total of 72 winners since I started.

It was tough, all you’ve got to do is put in and you’ll get the results. They’ve got everything here. They’ve got all the facilities here, you go out into the centre, the racetrack and they teach you the correct way of doing everything. They taught me everything to do with horse management".

Bradley’s story highlights some key features of our educational philosophy, values and practices. Firstly, fundamental to Bradley’s success was gaining a place in a pre-employment program. With no experience whatsoever in riding horses he could not
have gained an apprenticeship as a jockey without that six-month full-time institutional based course.

Secondly the horse industries program is an example of the Institute working in partnership with industry. The Cheltenham Campus of Torrens Valley TAFE is actually on the racecourse owned by South Australian Jockey Club which is very supportive of the program. Students have access to the track and train and work with leading trainers, jockeys and stewards.

A further feature of the program which contributed to Bradley's success is the carefully matched work placements. Lecturers know employers and students and so can match the skills and attitudes of students with the needs of particular employers. Work placement in the pre-employment program frequently leads to employment as track riders, stable hands and jockeys.

SUE: CERTIFICATE III IN FLORISTRY
A CAREER CHANGER

Sue sustained a workplace injury and needed a complete change of work. Her love of gardening led to an interest in Floristry. As part of her rehabilitation program she joined an Adult Community Education (ACE) program in Floristry. Like many other ACE students she started a small business using the skills developed in this program. The introduction of the Floristry training package presented the Institute with the opportunity to expand the Floristry program. Floristry classes now have a mix of students: ACE students learning alongside certificate students and trainees under user choice.

In starting the training package the first step was to provide skills recognition for those ACE students who wanted to move from the informal training to the accredited training provided through the training package. Sue gained a Certificate II and then a Certificate III through skills recognition. She is now studying Certificate IV. Taking advantage of the flexibility of training packages she is developing competencies from Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training along with small business management competencies in a Certificate IV in Floristry. She continues to operate a successful floral business Blooms for Brides, and is now also an hourly paid instructor within our Floristry program.

A particular challenge in this program as with many others is access to and the cost of materials. Working with up to date materials and equipment is a problem not only connected to high-technology programs such as Electronics. Working closely with industry has provided a solution in this program as it has with the high technology related programs. One of the competencies within the training packages is the purchase and care of flowers. The Institute turned this problem ie provision of highly consumable and expensive materials to a positive learning outcome. Students take responsibility for providing their own materials, flowers, and in doing this achieve the competencies of purchasing and caring for fresh flowers. Students with the support of lecturers have identified a number of innovative means of accessing their materials. One particular example is a partnership with a recently established business which specialises in hiring floral arrangements to companies. This is an example of entrepreneurial thinking and an innovative approach with industry that leads to a win-win for all parties. The business provides blooms, students arrange them and the business hires the arrangements to clients. Students have access to blooms which few
could afford to purchase on a weekly basis. An exotic arrangement such as the students are working with would retail for approximately $150. The business changes the arrangements for their clients each month and so students have the opportunity to refresh, clean and rearrange the blooms developing further skills.

Sue's story highlights pathways from adult community education to accredited training through training packages, and the importance of skills recognition in this process. The program also illustrates the resourcefulness of staff and students and the benefits of establishing sound mutually beneficial partnerships with industry.

CONCLUSION
In this paper I have highlighted significant aspects of Torrens Valley TAFE's educational philosophy and methodology: flexible learning, key competencies, skills recognition, pathways between programs and educational institutions, and partnerships with industry. From this strong educational base we have expanded our fee-for-service programs for enterprises and industry groups. The entrepreneurial spirit and culture and the commitment to quality learning and educational practice exemplified in these stories flows to all aspects of our business.