

Inaugural Sydney Basin Science Learning & Teaching Interest Group

12.30 -15.00h, Monday 21st February 2005

Webster Building Rm 250 UNSW

Attending: Kelsie Dadd (MacQU), Les Kirkup (UTS), Mary Peat (USyd), Pauline Ross (UWS), Michele Scoufis (UNSW), Charlotte Taylor (USyd), Noel Whitaker, Michelle Kofod, Will Rifkin, Helen Dalton (UNSW).

Apologies: Maureen Bell (U of Wollongong), Deidre Tronson (U of Western Sydney)

Minutes:

1. Objectives of this group

Discussion took place as to the aims and function of setting up this group. Several objectives were put forward. They were to:

- act as a support network for students (honours and postgraduates) as well as academics in Science learning and teaching
- collaborate with other equivalent interest groups to apply for research funding into tertiary Science learning and teaching issues
- add value to and give acknowledgement for scholarly teaching
- shift perceptions of learning and teaching in the eyes of senior staff in Science
- brain storm problems, issues and challenges in learning and teaching
- increase dialogue about teaching, e.g., first year teaching
- host a forum and use the outcomes to develop a resource and/or apply for research funding
- have a research orientation in particular the practice of Science education
- look at ways of reaching the 'non-converted' and implementation at the coal face
- implement policy
- investigate the issues relating to peer review, evaluation, mentoring and sessional staff.

2. Concerns and challenges

The following issues were raised:

- How to deal with the perceived competitiveness between universities and the impact that will have on participation in this group
- How do we implement educational policy
- Long-term viability of such a group and the time commitment

3. Where to from now?

It was decided that:

- a) This group will meet every 3 months.
- b) A steering committee will be put together.
- c) A web page will be set up. Initially this will be on the UNSW Science site with links to UniServe and the Science sites of the Universities represented. Participants are to send the link addresses to EdSquad for incorporation onto the site. The web page will highlight:
 - the group's major objectives
 - the members
 - projects and initiatives and the contact person
 - resources to share
 - the Forum
 - an invitation to join the group.
- d) In addition to advertising for members via the web page, invitations will be by email, letter and personal networks.
- e) A one day mini-forum will be held 3rd or 4th week July 2005. The following topics were suggested:
 - Graduate attributes
 - Sessional teaching
 - Tutor training
 - Peer review
 - Mentoring
 - Assessment
 - Feedback
 - Funding.

Additional topics will be sought from interested parties at each university.

A document will be put together after the forum to serve as a teaching and learning resource and/or an application for collaborative research funding into a particular area.

Possible funding for this meeting will be via the Deans' of Science at each University. The web page will be set up prior to this solicitation and will act as a prospectus and focus of intent.

f) After this inaugural mini-forum, it is intended that there will be one a year at the end of each year. An Open Space style of conference with some added structure was suggested to take advantage of the productivity of the 'coffee breaks' at conferences.

f) Ongoing funding will have to be sought possibly from external sources.

g) A decision needs to be made about a suitable name for this group.