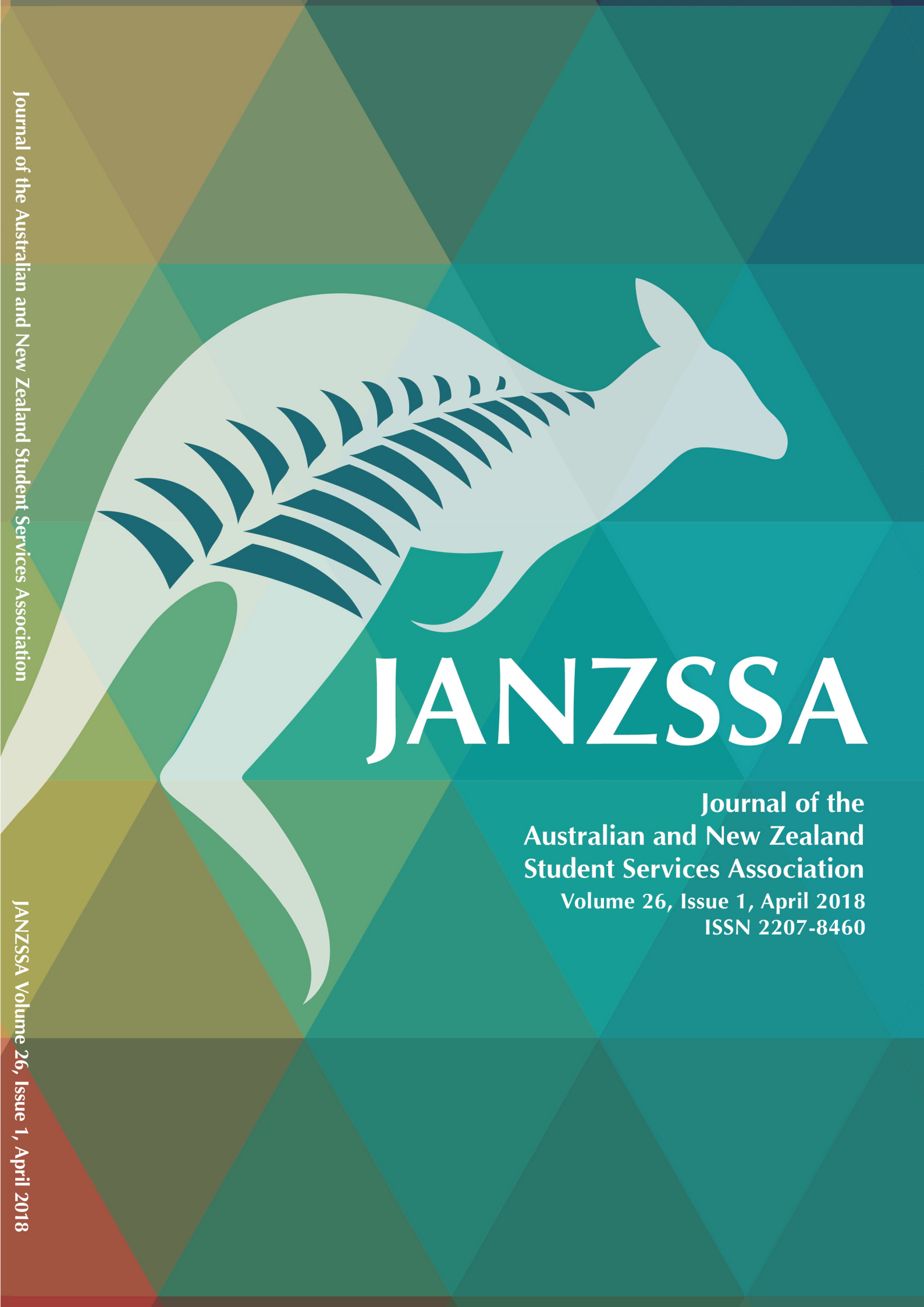
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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of JANZSSA for 2018. You may notice that, as JANZSSA continues to improve its online presence, all articles in this issue may now be cited with their unique Digital Object Identifiers, or DOIs. Using DOIs enables JANZSSA to publish articles in an 'early-release' format as online articles, as soon as they have been accepted for publication. This means that there is immediate online access to articles as soon as they are ready for publication, and that authors do not have to wait so long to be able to disseminate their publications.

Early-release papers are individually downloadable to read or print at https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/, with the drop-down articles menu enabling readers to search for articles by type – from refereed, to best practice, professional, conference papers, reports and so on, or, of course, to use the search function to find a paper by title, author or keyword. Early-release papers are then compiled into two issues per year, in April and October, as usual. Each issue is emailed as a pdf to all members and accessible online at https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/issues, where each paper is again individually downloadable.

This current issue of JANZSSA, Volume 26, Issue 1, contains three peer-reviewed conference papers from the 2017 combined ISANA/ANZSSA Conference, held on the Gold Coast, Queensland. Each one presents new initiatives, including: ways to enhance self-disclosure of equity status and needs; strategies to improve the wellbeing and mental health of medical students; and a web-based tool to direct students to the most appropriate services to meet their needs. There are also two excellent refereed papers in this issue, one on New Zealand research investigating factors influencing the academic achievement of Pacific students; and the other on Australian research evaluating the impact on the wellbeing of students who participated in online Mindfulness programs. The final two papers are Best Practice Case Examples – one an international paper from the United States, on a program that relies on building collaboration across different areas of the university to improve student retention, and the other on a program that addresses issues of sexual harassment through involving and training students as program ambassadors.

Our sincere thanks to all the authors of these papers for sharing their research, their practices and initiatives with us, and once again helping to demonstrate the extent of the commitment of education practitioners to improving the student experience and maximising the potential of all students. Our thanks again also to our assistant editors and copy-editor, who make the production of JANZSSA possible.

We hope you will enjoy this latest issue of JANZSSA and that you will share the online link with other interested potential readers. We hope that many of you will consider submitting further examples of your practice and research, so that others can benefit from your knowledge and experience. The editorial team is committed to making the submission and acceptance process as smooth as possible, and publishing all accepted papers online with minimal delay.

Cathy Stone
Annie Andrews
Co-editors, JANZSSA

Refereed Paper

Teaching Mindfulness Online

Geoff Simmons, Student Counsellor
Judith C S Redman, Ecumenical Chaplaincy Co-Ordinator

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Abstract

This article outlines the design and delivery of sessions used and the results obtained from a 2016 pilot study investigating whether the use of mindfulness-based techniques could enhance the wellbeing and academic performance of university students. The study, a collaboration between counselling and chaplaincy at Charles Sturt University (CSU) had three aims: (1) to determine benchmark data of wellbeing, focused attention and academic motivation across the CSU student population; (2) to determine whether mindfulness training affected the emotional wellbeing, focused attention and academic performance of higher education students; and (3) because around 60% of CSU students study online, to examine the relative contribution of two different online modes for delivering mindfulness training, one in real time and one self-guided. Based on research that supports the assumption that 'mindful learning' benefits students by enhancing their cognitive and socio-emotional capabilities and improving their general wellbeing and academic performance, this study used three validated psychometric scales to measure the attention and awareness, wellbeing and academic motivation of the participants before and after a four week mindfulness training course. The results demonstrated three main findings: mindfulness training may contribute in the long-term to creating a mindset conducive to learning; mindfulness training can be successfully administered online, both in real time and self-guided; and mindfulness training may contribute to shifting patterns of motivation for learning from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

Keywords

Attention, teaching mindfulness, motivation, student wellbeing, online, distance

Background

Mental health issues in university students are of significant concern. Psychological distress has been associated with low academic achievements and high attrition rates (Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Stallman, 2010; Szulecka, Springett, & De Pauw, 1987) and several Australian studies have shown significantly higher levels of distress and mental illness in student populations than in the general population (Cvetkovski, Reavley, & Jorm, 2012; Stallman, 2008; 2010). A recent European study found that, within the sample used, one in two PhD students experienced psychological distress, with one in three at risk of common psychiatric disorders (Levecque, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, Van der Heyden, & Gisle, 2017). There is evidence that these problems are increasing (Belfer, 2008; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010), with university student health services recording increasing numbers of students seeking consultations for diagnosed mental health problems (Andrews & Wilding, 2004), regardless of culture (Giel et al., 1981) or socio-economic status (Kieling et al., 2011).

In response, many universities are developing strategies designed to improve student mental health (Greenberg et al., 2003). They are paying particular attention to mindfulness because there is increasing evidence that 'mindful learning' addresses student mental health and general coping abilities (Collard, Avny, & Boniwelly, 2008; Hassed, de Lisle, Sullivan, & Pier, 2009; Kang, Choi, & Ryu, 2009; Lynch, Gander, Kohls, Kudielka, & Walach, 2011), and also enhances students' cognitive and socio-emotional capabilities and improves their general well-being and academic performance (Hassed & Chambers, 2014; McCloskey, 2015; Mrazek, Franklin, Phillips, Baird, & Schooler, 2013; Ritchhart & Perkins, 2000; Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, & Goolkasian, 2010). A number of Australian universities (such as Monash

University, the Australian National University and the University of South Australia) are thus offering mindfulness programs to help students both with stress management and to develop cognitive strategies to enhance academic performance (Hassed & Chambers, 2014). A wide variety of online resources are also available (e.g. the Australian 'Smiling Mind' (n.d). website).

Mindfulness has been defined as 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally' (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Originating from the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, it is a form of mental training that improves the ability to raise awareness levels and to direct attention intentionally (Johannes, 2012). As such, it does not need to be set within a particular religious tradition, and can readily be used by people who practise other religious traditions, such as Judaism (Gefen, 2011, p. 110) and Christianity (Symington & Symington, 2012; Trammel, 2015) or as a secular practice. The program outlined in this paper was presented to participants as a secular practice, but with information about its use in religious traditions.

Hassed and Chambers (2014) argue that when mindfulness is not presented in ways that are clear, practical and relevant, it does not lead to the long-term engagement that is necessary for long-term benefits. They also argue for the need to promote mindfulness in an evidence-based way. The principles of clarity, practicality and relevance informed the development and delivery of this program. Wherever it was possible to do so, the program provided the evidence and rationale for the content and the recommended practices.

Goretzki and Zysk's (2017) study of the University of South Australia's three-week, face-to-face mindfulness program provided an analysis of student evaluation feedback on the program over a three-year period. The feedback consistently indicated significant improvements in participants' capacity to manage stress and maintain focus. Complementing this, and in recognition of the fact that the majority of Australian universities now offer some online learning components in their courses (University Rankings, n.d.), this study looks at the outcomes from providing a mindfulness program delivered entirely online (compared with face-to-face delivery). A four-week course was designed and developed in two online modes: one offering four 90 minute real-time sessions in the early evening with material presented by a tutor, and one which presented the same material as a largely text-based self-guided online course to be followed over four weeks. Both also encouraged participants to do regular, ideally daily, practice between teaching sessions. The analysis used three validated psychological scales in addition to participant feedback.

While the scope of this pilot study made it impossible to measure academic success directly, it was possible to investigate whether mindfulness training could benefit students in three areas known to contribute to academic success:

- Wellbeing, including managing stress
- Ability to pay attention in the here and now (mindful attention) and
- Academic motivation.

This paper reports on the results in relation to the first two of these aims. Although some promising results were found in relation to academic motivation, the sample size was too small to provide definitive information and it is beyond the scope of this paper to report these findings.

The Charles Sturt University context

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is a regionally based university with approximately 30% of its students studying face-to-face on six main campuses and the remainder studying online (by distance) or mixed mode (part face-to-face, part online). In 2017, approximately 21% came from low socio-economic backgrounds and 68% were the first in their family to attend university. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a relatively high proportion of its students study part time whilst in full-time or part-time employment and/or with family care responsibilities, although the university does not collect these figures. Some students fall into all these categories.

In Australia all tertiary institutions charge students a government-sanctioned compulsory Student Support and Amenities Fee (SSAF). The Federal Government has specified 19 areas in which these fees can be spent by universities. In 2015 the CSU SSAF Steering Committee surveyed its students to determine which of the 19 areas were considered most important by students, in terms of how SSAF funding should be used. Developing study skills and providing health and welfare services were amongst the top five priorities. In 2016, the Office for Students obtained SSAF funding for a pilot project to investigate whether levels of well-being, focused attention and academic motivation changed after an intervention of mindfulness training, examining, in particular, the relative contribution of two different online modes for delivering mindfulness training outlined above. In addition, it aimed to determine benchmark data for levels of wellbeing and academic motivation within a sample of the population of students at CSU.

The mindfulness training

Development of the course

In recognition of the developing literature about the effectiveness of mindfulness, sessions have been offered in various formats and iterations for students and/or staff across the various campuses of the University over a number of years. Notably, the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Science has funded mindfulness programs for academic and professional staff and these programs have been shown to help participants cope with work-related stress and anxiety, as well as improving job satisfaction (Wongtongkam, Krivokapic-Skoko, Duncan, & Bellio, 2017). At the time of writing this paper, the University Human Resources (HR) division was funding lunch-time mindfulness sessions for University staff. Some members of the academic staff were also embedding mindfulness practices into subjects, particularly those that focused on professional practice, reflection and self-care (for example, in undergraduate nursing subjects). A Graduate Certificate in Applied Mindfulness has been developed, with enrolments commencing in 2018. One of the authors of this paper (Simmons) had devised and conducted several previous iterations of this training based on the Monash University Mindfulness for Academic Success program (Health and Wellbeing, Monash University, 2017; Dobkin & Hassed, 2016). They were delivered online via real-time meetings, with students recruited on a small scale. During these previous iterations there had been little organisational support or interest for the program and, while there was some evaluation of student satisfaction, there was no attempt to research the outcomes of students who participated. In addition, none of these offerings involved a scalable program accessible to both online and internal student populations and with an explicit focus on enhancing skills for improved wellbeing and academic performance.

The call to staff to submit for SSAF funding offered an opportunity to seek funding to undertake a properly resourced research project. The funding from the SSAF program was directed

towards the research aspect of the project, rather than content delivery. All content development work occurred within the duties of the existing Student Counsellor role (one full-time position).

Content overview

A four-week program called Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Academic Success (MWAS) was developed and delivered in the two modes described – self-guided online and in real-time sessions.

Table 1 presents an overview of the four- week program:

Table 1. Mindfulness program overview

Week One Content Introduction to mindfulness, thoughts and awareness, how we learn mindfulness, making a commitment to practice.	**Week One Practices** Three-minute Breathing Space (everyday mindfulness), Using the Breath as an Anchor (guided mindfulness practice)
Week Two Content Default mode brain function, negativity bias, responding to negative emotions mindfully.	**Week Two Practices** Three-minute Breathing Space (everyday mindfulness), Thoughts and Feelings as Waves (guided mindfulness practice)
Week Three Content Attention, training attention, dealing with distractions, multitasking, stress and performance, applied mindfulness, procrastination.	**Week Three Practices** Mindfulness Bells (everyday mindfulness), Body Scan and Mindful Movement (guided mindfulness practices)
Week Four Content Being intentional, ethics, values and spirituality, maintaining motivation, finding teachers, wellbeing and positive psychology, using apps for guided meditation.	**Week Four Practices** Befriending Meditation (guided mindfulness practice) and practice of participants' choice.

Challenges

Timing challenges

Sessions were scheduled for times when participants would be less likely to be already overloaded with coursework demands, preparation for exams and so on. The length of the program was partly determined by available time frames and constrained by the fact that academic sessions at CSU are 12 weeks in duration, which leads to content-heavy subjects and tight timeframes for students to complete assessment tasks. There are also session breaks to be navigated. The final four weeks of academic session were avoided, to allow students to focus fully on their studies at that time.

Because of this, students arrived at the end-point of the program after only three weeks of practice, so opportunity for reflection and feedback on the practices in week four was severely limited. However, a number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of brief (two- to four-weeks' duration) mindfulness training programs for university students (Zeidan et al., 2010, Mrazek et al., 2013, Goretzki and Zysk, 2017)

Limits to presenters' expertise with online platforms

The authors had limited experience in formal teaching, although they had experience in training, mainly consisting of ad-hoc presentations to students and/or staff members. They also had little prior experience or expertise with online content platforms (CSU uses BlackBoard, branded as Interact2), other than limited experience with AdobeConnect online meetings. Academic content developers were therefore engaged to assist with putting content online for

the self-guided version of the program. Even so, the content was presented in a way that did not take full advantage of the interactivity possibilities afforded by the online platform. This could be improved in future offerings.

Teaching mindfulness

A major challenge was to devise a coherent learning trajectory for participants seeking to learn mindfulness in a scaffolded way. The final content for the program included elements from the Monash University Mindfulness for Academic Success program (Hassed & Chambers, 2014), Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), Mindfulness integrated Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (MiCBT; Cayoun, 2011), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (MBCT; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002) and Mindfulness: An Eight Week Program for Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Williams & Penman, 2011).

Among these different approaches to teaching mindfulness, several features stand out as being particularly important in developing a graduated learning pathway for participants:

1. Duration: beginning with practices of shorter duration and graduating to longer practices.
2. Density or frequency of instruction: 'Density' refers to frequency of instructions within specific mindfulness practices. More basic practices provide more instruction to participants, with shorter gaps between the delivery of instructions. More advanced practices can have fewer instructions and longer spaces for participants to engage with the practice in silence.
3. Type or object of focus: Another dimension of scaffolding or increasing challenge for participants is the type of focus that the practices employ. It appears to be useful to use practices which engage a variety of sensory modes as a focus for attention, including, for example, body sensations, mindful eating and mindful movement. Nearly all the mindfulness programs examined use these. Different participants tend to engage more strongly with different activities; for example, some may engage more strongly when the focus is on body sensations (body scan activities), while others may prefer mindful eating, or mindful movement activities (such as 'mindful standing yoga' in MBSR training). Through the use of such activities, participants are helped to move from a clearly defined focus (say, the breath) towards a more open – truly mindful – undirected awareness of experiences unfolding moment by moment.
4. Acceptance: This relates to when it is most helpful to transition from teaching the skills of 'bare attention' (Kabat-Zinn, 1982) – the focusing element of mindfulness – to self-compassion, the other important component of mindfulness, which allows participants to remain open to unpleasant experiences that inevitably arise in their awareness at times, without judgement or the tendency to draw away from these experiences. Withdrawal can happen in a variety of ways – such as abandonment of practice due to agitation and restlessness, boredom or sleepiness. Acceptance is an essential part of the training and needs to be introduced early in the process, at least briefly, then elaborated and expanded upon later in the program.

5. Teacher-student relationship: Many traditions use a kind of 'master-apprentice' approach that emphasises the teacher-student relationship as the focus for the transmission of learning. A more technical or technological approach, where techniques and skills can be articulated in a more instrumental way is less dependent on the teacher-student relationship. The latter is clearly more acceptable and appropriate to a modern, secular environment such as this one, where we are offering university students a chance to learn skills to enhance their wellbeing and academic performance.

The importance of practice

The well-established principle followed within the program, was that, above all, mindfulness arises from direct experience and as a result of practice, rather than purely from description or instruction, although those things are necessary (Crane et al., 2012, p. 32; Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002). Therefore, there was a heavy emphasis on the importance of practice; a number of resources were developed to assist and support participants' practice and to trouble-shoot when the inevitable problems arose for them. Participants were encouraged to commit to practising each week's exercises as close to daily as possible for the duration of the course.

Placing mindfulness in the learning context

A challenge was to include a practice that would place mindfulness squarely in the context of being a student and would allow participants to explore for themselves how mindfulness might be usefully employed 'on the run' while they are striving to focus and direct their attention to a study task. An activity that forms part of the Mindfulness for Academic Success Program at Monash University (Hassed and Chambers, 2014) was therefore used. It involves selecting a task to perform, from three different options – a Sudoku task, a spot-the-difference task and a brief reading comprehension task. Participants first cultivate mindfulness, then undertake the task of their choosing, in mindfulness, and simultaneously reflect and write down their unfolding experiences (thoughts, feelings, distractions and so on) in real time. Describing this task adequately for self-guided participants was a particular challenge. Even for the real-time participant groups, it was a challenge to understand the experiences that individual participants were having and whether they were able to undertake the task in the intended way, and gain some insight or benefit from it.

Limits to participants' opportunities for reflection, sharing and feedback

Another challenge in the design and delivery of this program was designing opportunities for participants to reflect on, seek feedback and learn from the experiences that arose in the practices – a crucially important task. Goretzki and Zysk (2017) note the benefits that accrue from a group program focusing on knowledge acquisition and skills development. For purely practical reasons, this needs to be handled differently in the online environment than in a typical group or classroom learning environment.

The real-time sessions were structured so that there was an opportunity for participants to share and discuss experiences from the previous week's practices early on in each session. However, minimal discussion ensued. Although the AdobeConnect room was set up and managed so that participants could use a microphone where one was available, all of the discussion that occurred happened in the text-based 'chat' feature. Unfortunately, the resultant lack of verbal discussion diminished this element of the program, hence feedback on experiences and difficulties arising during practices was more limited than it might have otherwise been.

In an online learning environment collaboration is typically encouraged using online discussion forums, so forums were set up within the program for both delivery methods (self-guided and real-time participants). However, engagement in this aspect of the program was low. One contributing factor to this may have been that although project team members recognised discussion amongst participants as being an important aspect of the program, they found it difficult to generate this via the forums, due to lack of dedicated staff time allocated. As previously mentioned, the program development was undertaken while normal work commitments and expectations remained in place, which was a serious limitation, timewise. Despite this, attempts were made to encourage discussion, but most participant activity consisted of requests for help with technical issues. While there is minimal attention to this in the literature, discussion with experienced online teaching academics at a number of universities also suggests that low engagement is normal for activities that are non-assessable components of a course, so it is unclear whether this could be changed in a course that does not involve credit points.

Despite the limitations mentioned, statistically significant improvements were seen for participants in both groups (real-time and self-guided), in mental wellbeing (WEMWBS), mindful attention (MAAS) and, with some qualifications, academic motivation (AMS).

The research

The research was conducted in two stages and participants could take part in either stage one only or both stage one and stage two. Stage one was for benchmarking; students were asked to complete three self-report questionnaires and provide some demographic and general background information to enable the authors to assess the general levels of wellbeing, academic motivation and mindful awareness in the student population. The questionnaires used were the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS; Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008), the Mindfulness Awareness Scale (MASS; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand, Blais, Briere, & Pelletier, 1992).

Stage two involved participating in the four-week mindfulness training program outlined above and completing the same questionnaires, together with the standard participant satisfaction questionnaire given to everyone who attends activities run by the CSU counselling service. This enabled evaluation of whether participating in the program resulted in changed levels of wellbeing, motivation and mindfulness awareness. It also provided feedback about the course delivery.

The scales

The WEMWBS (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008) scale is a 14 item self-report questionnaire used to measure participants' wellbeing. It looks at two perspectives of mental wellbeing: the subjective experience of happiness and life satisfaction; and psychological functioning in the domains of autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth and positive relations with others. The minimum score of 14 is the lowest level of wellbeing and the maximum score of 70 is the highest level of wellbeing.

The MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2003) is a validated 15 item self-report questionnaire that was used in this study to measure students' levels of attention and awareness. Low scores (>1 and <3) indicate little attention to, or awareness of the individual's present-moment experience. High scores (≥3) indicate an overall ability to experience everyday life and activity with high awareness and mindful attention.

The AMS (Vallerand et al., 1992) is a 28 item validated self-reporting questionnaire. The wording was slightly adjusted to suit the Australian context. It measures seven types (seven subscales) of constructs related to motivation.

Recruitment

After the researchers obtained approval from the university's Human Research Ethics Committee, students received official email invitations to participate in the voluntary study, which was also advertised on the university website and through the use of posters. Any student aged 18 years or over, enrolled in any course, location or mode, was eligible to participate. Each was provided with a link to a SurveyMonkey site which contained the participant information sheet (PIS) and consent form. Once they had clicked on the 'consent to participate' button, they were taken to the first iteration of the three questionnaires and the demographic questionnaire. After completing the first set of questionnaires, participants could choose to go no further or to enrol in either the self-guided mindfulness course through Interact2, CSU's Blackboard-based Learning Management System, or one of two real-time presentations of the course using AdobeConnect. Those who only wanted to participate in the first stage could choose to be totally anonymous, while those who wanted to continue to stage two needed to provide a nickname so that we could match their pre- and post-participation scores on the questionnaires. At the end of stage one, participants were given general information about the significance of particular kinds of responses to the questionnaires, together with information about where to find resources to improve their wellbeing and academic motivation. At the end of stage two, participants were able to receive individual feedback about their scores.

Study design

The stage one data were designed to provide benchmarking information about the well-being levels of the CSU student population, to determine how representative participants were. In stage two, two designs were used to investigate the main effect of time (i.e. pre- and post-training), the main effect of mode of training, (i.e. real-time versus self-guided), and any interaction between mode of training and time. The aim was to determine whether participating in a 4 weeks' mindfulness training-program resulted in changed levels of wellbeing and focused attention and whether the mode of delivery had any effect. The mode of delivery is of interest because internal CSU statistics show that many of CSU's online students prefer to access support services outside normal office hours. For example, since the staff working within Academic Literacy, Learning and Numeracy began offering workshops outside office hours in 2016, approximately 42% of participants have attended weekend options. Staff report that the six o'clock to seven o'clock evening weekday timeslots are also popular, but no separate figures are available for these. The ability to provide effective self-guided online participation has significant (positive) resource implications for the University student support services, in that it would allow courses to be delivered to many students without taking counsellors' time away from other tasks. The second design looked at motivation, including any changes between type of motivation that participants experienced in the four weeks of the course. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 22 (Allen, Bennet, & Heritage, 2014). The significance for all parametric tests used was set at α=.05 and assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance tested.

Results of the statistical analysis

Stage 1:The benchmarking data`

Of the 609 students who returned pre-training surveys (Stage 1), 589 provided a complete set of answers; these were 448 females (76% - compared with general enrolment figures of 69%),

136 males (23% - general enrolment = 31%) and five participants who preferred not to specify their gender (1%) with a mean age of 36 years (SD±11.7). Of these, 33% were enrolled full-time (general enrolment = 39%) and 67% part-time (general enrolment = 61%); 73% were studying externally, online (general enrolment = 60%), 23% were studying on campus (general enrolment = 30%) and 4% were studying in a blended mode of some on-campus attendance combined with external online study (general enrolment = 11%). These statistics indicated that the participating sample was similar to the general makeup of CSU students, although online students and female students were somewhat over-represented. The over-representation of females within the stage one sample matches the current participation trend in mindfulness training courses around the world, with the literature indicating that it is not clear why this is so (Hattori, 2013). The over-representation of online students was not problematic, given that a major concern of the research was the ability to deliver effective mindfulness courses to this cohort.

Stage 2a: Comparison of pre- and post-training scores on the three questionnaires

Two hundred and sixty-two students, 44% of those who completed stage one, signed up to participate in stage two. Of these, 74 chose to follow the online training in real time while 188 chose the self-guided mode of delivery. Seventy-one of the participants, representing 26% of those who had enrolled in the real-time sessions and 28% of those enrolled in the self-guided mode, provided sufficient feedback to enable matching of pre- and post-training data. These response rates are slightly better than the 21% that Sax et al. (2003) reported for other studies using web-surveys with students. The study controlled for variables of adverse life events, exercise and previous mindfulness experience. Effect sizes were correlated with levels of engagement with the mindfulness practices, as reported by participants.

Post-training scores on the WEMWBS significantly increased from pre- to post-training ($F(1,69)=13.38$, $p<0.001$) suggesting a positive effect of the mindfulness-training on general wellbeing. Similarly, the mindful attention (MAAS) scores were significantly higher than pre-training scores ($F(1,69)=19.65$, $p<0.001$), suggesting a positive effect of the mindfulness-training on ability to stay focused and aware. Overall, 62% of participants showed an improvement on the scores of the WEMWBS wellbeing scale and 75% on the scores of the MAAS scale. Scores on the WEMWBS ($F(2,728)= 3.56$, $p=0.029$) and the MAAS ($F(2,728)= 7.94$, $p<0.001$) were statistically significantly higher than benchmark-scores of the general CSU population of students who participated in stage one.

Analysis of the motivation scores was more complex and, while detailed discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper, it is intended that this will form the subject of a future publication. Of particular interest was that while, as expected, the younger participants started with relatively higher levels of extrinsic motivation and lower levels of intrinsic motivation than the older participants, by the end of the program younger participants were reporting a decrease in their extrinsic motivation and an increase in their intrinsic motivation. This is an encouraging outcome because the literature indicates that higher intrinsic motivation levels are associated with better academic achievement (see, for example, Walker, Greene & Mansell, 2006).

Stage 2b: Comparison between the two modes of delivery

As noted above, post-training scores on the mindful attention and well-being questionnaires were significantly higher than pre-training scores. Importantly, there was no significant difference between the two mindfulness training groups (self-guided and real-time) in the scores for any of the three questionnaires, pre- and post-training, suggesting positive effects

regardless of the mode of training delivery. These results should be treated with caution, however, because the sample sizes of the groups that were compared were not large enough to provide a high statistical power. Although prior experience of working in these environments indicated that there might be a higher drop-out rate in the self-guided group, there was no significant difference in drop-out rates between the two groups.

Stage 2c: Overview of the results of participant satisfaction surveys

The results of the participant satisfaction surveys were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the resources were useful, with: 91.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the information provided was relevant to them; 71.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they felt confident about applying the skills they had learned; 74.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program had been beneficial; 82.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they knew where to find further information and resources; and 91.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would recommend the program to other students. The remaining responses to each question were mostly neutral, with the highest disagreement score being that 7.1% of participants were not confident that they could apply the new skills they had learned.

Discussion

As reported in the statistical analysis section, participation in the MWAS training program appeared to lead to significant improvements in all of the three dimensions that were investigated: mental wellbeing, mindful attention and academic motivation (as measured by three scales: the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, the Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale and the Academic Motivation Scale, respectively).

Given the continuing growth in online study in higher education, the finding that improvements in all three dimensions were seen in both the real-time group and the self-guided group, is important. The results suggest a way for support services to meet the challenge of providing effective strategies to assist online students to maintain wellbeing, focussed attention and effective motivation for their studies. There were limitations on the statistical power of some findings, due to sample sizes, but overall findings were robust.

The observed changes in extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation in the younger cohort of participants suggest that these practices may be particularly beneficial for younger students. This is particularly important as it has become widely recognised that motivational and cognitive factors interact to influence students' academic success (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

A note on attrition

In the study overall, 67% of participants who signed up for the training failed to submit the final questionnaires, 70% of those in the two real-time groups and 65% of those in the self-guided group. These figures include participants who signed up but did not actually begin the training (29, or 15%, in the on-line group and 20, or 27%, across the two AdobeConnect groups), those who started the training but left along the way, and those who may have completed the training but not the final questionnaire. There was no way of differentiating between the latter two groups. The study design did not allow investigation of this outcome, although some of the participants in the real-time training groups did communicate their reasons for leaving the training. Reasons included unforeseen additional time challenges and life events arising during the training. Anecdotal evidence suggests that high drop-out rates are common in online training offerings which do not bear credit points and do not form part of

students' degree courses, and our attrition figures are significantly better than the less-than-13% completion rates generally reported for MOOCs, which offer certificates for satisfactory completion (Onah, Sinclair & Boyatt, 2014), even for five and seven week short courses (MOOCs at Edinburgh Group, 2013).

Perhaps of more importance is the effect of the experience of learning mindfulness on these participants, and what, if any, conclusions they have reached for themselves regarding their capacity or willingness to continue practising mindfulness in the future. It would be unfortunate if these participants found that some aspect of their experience of mindfulness was negative and did not have the chance to process this or gain feedback from the instructors, something that is less likely to happen in face-to-face courses.

For further investigation

A number of issues would merit further investigation. First, it would be useful to follow participants over a longer period to see whether and for how long the benefits lasted and under what conditions. Second, a larger sample size with a more balanced age distribution would enable better data to be gathered on the effect of mindfulness on motivation. It should also be noted that the improvements that students in our study reported in focused attention and wellbeing after the mindfulness training paralleled the common relationship found between mindfulness training and wellbeing (see, for example, Carmody & Baer, 2008), but are still correlational, rather than demonstrating a causal relationship.

Conclusion

Participants in the MWAS program appeared to experience improvements in mental wellbeing, mindfulness and academic motivation, but there is room for further development of these research findings. In particular, we know that mindfulness training works best when teachers/facilitators can help students to connect their learning with their own experiences (Crane et al., 2012, p. 32). This requires opportunities for teacher-learner engagement and feedback. Possibilities for further research are being pursued, with the intention that future iterations of MWAS will involve enhanced opportunities for interaction during (and after) mindfulness training for the significant online learning student population at CSU. It seems highly likely that these results are transferrable to other universities with high numbers of online and mixed-mode students since, at least in Australia, all universities that teach online use Learner Management Systems with the same kinds of facilities.

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Refereed Paper

What Enabled and Disabled First-year Pacific Student Achievement at University?

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Abstract

Identifying positive success factors and addressing the factors that impede academic success for minority students in higher education, is a priority for most countries that are experiencing rapid population diversity. This qualitative study explored the experiences of first-year Pacific students at a New Zealand university, and undertook a comparative analysis of factors from two groups of students; one that successfully passed 50% of their first-year papers compared with those students who did not pass at least 50% of their academic papers. Students who succeeded in the first year of study used Pacific-centric student support services, had family members who had been to University before, and had different study habits, learning strategies and expectations from their peers who struggled to achieve. This study identified important aspects of the first-year transition for Pacific students, upon which tertiary institutions can have some impact. As first-year academic success predicts University completion, this study recommends further effort in first year transition interventions to address the social and academic adaptations that Pacific students need to make in order to be successful at University study.

Key words: Pacific Island, students, minority, ethnicity, university, higher education, tertiary education, transition, first-year, New Zealand.

Background

In the New Zealand context, the term 'Pacific Peoples' refers to a grouping of multi-ethnic South Pacific migrants mainly from the Islands of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Niue and Tokelau. These migrants have peopled New Zealand since the 1950s, through continuous migration as well as new generations being New Zealand-born. As a result, Pacific Peoples now make up 7.4% of the total New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Upon closer inspection of population census data, Pacific Peoples in New Zealand have a much younger age-profile compared with the general population, with a little under half (46.1%) being less than 20 years old, compared with 27.4% for the total population. The highest proportion of New Zealand children aged 0-14 years, at 35.7%, are of Pacific ethnicity (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). As a fast-growing sector of the New Zealand population, New Zealand's future workforce is becoming more diverse, with increasing reliance on the contribution that Pacific tertiary graduates can make to the social wellbeing and economic success of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2013; Tertiary Education Commission, 2017).

These important demographic shifts have necessitated key educational policy objectives to prioritise the principle of success in education for all students at all levels. In the last decade, the number of Pacific Peoples entering into and succeeding at New Zealand universities has increased. The percentage of those with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 5.4% to 8.9% between 2005 and 2015 but remains substantially below that of other New Zealand ethnic groups, namely New Zealand Europeans at 20.7% and New Zealand's indigenous Maori at 9.9% (Ministry of Education, 2015). In terms of tertiary qualifications completed within five years, 58% of Pacific students completed their qualifications within five years of starting full-time study compared with 74% of all students (Meehan, Pacheco, & Pushon, 2017). These figures indicate that educational disparities exist for Pacific students in New Zealand's tertiary education sector and there is a need to address this gap. This paper explores the university experiences of Pacific students at a New Zealand university, including identifying the enablers and barriers that contribute to academic achievement.

Literature review

A current New Zealand tertiary education priority is to address issues of equity in education, with a particular focus on Pacific New Zealanders as a population group. A key outcome is to improve Pacific students' participation, retention and success in the tertiary sector, to at least on par with other students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). The issue of higher attrition and lower completion rates experienced by Pacific students compared with other population groups has received some attention; in particular, literature from the New Zealand (NZ) government sector which investigates Pacific students' educational achievement (Anae, Benseman, Anderson, & Coxon, 2002; Horrocks, Ballantyne, Silao, Manueli, & Fairbrother, 2012; Meehan, Pacheco, & Pushon, 2017). A seminal report commissioned by the NZ Ministry of Education (2002) found that barriers to tertiary educational success, from the student perspective, included: feeling misunderstood by teaching staff; experiencing pedagogical practices that did not fit their expectations; not having locations in institutions that acknowledged Pacific identity and cultural knowledge; not seeing or accessing Pacific staff as role models; and not accessing particular types of learning support services. Also identified as important was the facilitation of a sense of belonging and being valued within an institution. Students interviewed for this study also indicated individual factors such as time management (for example, trying to manage numerous commitments such as family, church, part-time work, financial pressures), as barriers to educational achievement.

Recent NZ government-commissioned reports have contributed further evidence on barriers to success, highlighting that Pacific students are often first in their family to enter higher education (Chu, Abella, & Paurini, 2013; Mayeda, Keil, Dutton, & 'Ofamo'oni, 2016; Millard, Stephenson, Rio, & Anderson, 2011). There is also evidence that financial difficulties have significantly impacted on both participation and retention, with students dropping out of studies to find work to support their families (Luafutu-Simpson, Moltchanova, O'Halloran, Petelo, & Uta'i, 2015; Toumu'a & Laban, 2014). Recent studies have taken a more enabling approach, by investigating factors influencing success for Pacific students in tertiary education (Chu et al., 2013; Penn, 2010; Perrot, 2015). For example, one study found that Pacific students who were able to complete their tertiary studies stated that the culturally-responsive pedagogies at their institutions were critical to their success; this included learning material that acknowledged the worldview of students and incorporated Pacific models, metaphors and language (Airini et al., 2010). Another study found that having Pacific staff as role models enabled Pacific students to see tertiary institutions as a place for them (Benseman et al., 2006). Such studies have also found that having a visible Pacific presence on campus normalised Pacific culture and values in the institutions and made students feel welcomed and validated. This included having Pacific communities of learning such as Pacific student associations, tutorial groups, events, spaces, services and programs that promoted a Pacific presence on campus. These were highly valued by Pacific students and were seen as contributing to their success at higher education (Anae et al., 2002; Benseman et al., 2006; Chu et al., 2013).

Over the years, trends have shown improvements in Pacific participation in higher education, however, a closer examination of data reveals that this increase is largely attributed to low level certificates and diplomas in the tertiary sector (Benseman et al., 2006). This has influenced some recent work within particular fields such as Health Sciences, where efforts are being made to address the imbalance and to promote Pacific student success in specific professional fields such as medicine, nursing and other allied health professions (Kokaua, Sopoaga, Zaharic, & van der Meer, 2014; Southwick, Scott, Mitaera, Nimarota, & Falepau, 2017; Teu, 2014). These studies examining the experiences of Health Sciences Pacific students have confirmed much of what has been found previously in terms of barriers to achievement; however, an enabler for students has emerged, that of spirituality and, in particular, the Christian faith, which appears to be a source of support that has influenced positively Pacific student educational success (Ng Shiu, 2011). Research with Pacific

Health Sciences students has also found that academic preparedness for university study impacts on their success (Sopoaga et al., 2013). This has highlighted the role of secondary schooling and pre-transition settings in creating conditions that enable successful transitions from secondary schooling to tertiary education, particularly for professional university courses.

One study looking at the transition from secondary schooling to university study among students from low-mid decile[1] schools in NZ, which included a cohort of Pacific students (who account for 90% of students from low-decile schools in NZ), illuminated the pre-transition and post-transition factors impacting on success (Madjar, Mckinley, Deynzer, & van der Merve, 2010). Pre-transition factors included: the development of clear academic goals; strong academic preparation; realistic expectations of university; early planning of subjects related to intended post-secondary schooling goals; and a supportive family environment. Factors that appeared to be influential and important throughout post-transition, included: the level of success in the first year of university; accessing and utilising campus support services; and personal attributes such as determination, confidence, diligence and persistence (Madjar et al., 2010).

There is a vast international body of literature on the transition to university, stemming from the United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia, demonstrating that the first year of university is a pivotal time in a student's life (Tinto, 2006, 2008; Hillman, 2005; Yorke, 2000). The first year of study is described as a major life transition as new students make the passage from secondary schooling, employment and other aspects of their community, to university study. When entering university, students leave behind a particular secondary school system, community and environment. This can include leaving family, friends and familiar surroundings to embark upon uncharted territory (Kidwell, 2005). It also includes navigating through academic and non-academic challenges and demands, as students go through a transition period full of new learnings and social experiences (McInnis, 2000).

There is a handful of small qualitative studies on first-year student experiences in New Zealand universities, which suggest that institutional culture, support structures and the fostering of positive relationships are pivotal to student retention and to addressing early student departure (Madjar et al., 2010; Zepke et al., 2011). There is a paucity of published research worldwide on the transition from school to university for minority students, including Pacific students, which this paper addresses. The current literature, both local and international, points to the first year of study at university as a critical time-point for being successful at university study. Understanding the issues faced by under-represented groups such as Pacific students in their first year of study, can illuminate strategies that the tertiary sector and the tertiary institutions within it, can develop to address their equity goals.

Methods

This study interviewed the cohort of Pacific students who entered the University of Otago[2] in 2013. The authors of this paper interviewed participants post first year of study, using a qualitative approach to explore their first-year experiences. This included a follow-up of students who were no longer engaged in University study. Interview, as a type of qualitative data collection method, is "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 698). It attempts to uncover and understand the subjects' point of view and the meanings placed upon their lived experiences (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interview process was

[1] In the NZ school system, a school's decile indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from low socioeconomic communities. Decile scale from 1-10, with decile 1 schools (or low decile) are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities.

[2] The University of Otago is New Zealand's first University founded in 1869. Over 80% of its student body have original homes of residence outside of the Otago region, making it the most residential-intensive University in New Zealand.

guided by a Pacific methodology known as *Talanoa*[3]. Talanoa, as a specific form of communication, is similar to that of interviewing and refers to "a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking whether informal or formal" that is usually carried out face to face (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 23). Talanoa allows for flexibility of dialogues and conversations between researchers and participants. It places the power in the relationship between a researcher and participants in their encounters throughout the Talanoa or interview process.

A comparative approach was used to illuminate both the barriers and enablers that promoted or impeded academic success for first year students. The student cohort was split into two groups according to a prescribed achievement level. Achievement can be measured as percentage of papers passed (PPP) or by grade point averages (GPA). The University of Otago's Academic Progress Policy uses PPP as a measure of student performance, with those students passing less than half of their papers in the first year, falling under this policy. PPP was used as a measure of first-year achievement and compared the experiences of students who did not complete 50% of their academic papers (46.8%) with that of the students who were able to complete at least half of their academic papers (53.2%).

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Otago Ethics Committee. All participants were provided with an information sheet and consent forms were confirmed at the beginning of each interview. Students were made aware that their participation was voluntary and were welcome to decline and/or withdraw from the study at any stage and assured that their identities would remain confidential and anonymous.

Participants and recruitment

A total of 116 students met the eligibility criteria with 51 students allocated into Group 1 – as those students who did not pass 50% of their academic papers; and 65 students in Group 2 – as those students who did pass 50% of their academic papers. The inclusion criteria for eligible participants were: having enrolled as a full time first year undergraduate student at the University of Otago in 2013; identifying as an indigenous Pacific student; and a domestic student. Those who were excluded, were international students and students who had enrolled in a Foundation or bridging program in 2013. All eligible students were invited to participate in the study via email and post. In some instances, text messaging, using the social media platform Facebook and using Pacific student and community networks to facilitate face-to-face meetings, were employed as strategies to connect with participants, especially for those students who had left the University of Otago and/or were no longer residing in Dunedin city. Table 1 summarises the demographic profile of the participant cohort.

Data collection

The Talanoa research framework (Vaioleti, 2006) guided the interactions; as a Pacific indigenous process it allows for flexibility in delivery, and space for the layers of discussion that needed to occur. An interview guide was developed to guide the discussions but opportunities for participants to elaborate on certain questions and initiate their own issues for discussion, were readily made available throughout the interview process, with no time limit set for *talanoa.* Data was collected using one-on-one semi-structured interviews, by face-to-face and telephone. An important research strategy was to try to match the interviewer with participants as much as possible, in terms of demographic characteristics. In this case, a young post-graduate (Masters) Pacific student was employed, who was an active member of the Pacific student community at this university, to carry out the interviews. Data collection continued until data saturation point was reached.

Initial discussion questions were developed after consultation with University of Otago student

[3] *Talanoa* – Samoan and Tongan word for conversation, discussions or talking together.

support staff and Pacific academic staff. The questions were framed taking into consideration previous literature reviews on Pacific students' tertiary education experiences in New Zealand and the wider Pacific region. The interview question guidelines consisted of a series of broad questions on: students' prior expectations of university study; support services; social life and Dunedin city; prior knowledge and expectations of the University of Otago; and their first-year university experience in 2013, identifying both successful/positive and unsuccessful/negative experiences and how these impacted on academic success.

Interviews were held at various booked office spaces at the University of Otago. Students were gifted with an *alofa* (gift) $25 supermarket voucher as a token of appreciation. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts, along with audio recordings, were stored safely and securely in University computer filing systems with access restricted to research personnel.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis drew upon a thematic analysis framework. Thematic analysis is often described as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It involves identifying underlying systems of meanings within a data set, the generation of codes and subsequently themes, that structure the presentation of findings. Using the computer software Nvivo an inductive approach was adopted to code data where unitising and coding occurred simultaneously. As each transcript was reviewed, meaningful comments were identified as units and labelled with a code. Generated codes were further examined in order to identify broader patterns. Emerging patterns from the collated data were categorised into themes and sub-themes reflective of the raw data and the project's objectives. Coded data and identified themes were re-read and cross examined between two Pacific research personnel.

Findings

Consistent with the overall 2013 cohort of first-year Pacific students at the University of Otago, the study participants were almost entirely aged under 25, with slightly more females represented in the sample (Table 1). Compared with the overall 2013 cohort, the proportion of Cook Islands and Tongan students was slightly higher, while there was a slightly lower proportion of Samoans. The proportion of students who had returned to university was also slightly over-represented in the study sample when compared with the 2013 cohort. There were no differences between Group One and Group Two students in terms of age and gender. Samoan students were represented more highly in Group Two and Fijian students were represented more highly in Group One.

Table 1: Demographics of study participants.

		2013 cohort		Study participants		Group 1[a]		Group 2[b]	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	**All**	116	100	66	100	23	100	43	100
Age	**Under 25**	105	91	62	94	23	100	40	93
	25+ years	11	10	4	6	0	0	3	7
Gender	**Male**	52	45	24	36	16	68	17	39
	Female	64	55	42	64	7	32	26	61
Ethnicity[c]	**Samoan**	46	40	25	37	5	21	20	46
	Cook Islands	26	22	15	23	5	24	10	23
	Tongan	22	19	15	23	7	29	9	20
	Niuean	6	5	5	8	3	12	3	6
	Fijian	18	16	9	13	6	27	3	6
	Other	4	9	2	3	0	0	4	9
Enrolled in 2014	**No**	52	45	24	36	15	65	3	7
	Yes	64	55	42	64	8	35	40	93

[a]Students who passed <50% of their academic papers
[b]Students who passed >50% of their academic papers
[c]Students who reported more than one ethnic group are counted once in each group reported and the sum of individual groups may add up to more than 100%.

The factors enabling and impeding academic success for first-year Pacific students are presented in Table 2. The factors found to both enable and impede student achievement are grouped under three headings; (i) Institutional, (ii) Family/Community and (iii) Individual. Taking a lead from Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological framework, which proposes that human development, occurs and is influenced by the interactions between an individual and their environmental settings or systems, the headings define the spheres of influence on a student's university experience: (i) institutional; (ii) family and community groups; (iii) individual. Findings related to the '*institutional*' environment included factors that are under the control of the university, such as its physical setting, programs, teaching practice, resources and academic workload. '*Family and community'* factors are related to groups that students may be affiliated with, such as family, a church community, school community, specific Island communities (e.g., Samoan community, or Tongan or Cook-Island community) and friendship/peer groups. Reported enablers and barriers at the '*individual*' level are related specifically to a participant and their personal skills and characteristics.

Additionally, the findings are grouped under two subheadings; *Academic* and *Social*. The first year of higher education is often referred to by international studies as a transition period. Within an educational context, common transition examples include: when students encounter new knowledge, such as new subject material; move between educational stages, such as secondary school to university; and adapt to different physical institutional contexts, for example, moving from living at home to living in a residential hall (McInnis, 2000). Entering the University of Otago is a noteworthy transition, as students face various changes and challenges in leaving home and adjusting to new learning environments. Successful adaptation to both academic and social transitions is significant in determining achievement in higher-level tertiary education. The factors that influence students' study

and learning transition are grouped under the subheading *Academic* and the factors that relate to lifestyle transitions as part of the first-year experience, are grouped under the subheading *Social*.

In Table 2 below, factors that were identified by Group One students as barriers or enablers affecting their university first-year experience, are highlighted in orange. Factors identified by Group Two students as barriers or enablers affecting their University experience are highlighted in green and *italicised*. Factors that were commonly identified by both Group One and Group Two students are highlighted in blue with **bold** font.

Table 2: Barriers and enablers for academic achievement of first year Pacific students at the University of Otago,2013.

Key to presentation of data in Table 2:

Group 1 students = passed <50% academic papers

Group 2 students = passed >50% academic papers

Both Group 1 and Group 2 students

Barriers

	Institutional	Family/Community/Friends	Individual
Academic	- **New learning environment** - **Academic adjustment**	- **Family and Community expectations (internalised pressure)**	- Time management - Lack of coping strategies - Lack of use of student support services - Lack of effective study strategies
Academic	- Lack of awareness of student support - Non-residential college accommodation		
Academic	- *Lack of Pacific support in non-Health Sciences divisions* - *Confidentiality at support services*	- *Backlash from non-Pacific peers regarding use of Pacific support services*	
Social	- *Drinking culture*		- Living independently

Enablers

	Institutional	Family/Community/Friends	Individual
Academic	- **University support** - **Departmental support** - **Tutorials**	- **Family support**	- *Student expectations* - *Positive learning strategies* - *Seeking help early* - *Positive study habits*
Academic	- *Pacific support services*	- *Family member attended university*	
Social	- **University friendships/peer support** ◄----►	- **University friendships/peer support**	- Gap year - Mature student
Social			- *Balanced healthy lifestyle*

Note: ◄----► indicates that University friendships/peer support groups can be formed both as a result of an existing group prior to University study or as a result of the influence of the University, via University social events, orientation activities, Halls of Residence peer group, student associations etc.

This project's findings suggest that the determinants of academic success and achievement for this cohort of Pacific students include institutional, family/community and individual factors. Both groups

of students highlighted the following barriers: adjusting to the new tertiary learning environment; academic adjustment; and the internalised pressure from family/community expectations. In particular, students identified the differences in academic workload between high school and university as a barrier which could lead to their struggling and falling behind with the course workload, as well as having difficulty navigating self-directed study and understanding course expectations.

> *So much content, like what you get in like a week at Uni is like a term in high school, I swear. So then it was like, you just fall behind and it was like how do I even catch up from here. (Participant 3)*

The autonomous, self-directed and independent learning environment that underpins university education was reported as challenging by these first year Pacific students. Bigger classes, reduced academic monitoring by teaching staff, understanding assessments and communication with teaching staff around feedback, were all mentioned as facets of the new learning environment that were challenging for them.

> *Getting to class is all good but like after that, you get your own independent time and trying to manage that and making sure you understand everything on your own was hard. (Participant 4)*

Family and community expectations were identified as sources of internalised pressure, particularly among Group One students. These included expectations of students to do well academically and to complete a degree that would lead to a job.

> *It was sort of expected that I had to go to university so that's all pressure from school, a little bit of parents, but driven from that, to go university because I was in a leadership role. There was so many outside influences, [expecting] that I do well at Uni. They keep asking 'How's Uni going?' and stuff, so that sort of put a bit of pressure. (Participant 18)*

A number of similar positive enablers were reported by both groups of students. Academic factors, such as university support that included tutorials and departmental support, were identified by most study participants in both groups as being helpful for their academic study.

> *Discussing and talking to the lecturers about what I was unclear about during discussions or during reading the readings and they were really helpful, especially Dr. X from Theology. He's really like an approachable person and he's really nice and um yeah he just tells me to just keep reading and just take it slow because sometimes scan reading doesn't help. (Participant 8)*

Additional tutorials were also identified as a positive aspect of the learning experience at university. These provided a space for students to ask questions and discuss learning material in a smaller and less intimidating setting. These tutorials were accessible through different support services such as the Pacific students' support services, the Student Learning Centre and academic departments.

Non-academic factors, such as having family support, university friendships and peer groups for support, also played a positive role in the academic achievement and university experiences of both groups of Pacific students.

> *I had a patch where I was like, I had no motivation to study and I don't know what to do. I called home 'Mum, I need a kick up the a***, like help me', and then she like texted me, 'Think about all the times you've spent away from your sisters and think about the reason why you're there, like all this time away from your family, you know it's going to be worth it in the end.' You know, she wasn't putting on pressure and I was like, 'oh yeah, that's true!' and I was like, right! And I was like sweet. (Participant 8)*

Key differences between the two groups of students in reported barriers and enablers were noted at the institutional and individual level. At the institutional level, Group One students reported a lack of awareness of student support services as a barrier, also not living in a residential college. Group One

students talked about only becoming aware of university support services after semester one, when receiving poor academic results. There appeared to be a lack of early utilisation of academic support services, with students being *fakama* or shy and not wanting to be viewed by their peers and academic community as needing help. Alongside this was a fear of negative judgement.

> *I don't know why I didn't [seek help], I think I was just scared of people being like 'You haven't done well' and I just didn't want to be shut down. (Participant 44)*
>
> *I think I feel scared to ask for help, I feel I'll be judged. I know I won't be because not all of them are like that, but that's just me. (Participant 40)*
>
> *There were a lot of times where I thought, I would just deal with it myself like, it's okay, I'll just, I'll like look it up or I'll go to the library and I'll figure it out cause you, I don't know I guess you feel like, like you feel stupid when you ask. (Participant 11)*

Barriers to accessing academic support, such as additional tutorials, were reported by students who were living in off-campus accommodation or living with family in their first year of study. Not living in close proximity to their peers was noted as a further barrier for forming study groups, compared with living in a residential college, where there are more opportunities to form study groups with peers.

> *It was hard for me first not being at a hall cause everyone that was at a hall would be together, they would study together and stuff, yeah. In my first year I didn't really talk to anyone or I kinda just tried to do it on my own. (Participant 11)*

At the individual level, time management, lack of effective coping strategies, lack of use of student support services and poor study strategies, were impeding factors for Group One students. Notable was the lack of effective coping strategies when encountering academic disappointments, such as failing papers or not gaining entrance into a particular restricted academic program. Students often dealt with such stress factors in negative and unhealthy ways, including drinking alcohol and ignoring the problems. Dealing with the academic demands of university was particularly challenging for students who did not seek help early. These students reported seeking help only once a point of crisis was reached, and then in a reactionary capacity rather than as a prevention.

> *I guess it was depressing knowing about my academic things and stuff but then I would be like, YOLO![4]. (Participant 12)*
>
> *When I, like get a grade that wasn't really good, then I'm the kinda person that if I'm stressed, I won't really do anything. I would not freeze but I let it go, and I don't do anything about it and hoped it will go away. (Participant 19)*

There were two unique positive enabling factors for Group One students noted at the individual level; taking a gap year and being a mature student were both noted as positives. These students indicated that having more experiences with other adult environments allowed more personal confidence to grow, developing greater abilities to deal with new people and places.

For Group Two students, enablers they identified that were unique to them and not exhibited by Group One students, tended to be related to the individual level and included: realistic expectations; positive learning strategies; seeking help early; and having a balanced healthy lifestyle. These students highlighted the importance of being proactive about seeking help, accessing, and utilising available student support services.

[4] Yolo – 'You only live once': expressing the view that one should make the most of the present moment without worrying about the future, and often used as a rationale for impulsive or reckless behaviour (Defined in Oxford Dictionary https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/yolo)

> *We must have not understood something said to us at the start of Commerce or something and I said 'well let's just go get some help because, we're paying $800 per paper, surely, they're here to help us! (Participant 3)*

> *I got a C- on the first test of my university year and I just passed and I was like, okay I need to go see someone, this is not a joke. Like I need to go see someone like ASAP. So I just thought, if I'm not going to ask for help, like how am I going to get through this, you just have to like kinda just do it. (Participant 43)*

Another unique enabler reported by Group Two students was having a past family member attend university, which seemed to lead to a greater awareness about university prior to starting. Group Two students seemed to be more knowledgeable about the challenges that underpinned university study, such as the academic workload, bigger classes, self-directed learning and the student culture. Understanding the nature of the university as a different learning institution appeared to assist Group Two students to raise their self-expectations, in order to cope with the new learning environment. As illustrated below, some students mentioned personal expectations of themselves to do their best.

> *What you hear about the University culture and stuff, it sounds fun. What I sort of expected of myself in coming down, was like doing the best I can. I don't know, it sounds really simple but it was really just that, it was to come down and like make sure that you weren't too distracted. (Participant 11)*

Another important enabling factor that was unique to the successful Group Two students, is identified at the institutional level – that is, using specific-Pacific student support services.

> *We had the tutorials in the PIC [Pacific Island Centre – a Pacific student support unit] so normally I would ask the tutor there, yeah instead of going to the lecturer or head of department for help, I would just usually go to email help to the PIC, cause I felt more comfortable with the PI tutor. (Participant 23)*

In terms of barriers unique to Group Two students, students who utilised Pacific support services throughout their studies reported receiving peer backlash and being questioned by their fellow non-Pacific students around the existence of Pacific support services and programs, particularly in the first year of study. These peer questioning interactions affected their use of Pacific student services.

> *After first year, none of my friends went to tutes [tutorial classes] or anything like the [Pacific group] extra ones. You can just tell, all my friends are European, you can just tell that they felt like that it was like an unnecessary thing that we got as like an extra. So they felt like that was like an extra thing that they didn't get, so like [they say] 'why do we have that sort of thing? (Participant 14)*

Discussion

This project's findings indicate that the determinants of academic success and achievement for first-year Pacific students included institutional, family/community and individual factors. The study was able to identify particular aspects of the first-year university experience that can be described as transitional and requiring students' greater adaptation in the first-year, in order to be successful. Previous studies have confirmed the importance of achieving success in the first year of study as a precursor for successful completion (Chu et al., 2013; Madjar et al., 2010). This study confirmed that students who used university academic support structures, and especially the Pacific-centric student support services, achieved more highly academically than students who did not; these findings are consistent with results found by others (Anae et al., 2002; Penn, 2010).

The differences in help-seeking behaviours between Group One and Group Two students may lie in their different expectations of university study. Group Two students in particular, were not first in their family to attend university, hence past family members' experiences appeared to have positively influenced their expectations of university and their study habits. A likely recommendation for tertiary institutions is to develop ways to confidentially identify first-in-family students in order to

place greater emphasis on supporting these students' academic and social transitions into university environments (Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009).

Previous data suggest that Pacific students may be disproportionately represented in the first-in-family category to attend university (Benseman et al., 2006; Meehan, 2017). Developing a Pacific-centric short university preparation course could help to address the academic and social barriers that negatively influence Pacific students' first year academic success. Previous research in the New Zealand context supports bridging transitions between secondary and tertiary study for minority students (Madjar et al., 2010). To date, the authors of this paper are unaware of documented educational interventions that currently address this for minority students in New Zealand.

The findings from this research suggest that there is a place for a Pacific-centric short university preparation program which encourages and normalises help-seeking behaviour, and works to reduce any stigma attached to help-seeking behaviours for Pacific students. Such a program could also address resilience factors, including tools for dealing with peer-backlash, encouraging realistic expectations for university study and challenges, promoting student support options and strengthening student engagement in the first year. There is also the potential for a pre-degree program to address Pacific families' engagement and capacity building, so that they are better able to provide their children with the family support required.

At the institutional level, the issue of Pacific students encountering peer-backlash for the use of Pacific student support services, and the subsequent negative impact upon future help-seeking behaviours, can be countered in several ways, including: (1) cultural competency training for university staff who work with and engage with Pacific students, whether in teaching or support services; and (2) curriculum development to ensure academic content includes aspects of the Pacific world.

Such measures are likely to have a two-fold effect: (i) increasing Pacific students' understanding of and transition into the university environment; and (ii) raising awareness among non-Pacific students of the diverse realities of Pacific students. A final point is that university leaders need to champion Pacific governance and leadership in tertiary education, to support practices that benefit Pacific students, and to drive institutional changes to address educational disparities (Coxon et al., 2002; Tongati'o, 2010; Toumu'a & Laban, 2014).

Conclusion

This study found that students who succeeded in the first year of study used Pacific-centric student support services, had family members who had been to University before, and had different study habits, learning strategies and expectations, when compared with their peers who struggled to achieve. As first-year academic success is a strong predictor of university completion, this study recommends future effort in first year transition interventions to address the social and academic adaptations that Pacific students need to make in order to be successful at university study.

Identifying and addressing the factors that impede academic success for minority students in higher education is a global priority, particularly for countries experiencing rapid changes in university population diversity. This study contributes important perspectives on the first-year transition for Pacific students, and offers recommendations for tertiary institutions on ways to ameliorate some of the barriers students face, thereby enhancing their engagement and future academic success.

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Enhancing Student Disclosure: Australia's Invisible Equity Students and Reasons for Nondisclosure in Australia's Tertiary Sector

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Abstract

Many students in tertiary institutions who are eligible for equity consideration and accommodations decide not to disclose their equity status. Discussions of equity disclosure concern fears of stigma, questions of purpose, and the relationship between visibility of equity status and disclosure. This paper reports on the concept of self-disclosure of equity group membership at university. This study is the result of an investigation of the factors that encourage domestic students from identified equity groups to self-disclose this information to higher education providers.

The project considers three key equity groups:

- *Students with disabilities*
- *Indigenous students*
- *Domestic students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)*

An understanding of nondisclosure would inform future policy and program design to encourage disclosure of hidden subpopulations with specific needs. In this article, we review the literature on disclosure, considering common themes and discussions around these three equity groups. We report on preliminary findings from a survey of university equity service staff on their perceptions of reasons for nondisclosure. When the study is complete, with student surveys and interview/focus group data, the information will be used to generate guidelines to help universities plan equity support measures, allocate appropriate resources and train staff.

Keywords: Australia; Disability; Disclosure; Equity; Indigenous; Non-English-Speaking; Tertiary

Disclosure in the literature

Many students entering tertiary institutions in Australia do so in the face of significant challenges and obstacles to their success and wellbeing. Such students include those with disabilities, those from traditionally disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous communities, those who speak English as a second language, or those from low socio-economic status backgrounds. Equity services are in place in many institutions to "level the playing field", offering accommodations in study and student life to overcome many limitations that these circumstances present. These accommodations are critical for creating a fair and equitable environment, and for ensuring that students can achieve their goals and reach their potential, notwithstanding their challenges.

Despite the role of equity services in helping students to overcome limitations related to equity status, many eligible students decide not to disclose their status. This tendency may prevent students from accessing targeted support to which they are entitled, or hamper effective intervention when support is required. The reasons for this lack of self-disclosure are complex. Although research is increasingly focused on the circumstances that surround self-disclosure, much continues to be personal accounts (see Jacklin, 2011), with a small but growing qualitative literature (Bulk, 2014; Cox et al., 2017; Hernandez, 2011; Riley & Hagger, 2015; Rosenthal, Efklides, & Demetriou, 1988; Sung, Lin, Connor, & Chan, 2017). There is a growing focus on self-disclosure in relation to disabilities, which has encouraged discussion of hidden/visible disabilities and disclosure, stigma, and the utility of disclosing a disability (Bulk, 2014; Kreider, Bendixen, & Lutz, 2015; Mathews & Harrington, 2000;

Mullins & Preyde, 2013). There is also much discussion of Indigenous status and self-disclosure, both in Australia and globally (Bandias, Fuller, & Larkin, 2014; Chirgwin, 2015; DiGregorio, Farrington, & Page, 2000; Farrington & Daniel DiGregorio, n.d.; Rochecouste et al., 2016). There is smaller body of literature on nondisclosure of equity status among students who have learned English as a second language, or come from a non-English speaking background (Earnest, Joyce, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Hannah, 1999; Joyce, Earnest, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Kong et al., 2016). This literature review critically discusses disclosure and nondisclosure among these three groups, focusing on theories of nondisclosure. This is followed by a discussion of methodologies utilized in equity disclosure research and the methodological challenges of studying non-disclosing populations—a "hidden" demographic.

Disability and disclosure

In 2015, the Australian tertiary sector included a population of 1,035,474 students. Of these, 60,019, or approximately 5.8%, identify as having a disability (Department of Education and Training, 2016). This indicates a 7.9% increase in the number of students with disabilities since 2014. However, these figures may not be representative of the entire population of students with disabilities. Despite strides made in framing and conceptualizing disabilities, and a growing population of tertiary students with disabilities, many students choose not to disclose their disability to university services. They do not disclose formally, or they selectively disclose to friends and confidantes, or keep their disability hidden altogether. In some cases, students may have disclosed to other institutions, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) or to other disability services, but not to the university itself. This may have outcomes that affect students' wellbeing and the university's services, resourcing, and institutions.

The decision not to disclose is influenced not merely by institutional issues, but by social factors as well. Stigma is one of the most widely discussed and attributed reasons for nondisclosure (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Hoehn, 1998), and is a fundamental consideration for individuals with disabilities. However, not all disabilities are associated with stigma in the same way. Disabilities that are highly visible, such as ambulatory impediments (being wheelchair-bound) and other physical impediments, owing to their high visibility, are less likely to attract stigma.

"Hidden" disabilities, on the other hand, including cognitive and mental disabilities, are associated with higher rates of stigma (Hernandez 2011). Jacklin (2011) found that self-disclosure was more likely in cases where it was impossible to hide a disability. In Jacklin's (2011) case study, this involved a student prone to suffering seizures, a condition that is sometimes hidden and other times highly visible. However, this did not extend to formal disclosure. Rather, in Jacklin's (2011) case, she disclosed informally to friends and colleagues, but feared formal disclosure to an institution would limit her opportunities in the future, a finding supported by the fact that the only institution accepting Jacklin for post-graduate study was the only one to which she did not disclose her disability.

Morris and Turnbull (2006) found that disclosure of a hidden disability—dyslexia—by nursing students involved significant considerations of stigma. For these students, disclosure involved a number of stigma-related considerations: peer attitudes, career outcomes, and pity. Some students associated disclosure with admissions that a problem existed, and shame. Regarding dyslexia, one such student in the study stated "no one knows about it—I can't bring myself to say it. I hated to be labelled as having it (dyslexia). I just can't and I hate it" (2006, p. 242). Likewise, Olney and Brockelman (2003) found that students with less visible disabilities were concerned that others would not believe they had a bona fide disability; they felt that others would see them as less competent, and worried about being seen as needing help rather than a peer who could give and take in relationships (2003, p. 48). Overall, Olney and Brockerman (2003) found that disclosure involves an "intricate decision-making process about revealing disability information".

Riley and Hagger (2015) interviewed 10 people of various ages who had suffered from a traumatic brain injury. They identify six reasons for nondisclosure: fears of negative reactions from others, feelings of shame, avoidance of emotional upset about the incident causing the injury, feelings that others were not interested in their injury, perceptions that the stress of disclosing their injury to others outweighed the benefits and a desire to fit in as a person without a brain injury—or in other words, not wanting a traumatic brain injury to define them and to isolate them socially.

Less visible disabilities are also associated with lower rates of disclosure and access to disability services and accommodations, and this appears to be related to the problem of stigma. Research by Mullins and Preyde (2013) involved interviews with university students with hidden disabilities—dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and mental illness. Students identified a number of social and organizational barriers that discouraged disclosure of their disabilities and encouraged shame and embarrassment at having a disability and seeking accommodations for it. These included resistance from professors, resentment from other students, and wider public perceptions around their less visible disability (2013, p. 154). The invisible nature of students' disabilities had a role in the negative perceptions surrounding them.

Essentially, the decision whether to disclose a disability hinges on a number of factors—its visibility, which gives individuals more or less of an option to keep their disability "hidden", fears of stigma, discrimination, and differential treatment, admission to oneself of having a disability and/or needing accommodations and differential treatment, and the utility and outcomes of disclosing. Students are less likely to disclose their disability(ies) when:

1. the disability is concealable,
2. the environment is hostile or is perceived as hostile towards disclosure,
3. the admission that accommodations or differential treatment are required is confronting, and
4. the outcomes of disclosure are unclear or seen to be ineffectual.

Indigenous disclosure

Since the publication of the landmark report, *A Fair Chance for All* in 1991, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of making Australian culture inclusive of Indigenous culture and practice (McKenna, 2014). For this change to be more than mere tokenism, it is essential that Indigenous people gain access to the same opportunities as the wider population. However, the proportion of Indigenous people who participate in higher education is believed to be less than half that of non-Indigenous Australians (Anderson et al., 2008). The reasons for this are unclear; however, some research suggests that the under-representation of Indigenous peoples in Australia's tertiary sector is related to a narrow and restrictive definition of Indigeneity, the orientation of Australian universities towards Eurocentric models of education and learning rather than models that recognise the needs and values of Indigenous communities, and perceptions of stigma and benefits related to disclosing Indigenous identity (Bat, Kilgariff, & Doe, 2015; DiGregorio et al., 2000; Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Kinnane, Wilks, Wilson, Hughes, & Thomas, 2014). Underrepresentation may also reflect the educational experience and aspirations of Indigenous students or lack of family support throughout their school careers (Craven, Tucker, Munns, Hinkley, & Simpson, 2005).

This underrepresentation may be attributable to structural factors within the university such as inappropriate orientation, stress or negative reactions to "special treatment" from other students. Farrington et al. (1999) found that Indigenous students at the University of Sydney were tentative about pursuing tertiary study before enrolling. This reluctance was related to perceptions that university study was too difficult and out of reach, doubts about their own abilities, stigma associated

with gaining entry through an alternative pathway, and distance from home and family. However, these students also reported greater satisfaction and more interest in continuing study when accessing an equity service—the Cadigal Program. Thus, Indigenous students face stigma and self-doubt when entering university; however, disclosure to equity services is also associated with better support and self-reports of satisfaction with the level of support (Farrington et al., 1999).

Challenging these findings, Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, Professor Marcia Langton, argues that such accommodations are a double-edged sword, calling them a "huge weakness"; "it is too easy for Aboriginal people to retreat into the comfort zone of an enclave rather than regarding high achievement and excellence as the goal" (Trounson, 2011).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2012) study consulted Indigenous focus groups and identified several reasons to self-disclose as Indigenous. Paraphrased, these were:

1. Pride and confidence in their identity
2. Perceived benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the individual personally
3. Desire for recognition of issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
4. A "Confirmation of Aboriginality" to support their identification
5. The perception that answering the question was compulsory

It is unclear which of these would extend to university students. Point 4 is a prerequisite rather than a benefit of disclosure in this context, and universities are not in a position to make disclosure compulsory. The information may benefit other students and the community, but students may differ in the responsibility they feel for this aspect. However, other benefits such as access to services may entice students to disclose.

Conversely, the reasons to avoid disclosure in the ABS study are:

1. Fear of negative repercussions for the individual/community
2. Fear of racism, discrimination or differential treatment
3. Learned behaviour owing to previous experiences
4. Offence at being asked the identity question
5. A need for more information about the reasons for asking questions.

These reasons seem applicable to the university context, and point to a lack of trust in the process of disclosure. Some of the research suggests that Indigenous students are more likely to disclose to access equity services, which appear to be well received by Indigenous students and associated with higher rates of performance, satisfaction and retention. However, this research also suggests that accessing these services and identifying as Indigenous to attain lower TER and ATAR thresholds are associated with discrimination and poor treatment by some non-Indigenous students. In addition, Langton suggests that these services may be harmful to student performance, as well as assisting Indigenous students in a new and often challenging environment (Trounson, 2011).

Disclosure by students from non-English-speaking backgrounds

Students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB students) face significant challenges in Australia's tertiary education system. These students operate in an environment where advanced English skills are often considered standard, and where accessing essential support and services often

depends on an ability to understand, navigate and utilise English speaking, reading, and writing skills. Despite these challenges, Australia's tertiary student population in 2015 included 40,281 domestic NESB students, in a total student population of 1,035,474 students. These figures are distinct from Australia's international student population, which is not considered in this study, but is nevertheless far greater (134,163 students in 2015) (Department of Education and Training, 2016).

Traditionally, considerations of NESB students have assumed these students to be international students. However, recent research has focused on a more nuanced understanding of NESB status. These students are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and in many cases are Australian citizens or long-term residents. Nevertheless, NESB students from domestic backgrounds have previously been identified as often failing to meet professional standards of English (Birrell, 2006) and may experience discrimination or exclusion as they negotiate identities at the intersection of Australian norms and customs and those of their own backgrounds. In essence, NESB and CALD individuals are local students, but share many of the same insecurities and challenges as migrants, albeit in an environment where "migrant" is a fixed and restrictive term that many do not identify with. Some of these individuals are second-generation refugees (Joyce et al., 2010; Kong et al., 2016); others are students who have come from overseas and attained citizenship before going on to tertiary study (Fildes, Cunnington, & Quaglio, 2010). Hence, NESB students are a diverse group with some similar and many differing needs.

Fildes et al. (2010) identify a number of factors weighing on the mental health and performance of NESB students in Australian universities. These included academic barriers, such as not knowing "the system". Several students were unaware that they were able to request extensions, or were unaware of online course components or university email accounts. Essentially, they lacked understanding of the structures the university offers them. Second, there are language and cultural barriers. Students had issues with formal and informal language, vocabulary and terminology. Related to this, asking questions of tutors, lecturers, and other staff was complicated by anxiety surrounding their poor self-perceptions of their language skills (2010, pp. 30–31). Students faced social barriers related to isolation and in many cases having few family members and friends nearby to talk to, or who understood their issues at university. Personal barriers such as disconnection from mainstream cultural norms, and a sense of disconnection from the wider community also affected NESB student wellbeing (2010, p. 32). Most importantly, structural barriers were found to create a rift between NESB students and university educators.

From the perspective of university teaching and academic staff, NESB and CALD students are perceived to be difficult and as taking up time and resources. Many tertiary educators feel challenged by NESB students and may not consider themselves qualified to support the students' linguistic and cultural needs. They may become frustrated by grammatical mistakes or inappropriate styles of writing, and by the extra time required to correct them (Pantelides, 1999). Ballard and Clanchy (1997, p. 2) found that lecturers were often frustrated by perceived "weaknesses" and "poor English" among students and "the extra demands that fall upon them as teachers". This may cause ambivalence about the benefits of internationalisation in higher education. Teaching staff are at the interface of these ideologies, and may experience some dissonance about their roles and responsibilities" (Fildes et al., 2010, p. 26).

Although there is little research on NESB disclosure/nondisclosure at this point in time, the research suggests that NESB students face real and perceived barriers in accessing services and seeking help in universities. This may be due to a lack of services in the university related to language skills, a lack of awareness of those services, or a disconnection from the wider student population. This may also be due to cultural barriers that may make many NESB students uncomfortable seeking help or see asking for help or assistance in the form of accommodations or extensions as embarrassing or as

a personal defeat. As discussed by Fildes et al. (2010), cultural and linguistic differences do not exist in isolation, and extend a rift between NESB students and teaching staff. This may also make students apprehensive to approach staff for help when they need it.

Disclosure/conclusion

Discussions of disability disclosure have generally focused on disclosure by students and employees to institutions and supervisors. The literature concerns disclosure of Indigenous status to institutions both in Australia and globally, while that of NESB relates to access to and support from equity services. These groups are distinct in form; the first is based on physical and nonphysical limitations, the second is an ethnic group, and the third is a language group, often with overlapping issues of ethnicity and migration. However, these groups approach self-disclosure with broadly similar considerations: fear of stigma and differential treatment, an admission to oneself that help is needed or that an equity status affects wellbeing and performance, and considerations of what the individual will actually receive—the outcomes of self-disclosure. This study aims to estimate the true numbers of non-disclosing equity students in Australia's tertiary sector, and to shed light on these and other considerations. However, this presents major methodological challenges, as this study focuses on a hidden population, and involves considerations of specific needs and vulnerabilities, while respecting students' choice to remain hidden.

Methodology

Approaching nondisclosure presents a significant challenge to researchers. Non-disclosing equity students are, by definition, largely undocumented and unknown to equity services. Their disability(ies), Indigenous status, and/or language background are unknown; hence, they are invisible for statistics and research purposes. Essentially, nondisclosing students are a hidden population, often by choice. Because of this, finding research subjects is a challenge in itself.

University staff were surveyed across campuses Australia-wide. Participants were recruited through emailing equity services based at Australian universities, and through snowball sampling respondents. The purpose of this survey was to gauge frontline staff understandings of the equity student experience. Because of this, equity service practitioners were specifically targeted for the survey. The staff survey concerns perceptions of equity numbers and representation at the university. The purpose of this survey was to identify staff perspectives of how many equity students were present at the institution, and the quality of the services offered to these students. This is important because divergence between staff perspectives of equity numbers and services and student perspectives indicate a critical gap in service delivery and/or information sharing between staff and students. Staff surveys were distributed to university staff through personal contacts of the researchers, mailing lists, institutional emails and cold calling (through email) university equity services at various university campuses across Australia. Equity unit email addresses were gathered from websites, and although not all responded, all 39 universities were sent an email with a description of the project and a link to the survey.

Ethics approval was granted by the University of New South Wales' (UNSW) Higher Research Ethics Committee on April 5, 2017.

This research approached this problem through a mixed-methodology model, employing quantitative and qualitative methods. Our methodology included online surveys of staff and students regarding their own equity status and their perceptions of equity numbers. Through deidentified surveys, participants could offer their personal information and equity data safely, without fear of unwanted further contact or being fitted into a rigid and static equity box from which they may later wish to withdraw. These surveys also offered space for staff and students to express their own opinions on

equity disclosure/nondisclosure; thus, they were emancipatory in nature.

A staged approach

This research consisted of three stages. Stage one was a staff survey concerning perceptions of equity numbers and representation at the university. The purpose of this survey was to identify staff perspectives on the accuracy of estimates of equity students at their institutions and the quality of the services offered to these students. This is also important, because divergence between staff perspectives of equity numbers and services and student perspectives indicate a critical gap in service delivery and/or information sharing between staff and students. Staff surveys were distributed to university staff through personal contacts of the researchers, mailing lists, institutional emails and cold calling (through email) university equity services to all university campuses across Australia. Sponsored Facebook posts were also employed.

The second stage was a survey of students, conducted in mid-2017 distributed to all 39 universities in Australia via staff contacts and Facebook posts. The third stage consisted of focus groups and interviews with students and staff, scheduled to occur in late 2017. At the time of writing this paper, only the data from the staff survey had been collected and analysed. Therefore this paper reports on the first stage only (staff survey) with further reporting planned to occur once data from the second and third stages have been collated and analysed.

The Third stage involved face-to-face or over-the-phone interviews to follow up and expand on the findings of the survey. Students opted-in to be interviewed by ticking a box and providing their contact details at the end of the survey. Essentially, surveys offered a wide selection of data on a national scale, while interviews offered a chance to follow up on trends identified in the surveys in-depth and consider personal experiences with equity disclosure.

Results

At the time of writing, 216 staff members from 27 universities, including 11 regional universities, seven ‘Group of Eight’ universities and nine other metropolitan universities, had clicked on the email link to the staff survey. Of these 216 staff members, 87 provided substantive responses—a 40% response rate. These responses are divided between the three areas of equity—staff may manage equity for Indigenous students, students with disabilities, NESB students or a combination.

Indigenous students

Responses to the first question, “What is the role of disclosure of Indigenous heritage at your university (i.e. is it necessary to access services, support or facilities?)”, indicated that disclosure of Aboriginality was required by all universities for access to services, scholarships or targeted support, and most required confirmation. All the universities that responded to this section offered students the opportunity to disclose to a dedicated Indigenous service at or following enrolment, as well as pathways to do so with administrative services thereafter. Of 33 respondents to that question, 19 expressed the view that the true number of Indigenous students is higher than the number that disclose this, while only three believed the reported number to be accurate. One respondent noted that some students check the box on the enrolment form but do not have documentation. On the other hand, a former staff member of the Indigenous unit of a metropolitan university stated that many of those who click the “Indigenous” box when registering with a tertiary admissions centre do so accidentally or do not understand the term.

The staff responses indicated that they considered the two most common reasons for nondisclosure to be: a disinclination to be labelled (9/10 respondents); and fear of prejudice in university life (8/10). See Table 1 below.

Other staff comments refer to difficulties that students encounter in proving Indigenous heritage,with some students (particularly those who do not feel that their appearance or background conform to common stereotypes of Indigenous people) feeling that they do not have the right to identify; also perceptions by students that the universities' anxiety to identify Indigenous students was to gain funding or to improve their public image rather than help students. For example, Participant 43 states**:** "I was concerned about the stigma around it and then once you get over the stigma, well like forgive me, but you're not 'black' enough. And then you… I don't know, how do you respond to that? When people just saying I don't believe you, well why would I lie about it? And … what benefit do I get from saying this? Nothing!"

Table 1: Staff perceptions of reasons for nondisclosure by Indigenous students

Reasons for Nondisclosure	**Response Count**
They do not trust the university with this information	7
They see no benefit in disclosure	18
They fear prejudice in their university life	30
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	12
They are concerned about confidentiality	18
They do not wish to be "labelled"	32
They do not believe the university needs to know	18
They do not know how to disclose	12
They do not have the necessary documentation	16
Other (please specify)	11
	34 Respondents

Comments include:

- *We have had a couple of students who have chosen not to disclose because of a perception of using their identity to take advantage in the competitive space of scholarship selection.*
- *I believe that students may not wish to disclose their heritage or be identified to non-Indigenous staff*
- *Some students don't disclose due to cultural safety issues*
- *To access services … it is necessary that students have a Confirmation of Aboriginality. Many students that are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders may not have access to this or the knowledge of where their 'mob' comes from so they do not disclose.*

Measures to encourage disclosure include advertised encouragement and reassurances of confidentiality and cultural safety. One large NSW regional university has previously offered "…an excellent camp where the students would go to Canberra for a camp and track their family tree". Respondents were generally unsure about the effectiveness of these measures, although the Canberra camp was described as "very effective".

From both staff and student comments, it appeared to be essential that the benefits of disclosure are explained, and that universities avoid giving the impression that Indigenous students are viewed as *a priori* less capable or in need of special treatment.

Students with disabilities

For students with disabilities, there was less unanimity with regard to the need for disclosure. Most respondents stated that that disclosure and documentation was necessary to access support, but one respondent (from a regional Queensland university) stated "[disclosure] is highly encouraged, but access is not limited to disclosure". Another important point is made by a respondent from a regional NSW university, who notes "We try to also provide an inclusive environment, where adjustments (and disclosure) aren't required".

Reasons for nondisclosure

The question on reasons for disclosure was subdivided according to type of disabilities. The six categories shown in Table 2 are those used by the Education Council Joint Working Group to provide Advice on Reform for Students with Disability (Education Council 2017): physical, cognitive, sensory, and social/emotional. There is an additional category for carers.[1]

Fear of prejudice and a desire to avoid labelling were among the strongest reasons for nondisclosure in the view of respondents. However, a lack of knowledge about how to disclose and concerns about confidentiality were also seen as strong disincentives to disclose, the latter particularly evident when referring to those with social/emotional disabilities. If the respondents are correct, the disincentives are particularly strong for those with cognitive as well as social/emotional disabilities, perhaps because these are less likely to be obvious than physical or sensory issues. All institutions had dedicated disabilities support services.

Methods to encourage disclosure included direct advertising of services via leaflets and central portals, promotion during orientation: "Promotion, referral services, awareness amongst academic staff, embedded in orientation, outreach activities to partner schools, widening participation activities targeting SWDs" (regional Victorian university correspondent).

Table 2 shows staff responses to the question, "From your experience, why might students be reluctant to self-disclose a disability?" These show differences between disability types, with confidentiality and trust issues being scored highly for those with cognitive or social/emotional issues. The scores are lower for those with physical disabilities, perhaps because these tend to be less easily concealable.

There was a range of responses to the question on the effectiveness of these measures. The measures considered effective were described as follows:

- *Students are encouraged to disclose to disability services by information provided in handbooks, orientation, early lectures and periodically to students and staff. Most students are referred to disability services from other staff (academic and other student services) after they disclose to them, and in response to relevant special consideration applications.*
- *There are standard approaches all universities apply but students who are happy to disclose and seek early notification and those who tend to delay will always delay.*

[1] A description of the disabilities in these categories may be found here: http://www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/broad-categories-of-disability.pdf

Table 2: Staff perceptions of reasons for nondisclosure by students with disabilities

Answer Options	Students with physical disabilities	Students with cognitive disabilities	Students with sensory disabilities	Students with social / emotional disabilities	Student carers for people with a disability	Response Count
They do not trust the university with this information	50% 14	68% 19	46% 13	89% 25	43% 12	28
They see no benefit in disclosure	42% 11	42% 11	31% 8	58% 15	65% 17	26
They fear prejudice in their university life	59% 22	78% 29	57% 21	92% 34	43% 16	37
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	57% 16	82% 23	68% 19	89% 25	50% 14	28
They are concerned about confidentiality	61% 19	77% 24	65% 20	90% 28	58% 18	31
They do not wish to be "labelled"	71% 27	76% 29	71% 27	87% 33	53% 20	38
They do not believe the university needs to know	45% 13	69% 20	52% 15	79% 23	69% 20	29
They do not know how to disclose	52% 14	96% 26	67% 18	89% 24	81% 22	27
No pathway exists to disclose	33% 1	33% 1	33% 1	33% 1	100% 3	3
answered question						43

Finally, it should be noted that most respondents (75%) agreed that official figures underreport the true number of students with disabilities. Comments note differences in reporting (for example, whether international students or those registered with pathway providers on campus are included). Students may not recognise their condition as a disability, or they fear repercussions. One respondent noted “I am not sure that we want numbers to rise—it would be much better if students were just included!”

NESB students

Non-English-speaking background (NESB) is the most problematic area regarding nondisclosure, because in many cases there is no pathway for disclosure beyond listing a first language other than English on the enrolment form or seeking help (for which disclosure is not required). Moreover, if students speak English with native or near-native fluency they do not require language support. Of 24 respondents, 14 believed the reported number of NESB students to be an underestimate; six did not know and three believed the number to be accurate. The primary method of disclosure for NESB students is considered to be registration *with a dedicated language support service* with other support services or equity services also available.

A respondent from a Queensland metropolitan university noted:

> *The university derives this information via the government formula—definition provided below. If the first character of the "Year of Arrival" field is not A; and the difference between the submission year and the year of arrival is less than 10; and the Year of Arrival is <=9999, and the Language code if between 1000 and 9799 (inclusive) or language code =9998 THEN The NESB Indicator is set to Y, otherwise its set to N. Our domestic students are able to access our Academic Language and Learning Services team for support*

Table 3 shows the reasons proposed for nondisclosure. Labelling is again the largest category, but perhaps predictably when disclosure is not necessary to access services, "they see no benefit in disclosure" was also common (the student survey also indicates that nearly 75% of domestic NESB students consider their English proficiency to be equal to that of a native speaker). Responses in the comments section included, "Goes against their culture to admit they have something wrong" and "they don't necessarily see it as an issue".

Table 3: Staff perceptions of reasons for nondisclosure by NESB students

From your experience, why might students be reluctant to disclose a non-English speaking background?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
They do not trust the university with this information	32%	7
They see no benefit in disclosure	68%	15
They fear prejudice in their university life	68%	15
They fear prejudice in their professional life after university	32%	7
They are concerned about confidentiality	27%	6
They do not wish to be "labelled"	73%	16
They do not believe the university needs to know	50%	11
They do not know how to disclose	55%	12
No pathway exists for disclosure	32%	7
Other	23%	5
answered question		22

Overall, in the opinion of the staff respondents, the main reasons for nondisclosure centre on fear of prejudice (from staff or other students) and a disinclination to be seen as "special" or as a member of a potentially stigmatised group. Moreover, there were concerns about the way in which such information may be interpreted or used by the university or whether disclosing this information would benefit the student concerned.

University staff members who offer support indicated in their responses that disclosure concerns issues of identity in addition to needs. The decision to disclose may reflect students' experiences of and relationship to bureaucracy, and may reflect a rejection of labels such as "disadvantaged".

Discussion/conclusion

A student's decision to disclose their equity status involves myriad considerations that are personally, temporally, and culturally determined. Non-disclosing students form a disaggregated collective that is both invisible to service providers and to other nondisclosing students as well. This presents significant challenges for researchers and practitioners alike. Nevertheless, common themes continue to appear in disclosure considerations. Some of these are more equity-group specific than others, such as fears of stigma among those with hidden disabilities and indigenous students, but less relevant for students from non-English speaking backgrounds for whom their status is either not important in some cases, or plainly obvious in others. Three themes are recurrent in self-reporting of nondisclosure considerations: stigma, self-image and self-esteem, and the utility of disclosure.

Limitations and future research

This research project examined the perceptions and opinions of staff in university equity units across Australia. However, at the time of writing, the number of staff members who have responded remains limited, and there remains scope for a follow up study of practices to improve disclosure at universities.

In future research, we intend to balance staff perceptions with student surveys to assess the success of inclusion practices and measures to encourage self-disclosure of equity group membership at university from the recipients' perspective. These survey findings will be bolstered by interviews with focus groups and individual students to provide rich qualitative data on their experiences and understanding of self-disclosure issues.

Finally, there remains work to be undertaken with respect to implicit definitions and models of disability held by university students and staff. Medical models of disability often result in a "deficit model" whereby student disabilities are seen as problems rather than as part of the diverse range of needs, and this may have implications for their inclusion.

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NavigateMe:
A Gateway to Students' Greatest Potential

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Abstract

Online interactivity, late night accessibility and anonymity are key to encouraging students to reflect upon their academic achievements. At UNSW, NavigateMe is an online self-help tool that provides immediate and personalised information based on students' responses. NavigateMe refers users to university services and suggests ways in which they can change their lifestyles or personal habits to improve their university experience. It engages students with university services, encourages them to reflect on personal goals, and assists them to achieve their greatest potential during their studies. Students use NavigateMe for various reasons at different times throughout the academic year, and some students use it on a frequent basis. NavigateMe was developed by Student Life and is continually enhanced through a collaborative and iterative process in consultation with staff, students and faculties, to assist students to improve their university experience.

Introduction

In the wake of recent government initiatives in Australia, there has been increasing discussion of ways to engage students who may be non-traditional in terms of social, cultural and economic factors (Nelson, 2014; White, 2014; Zepke, 2013). Early engagement has been found to be one of the key factors to helping students receive appropriate support and reach their full potential.

When students experience difficulty during their study, a number of support services are available at modern universities. Students are constantly required to seek out a range of services available to support their life at university, both academic and non-academic. McGorry (2003) has recommended that flexibility, responsiveness and interactivity are key to satisfactory and effective student support services, which in turn are critical for enhancing student engagement and success (Yukselturk & Yildirim, 2008). These three aspects can potentially be achieved in the online world. Online tools are widely used for teaching (Lawrence, 2013), monitoring student success (Kokaua, Sopoaga, Zaharic & Van der Meer, 2014), and for orientation (Smyth & Lodge, 2012). However, other than in distance education (Brown et al., 2013; Clark et al., 2015), there appears to be little use of web-based tools to promote student engagement with the wider university and student support services.

While in today's world most university services have a website or page that students can consult, this may not be particularly engaging if it merely displays contact details or a contact form. Another factor to consider is the issue of help-seeking avoidance by students which has been shown to be especially prevalent amongst lower achievers (Karabenick, 2004) and students who are highly distressed (Ryan, Shochet & Stallman, 2010). Many universities, particularly the established traditional institutions, lack clear effective pathways by which students can seek assistance with their emotional or support needs (Laws & Fiedler, 2013). This may impede help-seeking behaviour, which in turn may have an adverse effect on student success (Ryan, Shochet & Stallman, 2010).

This paper argues that a clearer pathway to support can be provided by NavigateMe - an online tool which serves as a first port of call for students who may be in need of support. Together with the anonymity that the online world can offer, an online tool such as NavigateMe can assist students locate and identify opportunities to improve their university experience, avail themselves of opportunities and seek support when it is needed.

Background

Within the Division of Student Life at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney staff were concerned that pathways to support services were not always made sufficiently clear to students. Information for students about support services was not necessarily standardised across faculties and schools, resulting in confusion from a student perspective about which pathways were available to resolve issues at the faculty and university support service level. It was apparent to Student Life staff as well as Faculty Advisors, that there was a need to link students more effectively to resources, services and webpages, including faculty-specific information, as well as ensuring that students have sufficient information about the available services. One method to assist students in seeking appropriate services is to encourage students to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses (Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010; Potter & Bye, 2014). For these reasons, NavigateMe was developed at UNSW by Student Life's Project Team to connect students with information about appropriate services according to their needs. Within NavigateMe, various statements are presented to students to encourage reflection. Encouraging students to reflect on and review personal goals, providing them with relevant information upon which to act, can also promote self-management (Robbins, Oh, Le, & Button, 2009).

Corrin and Barba (2015) reported that having immediate and personalised feedback assists students to effectively identify their gaps in performance for future improvements. They further recommend that to assist students to translate the feedback into a course of action for behaviour change, support resources and guidance should be provided alongside the immediate feedback. Based on the responses, a personalised action plan is generated automatically to provide immediate feedback and follow-up. This assists students to discover services within their faculties when needed, empowering them to act with targeted and personalised information related to their individual needs at various stages of their university careers. NavigateMe aims to promote retention of students through behavioural change, leading to more successful study.

Development of NavigateMe

The UNSW NavigateMe tool is a new initiative that uses technology incorporating mobile devices, in the online space, to assist in the provision of support with personalised information to students. NavigateMe was originally conceived as an alternative response to students identified as "without good academic standing". Students who fail more than fifty percent of their courses in a semester receive a category of "without good academic standing" and, given the number of these students, the cost of face-to-face service delivery to them alone is high. The development of NavigateMe, was seen as being potentially more effective to assist these students. However it became apparent that many of these students were already in the process of disengaging from their studies, hence it was decided to make NavigateMe available to all students as a preventative rather than remedial measure.

The purpose of NavigateMe therefore changed to one of offering support and making relevant information available to <u>all</u> students, rather than only targeting students already in difficulties, some of whom may have already disengaged from university services. It was also made available to prospective students as a form of early engagement, to prepare and assist them in transitioning into university by helping them understand and explore the support and development opportunities available.

It must be emphasised that the purpose of NavigateMe is not to replace traditional face-to-face services such as general advice, personal counselling, disability services or learning support. Rather, it encourages reflection on and analysis of a student's needs and empowers users by offering a mix of assisted and self-accessed resources for support. The personalised action plan which NavigateMe develops for the student may be used as the basis of discussion in face-to-face support or as a personal

agenda for them to action all the items.

From the outset, it was considered important to engage students in the development process and ensure that the finished product was inclusive for all students, in terms of imagery and practicality of use. With a prototype developed, NavigateMe was first trialled with students in two faculties of UNSW - the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Art and Design.

Academic staff, professional staff and students have continued to be consulted in relation to any changes made to the presentation and content of the webpage at which NavigateMe is housed. NavigateMe is also currently listed as a priority in the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic (DVCA) and has received significant internal and external funding such as HEPP funding, for continual development and enhancement. The recognition that NavigateMe has received from the DVCA, aligning it with the 2025 digital strategy, demonstrates how essential it is regarded for students.

Following a trial by students with vision impairments, some changes were made to accommodate students with disabilities in 2016 which allows NavigateMe to be used with a screen reader. It incorporates icons from the UNSW campus, so students have a sense of familiarity in the online environment. Some changes were also made to the software to make NavigateMe accessible on mobile devices. Subsequently, an online survey which was held amongst its users in 2016 provided feedback on useability and ease of use. This survey showed that approximately a quarter of completions of NavigateMe was on tablets and smartphones. Laptop computers alone accounted for nearly 60% of completions.

As previously mentioned, NavigateMe is available to current and prospective UNSW students. In September 2016, following a meeting with student support staff from different areas across the university, guest log-ons were created. A complete, redeveloped platform was launched in July 2017 based on the 2016 survey conclusions.

NavigateMe: How it works

NavigateMe is accessed via a link on the UNSW website, and is also featured on UNSW webpages with key information on academic performance. It is highlighted in email correspondence with students at key points for various purposes, for example: when enrolment opens; in mid-semester when major assignments are due; and when students fail more than 50% of their enrolled courses. It is presented to incoming postgraduates at information evenings and orientation week(s). Users log in using their university identification (ID) and password just as they do for all other university webpages. Alternatively, for those who are still waiting to enrol, NavigateMe has a guest log-in to help new students to become familiar with UNSW services. They are asked to select a faculty and academic career to obtain specific information in their area of studies. They are then presented with an interface containing a menu from which they can select the areas that most concern them. There are five general areas: “My Personal Life”, “My Life at Uni”, “My Career”, “My Study at Uni” and “My Uni Procedure” (they can choose any number of these). There is always an option of “Get in Touch” at the top of the website, which links to a contact form if students desire more personal support, in which case a response will be provided to the student within one business day. See Figure 1.

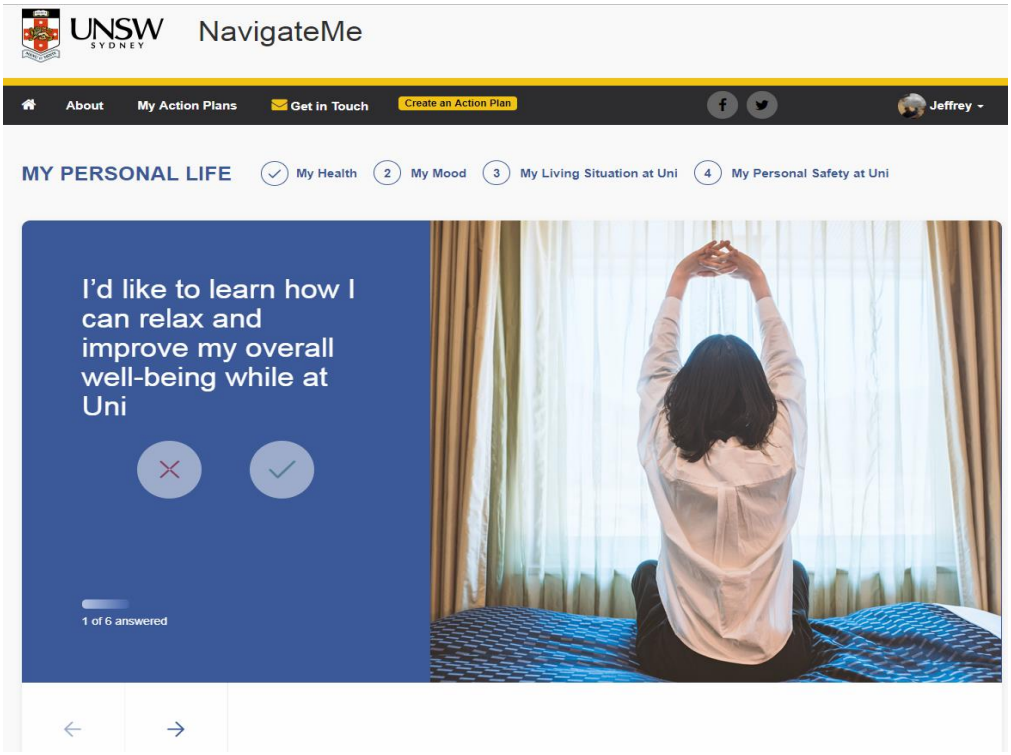

Figure 1: Screenshot of NavigateMe

Students are then directed to a list of sub-categories, which they can skip if they feel the area is less relevant. Under each sub-category is a maximum of ten statements which appear one at a time to assist students reflect on their current situation. Image 1 above shows a statement under sub-category "My Health" within category "My Personal Life". A progress bar is available at the bottom of the webpage to help students navigate through the statements. An example statement in this sub-category is "I have a short term medical condition/injury that is currently affecting my ability to study".

A personalised action plan is then generated based on statements selected. The action plan appears on the screen, and can be printed or emailed to the student. It consists of advice and links to other sites offering advice, which are sorted under two headings: "to read" (links to explanations); and "to see" (people to consult, such as administration staff or counsellors, depending on the problem).

All action plans created are saved under the personal profile of the student. The action plans can be named accordingly in case the student creates several different plans. Students also have the ability to set individual deadlines per item within the action plan to ensure that they will follow through. The action plan aims to facilitate the first step in seeking support; students are encouraged to take action and to seek further support from staff if required. They can log on to NavigateMe at a later date and tick the "Completed" checkbox under each suggestion offered in the action plan to track their actions. Their action plan progress is displayed through the dashboard, which provides the student with a simple yet interactive overview. Moreover, it allows them to set their own deadlines to ensure that they manage their own schedule accordingly.

Evaluation

NavigateMe is evaluated on an ongoing basis and at specific points in the academic calendar using several methods. NavigateMe is revised and updated in response to feedback from users.

- From early in the process, users' reactions have been gauged through focus groups with open questions and a survey form sent after they have used NavigateMe.

- Use of the online component is tracked using Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager and web analytics on hits, number of action plans generated, and clicks on links to further resources.
- Use of NavigateMe and issues sought by students are analysed using web analytics at different points in time. User log-ins enable differentiation of staff and student use.
- Impact on students is assessed using de-identified analyses of subsequent progress.

NavigateMe usage and user feedback

Ongoing evaluation provides useful feedback on web usage and service planning. From this, it can be seen that the peak times of usage are at noon, and also after seven o'clock in the evening, when no support services are available. The online self-help aspect of NavigateMe is a key feature; students are connected with support as soon as the student sees a need. Higher usage can be seen during key university events, and key student concerns and user demographics differ over time.

Web analytics show that students are always seeking ways to improve their academic standing. They may be preparing for the start of semester, catching up on course materials or preparing for the next semester after realising the need to improve. Personal issues in relation to stress and loneliness appear as exams approach and during semester breaks. Networking opportunities are sought during semesters, while career-related topics are most popular at the start or the end of the semester.

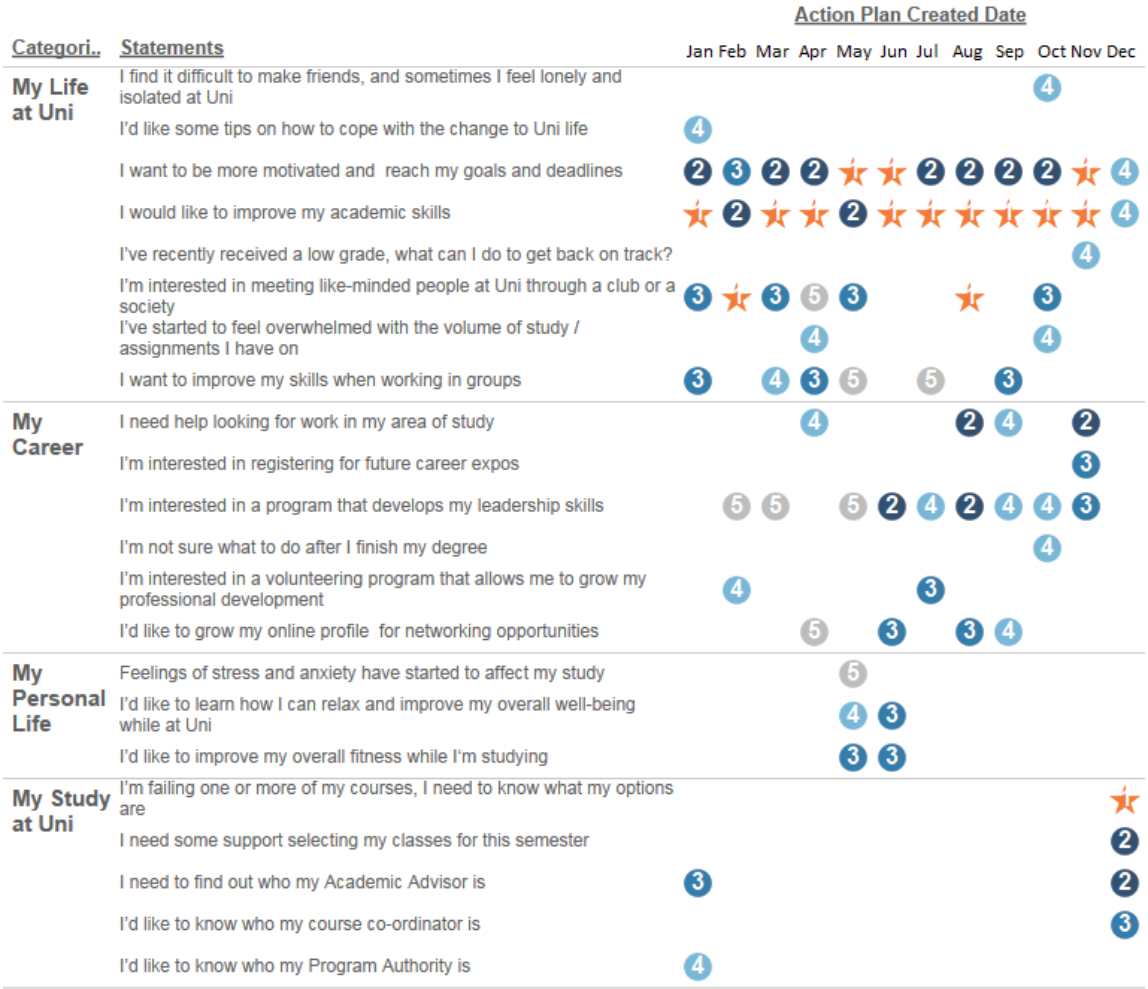

Figure 2: Table of top statements selected by students by month (star = most often selected; 5 = least often selected)

More personal information, such as in relation to sexual health concerns and disability are occasionally sought by students. Some of the students who sought information on disability services have never disclosed through the UNSW systems and never registered with the university disability support service. NavigateMe is a secure platform for students to seek sensitive information anonymously with minimal perceived threats to self-esteem.

NavigateMe engages with new students early in the start of the semester, with up to 30% more new students using this service during the first month of a semester compared with other months. These students are exploring services available, familiarising themselves with the university processes and finding opportunities to develop their future career in their area of studies. It also connects with students in need; after release of results until the start of the semester, approximately 20% more users were "without good academic standing" compared with other months. These students were seeking tips and support for improvement in the next semester. See Figure 2.

Staff, services and academics are consulted on an ongoing basis. Some students use NavigateMe on a frequent basis. Faculty involvement has been responsive and overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Focus groups have been held once every few months across both faculties in which NavigateMe is available. As a result of student and staff feedback during 2015, 36 recommendations were made for changes and additions to items, layout and content. These were implemented in January 2016; the subsequent feedback session held in October 2016 showed student reactions to be positive. The following comments from this feedback session indicated that students were able to reflect and self-manage actions for future improvements.

> *And a few weeks ago when I saw NavigateMe, I was like, "This is useful", because I was really stuck, "Should I do" - I can only do one commerce major, and I was like, "Which one shall I pick?" I knew all this time, since I started uni, that I was going to do accounting or finance, but I had no idea which one. And so I used that program. (Science/commerce student)*

> *… extremely helpful tool to encourage reflection and making the most of uni life through taking ownership and seeking support with a very efficient and helpful Action Plan. It offers simple advice, a lot of which you wouldn't have thought you needed, but which will really allow you to get a grip on what kinds of services and opportunities through faculty and services you can access, especially if you need help. (Law and Criminology student)*

> *Totally, it was actually one of the things I preferred about UNSW to other universities, as it showed recognition that sometimes people need extra help and understood that talking to someone can be uncomfortable. I found that in using NavigateMe I was able to work out exactly what wasn't going right for me and make some changes. (UNSW student)*

Further improvements to a personalised experience

Based on the feedback collected from students, staff and web analytics over 2016 and 2017, further enhancements will be implemented in 2018 after a new iteration was launched in 2017. Enhancements are mostly focusing on presentation, usability, notifications, instructions and other aspects.

However, it is impossible to know the extent to which students can translate the feedback to courses of action at this stage. With evidence from learning analytics' studies pointing to the success of personalised dashboards in assisting students to reflect and identify actions needed for behavioural change (Corrin & Barba, 2015), a personalised student dashboard was included to provide a more personalised experience for the user. To enable students to self-manage their actions and succeed, a personalised dashboard with reminder settings and visualised progress of student actions was included in 2017. It is hypothesised that this personalised dashboard will help students realise what future improvements are required and thus make them more likely to act (Corrin & Barba, 2015). This aims to assist students to realise and understand gaps in performance and empower them to

implement the action plan that is created. The dashboard includes methods for prioritisation and reminder settings such as deadlines, workshops, or social events. Student progress is visualised and presented on the dashboard, which shows actions completed and actions to be done.

Conclusion

NavigateMe combines student services and faculty information interlaced with questions to guide students towards the outcome — a comprehensive action plan for them to implement, in addition to key face-to-face contacts.

Previous research (Klem & Connell, 2004), emphasises that student engagement with the university community and services is a strong predictor of academic success. However, many students do not seek support, either because they are unaware of the options available or are reluctant to use it. This paper argues that the flexibility, anonymity and immediacy offered by NavigateMe are appropriate as a first step in seeking support.

The key to the effectiveness of NavigateMe is the collaborative and iterative process of development; feedback from staff and students ensures collaboration between faculties and student services, ensuring it will continue to provide optimum value for users. Moreover, NavigateMe can be adapted for specific campuses and faculties to provide program-related and personal advice.

NavigateMe represents an innovative approach to offering support for university students. Rather than a response to failure or poor grades, NavigateMe is a proactive and pre-emptive approach for both higher and lower achievers, addressing various student related categories in an accessible format. It encourages students to consider their lifestyle and approach to study, while they seek further development opportunities and support in a timely manner.

The strengths of NavigateMe are that it encourages reflection on personal goals and offers practical suggestions for students on ways to improve their own university experience, either by accessing available services or simply by making positive changes to their lives without needing to use student services. It is thus both empowering and informative, and perhaps even potentially life changing. In addition, continuous analysis, including ongoing focus groups with staff and students, is being conducted to improve the long-term impact of NavigateMe on student success.

Further enhancements and various concept designs are in development for a 2018 release. They are aimed at shortening the current process of receiving answers (Pedregal & Bhansali, 2016) and providing easier access to their selected content. In addition, the platform will also be made more customisable by providing the features of a digital diary, where students can turn NavigateMe into a digital assistant (Coulby et al., 2011). The final goal is that NavigateMe will be the first platform that every UNSW student will utilise to assist them in assessing their needs and where they should go next to enhance their student experience.

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‘Just What the Doctor Ordered’: Promoting Wellbeing with Medical Students

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Abstract

The tertiary student experience is not the same for all. Some students navigate the challenges of student life and flourish amidst stresses, whilst others experience considerable distress and disengage (Stallman, 2010; Larcombe et al., 2015). Much research has sought to identify what factors contribute to students’ thriving at university and what constitutes a successful student. Medical students have long been thought of as ‘successful’ students with high academic attainments and abilities, however recent research suggests medical students experience higher rates of mental health distress and suicidal ideation compared to the broader student population (Rotenstein et al., 2016). In recognition of the challenges faced by medical students, in 2017 the Melbourne Medical School (MMS) developed a new proactive approach to student wellbeing through adopting a ‘Health Promoting University’ strategic model (Okanagan Charter, 2015). The overarching strategic model entails a stage-based process of program endorsement, implementation and evaluation; of which the MMS is currently half way through (Stage 4). The framework has facilitated the development of proactive individual interventions and group based programs, all designed in close consultation with medical students, and seeking to broaden the scope of what constitutes a successful medical student. This innovative approach to medical student health and wellbeing demonstrates a school-wide, prevention-based approach to promoting student wellbeing. The authors detail the design, beginning stages of delivery, and future plans and aspirations for this evidence-based model of student wellbeing.

Keywords Medical Students, Mental Health, Wellbeing

Commencing university: The big picture

Commencing university has long been considered a stressful life transition for young adults, marked by complex changes in social, emotional and academic domains (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). This transition represents more than just a discrete or acute life change, but rather a series of life stressors and adjustment difficulties manifesting over the course of university life (Lu, 1994). Some of the stressors associated with this transition include establishing greater levels of independence in the midst of increased levels of social instability, as well as changes in both the quantity and quality of social relationships (Larose & Boivin, 1998; Tanner, 2006). Furthermore the university context involves a range of unique stressors including: increased study load, academic pressures (i.e., pressure to achieve good grades and graduate), studying in a more self-directed manner, and learning in an environment that is largely unfamiliar (Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Jones & Frydenberg, 1998). Students are often also juggling the broader developmental tasks and responsibilities associated with their age period, such as establishing independence from primary care givers and consolidating a sense of self-identity (Havighurst, 1972; Mattanah, Lopez & Govern, 2011). Given these challenges, commencing university has been found to be a particularly stressful time for students, testing students’ coping strategies and overall resilience (Lopez & Gormley, 2002).

Despite the known stresses and challenges associated with university life, recent Australian Government statistics have shown a continued increase in the number of students applying to study at university (Department of Education and Training, 2016). Furthermore, following the Bradley Review of Higher Education in 2008, the Australian Government reported an ongoing commitment to increase university participation, in order to better meet the needs of the Australian community and economy (Department of Industry, 2009). Combining these top-down government-based initiatives with increasing bottom-up student-led interest, the tertiary education sector has seen considerable growth in recent years. Now, as more and more students commence their journey into

tertiary education, interest has steadily risen regarding the plight of these students, with greater concern for student experiences beyond academic attainment.

Certainly, for some students, university presents as a new realm full of possibilities and opportunities for growth and development; however, for other students, university presents as an overwhelming environment, placing them at risk of attrition (McMillan, 2005; Schrader & Brown, 2008; Stallman, 2010; Larcombe et al., 2015). Much research has sought to explain these varied experiences, suggesting factors such as prior academic performance (Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001), perceived social support (Solberg, Valdez and Villarreal, 1994), coping and support strategies (DeBerard, Spielmans & Julka, 2004), emotional stability (Gerdes and Mallinckrodt, 1994), intrinsic factors such as locus of control and self-efficacy (Klomegah, 2007), or broader contextual factors such as family of origin (O'Shea, May, Stone & Delahunty, 2017), predicted student experiences, adjustment and retention at university. A review by Nelson, Duncan and Clarke (2009) concluded that no single factor can explain why some students leave university before the completion of their course; but rather, multiple factors and issues in the personal, social and academic domains are interactive and influential to students' university adjustment. Although no singular factor may impact a students' experience at university, one issue that is central to understanding these unique student experiences is student mental health.

Growing evidence has suggested that rates of mental illness among university students are on the rise, with some describing the issue as an epidemic (Kay, 2010; Kim, Coumar, Lober & Kim, 2011). Estimates suggest that 27% of young people aged 18-24 years have a mental health disorder (Patel, Fisher, Hetrick, McGorry, 2007). This is consistent with epidemiological studies confirming many mental health disorders such as psychoses, substance use and anxiety-based conditions, reach peak prevalence within the young adult age range (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004; Kessler et al., 2007). Within this population of young people, students in particular have been found to have higher rates of stress compared to their aged-matched peers in the general population (Storrie, Ahern & Tuckett, 2010). Studies have also shown that students who present to university counselling services have significantly high levels of distress and symptomatology within a pathological range (Connell, Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2007). Given what is known about the rates of mental health needs in young adults and that those attending university are most frequently young adults, it is not surprising that universities are facing growing numbers of students with mental health difficulties (Stallman, 2008). Now more than ever, universities face the challenge of not only keeping students engaged in their learning and education, but keeping them mentally well.

The medical student journey

Whilst there is now greater awareness surrounding the challenges of university life and the importance of student mental health, the university experience is not ubiquitous. Similarly, the stressors that students face vary. Certain courses and fields of study require varying levels of contact hours, academic pressures, and differing emphasis on grades versus competencies. For example, one student beginning their journey within the field of education may face different contextual challenges and opportunities compared to a student beginning their journey in dentistry. The different disciplines provide students with their own norms, expectations, values and epistemic cultures (Ylijoki, 2000; Knorr-Cetina, 1997). Recently, there has been growing interest regarding the potential impact of students' chosen area of study or chosen course, on their mental health. One field of study that has attracted much interest has been the field of medicine.

Traditionally medical students have been thought of as the most successful, high achieving and aspirational students, overcoming the hurdles of entrance requirements and competitive academic pressures to pursue a highly valued and esteemed career. Undoubtedly medical students are a gifted collection of individuals with certain academic and personal strengths; however, more and more,

these same students have been thought of as vulnerable or 'at risk' of mental health difficulties (Australian Medical Students' Association, 2014). An Australian based survey of doctor and medical student mental health in 2013 (beyondblue, 2013) was momentous in opening a dialogue regarding the wellbeing and mental health of the nations' doctors and future doctors. The study, which sampled over 1,800 medical students, found these students reported higher rates of distress, anxiety and depression compared to the general Australian population, and perceived stigmatic attitudes around mental health to be prominent in the medical environment. Perhaps most alarmingly, the study also found that one in five medical students had suicidal thoughts over a one-year period, significantly more than those in the general population. Highlighted in this study was the need to better understand the mental health of medical students and the unique challenges and stressors these students face.

Beyond Australia, much research has sought to recognise and measure the 'problem' associated with medical student mental health. Multiple large scale, multi-institute studies with medical students have consistently found symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation to be most prevalent during time spent as a medical student, compared to time spent as a Resident (Goebert et al., 2009) or early in the medical career (Dyrbye et al., 2014). Studying medicine was seen as the peak period when participants were likely to experience greatest distress and burnout, suggesting this may be the highest point in need of support within the journey to becoming a doctor. These findings have been further confirmed in a recent systematic review and meta-analysis combining over 160 cross-sectional studies and 16 longitudinal studies examining depression and suicidal ideation in medical students (Rotenstein et al., 2016). Findings from the review suggested depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation were prevalent in approximately 27% and 11% of medical students respectively. Such findings highlight the higher than average experience of significant mental health difficulties apparent in medical students across various international medical schools.

With research consistently reporting mental health difficulties in medical students, attention has now shifted towards identifying interventions, programs or strategies to address this problem. Various approaches have been reported, from individual student support to targeting the broader culture of medicine, each with differing approaches and outcomes. One particular approach introduced at Saint Louis University, USA, has involved a deliberate restructure of the pre-clinical medical curriculum (including reduction in contact hours, shift to pass/fail grading, changes to scheduling) intended to reduce some of the stressors associated with the learning environment and pressure on students (Slavin, Schindler & Chibnall, 2014). Mindfulness and resilience training were also part of the program adopted at the university to promote student wellness, with overall positive findings reported. In particular, these changes to the course were found to be associated with significant reductions in self-reported stress, depressive and anxiety symptoms and significantly higher levels of community connection within the student body. This particular medical school is unique in its adoption of holistic curriculum-wide changes, though variations of these wellbeing-focused approaches have been adopted more broadly.

Other studies focussing on addressing medical student mental health, have explored the role of modifying grading approaches (Reed et al., 2011), improving student skills through mindfulness-based educational programs (Hassed, Sierpina & Kreitzer, 2008; Hassed, DeLisle, Sullivan & Pier, 2009) or broader wellbeing and career advisory programs (Sastre et al., 2010). A recent systematic review of these various wellbeing-based interventions within the medical student population concluded that *some* specific learning environment interventions were found to be associated with improved wellbeing amongst students (Wasson et al., 2016). More specifically, the review recommended 'comprehensive reform' within the learning environment, that incorporates a range of targeted interventions, as most likely to be effective. Through such reviews of various implemented interventions, it is clear that a multifaceted, holistic approach anchored in a strong theoretical evidence base is needed within medical education.

A health promoting medical school

In recognition that a system-wide health and wellbeing initiative within the medical education context was needed, the University of Melbourne, Melbourne Medical School (MMS) recently adopted a Health Promoting University strategic framework, with the aim of becoming a 'Health Promoting Medical School'. This framework stems from an international movement (Healthy Universities) towards unifying health promotion and wellbeing-based initiatives under a principal strategic umbrella (Dooris, Dowding, Thompson & Wynne, 1998; Dooris & Doherty, 2010; Okanagan, 2015). The purpose of such an overarching strategic framework within the MMS is to ensure that all interventions and strategies to improve medical student wellbeing are connected, holistic in focus and part of a school-wide approach to improving the learning culture in medicine.

There are many envisaged benefits to adopting a school-wide approach to student mental health within the medical education context. Firstly, it allows for co-ordination of wellbeing-focused initiatives that have previously been implemented as individual, one-off activities or programs, often within silos of departments or at certain year levels and not others. Through coordinating the equitable out-rolling of such activities and interventions, it is hoped that this will allow for increased student access and participation. Secondly, it allows for preventative-based initiatives to student mental health, through the shift away from a 'reductionist focus on single issues' and towards a more holistic approach (Dooris, Cawood, Doherty & Powell, 2010). Thirdly, the approach involves many different stakeholders, including perhaps most importantly, the students themselves. Involving the student voice in steering the strategic model to health and wellbeing ensures students are active participants in the promotion and planning regarding student health matters. Finally, the model is aligned with international standards and evidence-based recommendations regarding how universities may better address student mental health (World Health Organization, 1986; Dooris et al., 2010; Veness, 2016; Ripp et al., 2017). As such, the university will be among the first of the Australian medical schools to adopt a school-specific strategic health promoting framework to unify student support strategies, policies and procedures.

As articulated within the Healthy Universities model (Dooris et al., 2010), the Melbourne Medical School plans on following a systematic approach to implementation of the Health Promoting Medical School strategy. More specifically, implementation will entail a seven-staged approach, namely; 1) Executive management endorsement and commitment, 2) Appointment of health promoting MMS Coordinators, 3) Needs and assets assessment, 4) Establishment of governance and working groups, 5) Action planning, 6) Delivery, 7) Monitoring and evaluation. Further information regarding each of these stages is provided in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, involving key educators, academics and students alike is key to the consultative planning and holistic delivery of health and wellbeing-based initiatives. At present, the medical school is in the process of establishing a governance body and is planning further working groups and seeking relevant stakeholder input (Stage 4). As with many new programs, getting started has been a timely process. The logistics of gaining input and engagement from stakeholders based across multiple clinical sites across the state of Victoria has presented as an obstacle to rapid progression. As engagement from staff and students is key to the success of this strategic plan, allowing more time to effectively seek and facilitate engagement has been worthwhile. Now that the governing Student Wellbeing Advisory Group (SWAG) has been established, it is anticipated that greater momentum in achieving the final stages of the strategic plan will be possible. Furthermore, the ongoing and unwavering support of senior leadership within the medical school has ensured that the focus on student health and wellbeing remains a forefront priority within the school. Further time is now needed to continue working through the remaining stages of implementation and gaining valuable feedback regarding effectiveness through robust evaluation.

Table 1. Health Promoting Medical School Implementation Stages.

Stage	Focus	Details
1.	Executive Management Endorsement	Endorsement by the MMS Executive of the Health Promoting University approach as the overarching charter guiding health and wellbeing work in the Melbourne Medical School.
2.	Appoint Health Promotion Co-ordinators	The two coordinators will be the Health and Wellbeing Practitioners that operate in rural and metropolitan regions related to the MMS clinical sites. Together they will drive the initiative, and provide the designated points of contact within the MMS for the work being undertaken in this area.
3.	Needs & Assets Assessment	Identification of key partners and stakeholders (both internal and external). Consultation with key partners and stakeholders to facilitate involvement and commitment to the strategic model. Implementation of UK Healthy Universities Self-Review Tool to audit current health and wellbeing activities and identify areas of need and service gaps. Collation of audit results to inform future action planning and service delivery.
4.	Establish Governance & Working Groups	Establishment of an overarching Student Wellbeing Advisory Group (SWAG) that serves as a steering body to provide governance and project management. Establishment of action-focused Working Groups based on key focus areas; e.g., Mental Health and Physical Health. The development of working groups will be informed by the findings of the Needs Assessment. Development of systems and mechanisms to ensure school-wide involvement including academic and professional staff, students and student representative groups.
5.	Action Planning	Within Working Groups, development of action plan/s to facilitate work and service delivery. Important that these plans match the planning and curriculum cycle of the MMS. Identification of clear, attainable deliverables that can be measured and delivered within an appropriate time frame. Service delivery areas would be both preventative and reactive in addressing needs identified in stage 3. Establishment of links to relevant expertise. Important that action plans have synergy with local, national and international health standards and documents.
6.	Delivery	Provision of timely advice and assistance to students with wellbeing challenges or concerns regarding discrimination, bullying and harassment. May include case management. Referral of students to internal and external service providers. Support of students to identify and navigate relevant pathways for effective resolution of grievances and academic progression issues. Design, delivery and evaluation of preventative programs promoting student health and wellbeing e.g. Mindfulness. Investigation and development of innovative ways to integrate new knowledge in health and wellbeing into MMS. Management of compliance and reporting requirements associated with monitoring of student wellbeing. Provision of strategic support and advice regarding student wellbeing to MMS leadership that is aligned with broader University policies.
7.	Monitoring & Evaluation	Development of evaluation framework to measure scope and impact of service delivery (in consultation with MMS Evaluation Committee). Evaluation of progress in relation to attaining Health Promoting University status. e.g. UK Health Promotion evaluation tool, self-review tool. Evaluation can be linked to external standards i.e. Vic Health guidelines. Utilisation of evaluation data to inform future service planning and delivery.

Discussion

The pertinent issue of medical student mental health is an ongoing matter and will require coordinated supports and responses, both within and outside of the university context. It is hoped that through the adoption of the Health Promoting Universities model within the Melbourne Medical School, students within this medical school will begin to feel more supported in their health, wellbeing and learning and ultimately reach their potential, academically, emotionally and socially. A genuine strength of the framework presented is its alignment with internationally developed models to address tertiary student mental health (e.g., Healthy Universities), the multi-layered and holistic nature of the approach, and the inclusion of the student voice throughout planning and delivery of the proposed interventions and programs. The model is also thought to combine aspects of various other approaches to medical student mental health, including individual skill-building programs such as mindfulness, mentoring, and curriculum-based programs that target student health and wellbeing. In this way, the model is thought to answer the call for more comprehensive reform of the medical education environment (Wasson et al., 2016) and incorporation of multiple strategies to target student mental health. However, it must be noted that there is a long way to go in furthering the implementation of the model and consequent revisions over time.

Reducing the known challenges and barriers in medical students accessing support services, as well as overcoming fears of stigma and a lack of confidentiality (Givens & Tjia, 2002; Schwenk, Davis & Wimsatt, 2010; Dyrbye et at., 2015; Gold, Johnson, Leydon, Rohrbaugh & Wilkins, 2015), will be crucial to the future stages of implementation and overall effectiveness of the model. Furthermore, given the recognised high contact hours and time pressures medical students face, delivery of the health and wellbeing focused initiatives must be practically accessible, conveniently timed and add value to students' busy lives. Currently however, the strategic model is in its infancy and will require more rigorous evaluation and measurement of outcomes over time in order to determine overall student engagement and effectiveness. Future cross-institutional and international research would also be worthwhile and may further validate the utility of the framework within the medical education context. Overall, the documentation and initial implementation of the Health Promoting Medical School strategic model marks a significant contribution towards supporting students to thrive, and not just survive, medical training.

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A Collaborative Approach to Retention Between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs: The Two Consecutive Absence Policy

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Abstract

Retention of college students has been increasingly important for institutions of higher education as costs rise and incoming students lack the necessary preparation for the academic rigour they face. Addressing this issue is not simply the domain of academic affairs or student affairs. To be successful, a school's retention efforts need to be collaborative between the two divisions. The "Two Consecutive Absence Policy," described in this article, is an example from a North American university of a unique and successful collaborative effort between academic affairs and student affairs to reach out to undergraduates experiencing academic difficulty in order to increase the campus' retention numbers. The program, briefly outlined here, can easily be replicated at other colleges or universities.

Keywords: retention, academic probation, collaboration

Introduction

Colleges and universities understand that assisting undergraduates on academic probation is critical for retaining students (Preuss and Switalski, 2008). However, according to Bridget Burns, executive director of the University Innovation Alliance, "traditionally…students [are] allowed to carry on, when immediate intervention [is] needed. Usually schools intervene when they are too far gone." (NY Times, June 7, 2017). Passive methods such as sending warning letters to students on academic probation have not been successful (Moss and Yeaton, 2015). Schools that have been more direct and intrusive with their programs have seen positive results (Cholewa and Ramaswami, 2015). These include "significant increases in the likelihood that students on probation would avoid suspension, would improve their GPA, and would remain enrolled in their classes at the college." (Preuss and Switalski, 2008, p. 2).

Implementation of Retention Program

In order to better respond to the needs of students on academic probation, the Waterbury Regional Campus of the University of Connecticut in the United States of America (USA) enacted a *Two Consecutive Absence Policy*. The idea, proposed by the campus Retention Committee, was created to connect with students missing classes and to provide support to prevent them from potentially failing one or more classes, being placed on scholastic probation, or being academically dismissed from the University.

Staff and administration in Student Affairs partnered with Academic Affairs to implement the *Two Consecutive Absence Policy*. This type of collaboration has been cited as being critically important for student success (Banta & Kuh, 1988, Kuh, 1996; Kellogg, 1999; Kezar, Hirsch, and Burack, 2002). Trudy W. Banta and George D. Kuh are more blunt. They state, "improving the quality of the undergraduate experience at any institution is so complex and multifaceted that it demands cooperation by the two groups on campus that spend the most time with students: faculty members and student affairs professionals." (Banta & Kuh, 1998, p. 42).

At the start of each semester all faculty receive an email stating the policy and encouraging them to participate. The email is as follows:

From the Waterbury Campus Retention Committee…

Students at risk of doing poorly in their classes are of concern to the Waterbury campus as a whole. Therefore, the Waterbury Campus Retention Committee urges you as a faculty member to forward the name of any student who has ***missed two consecutive classes*** *to Bette Ellis, Registrar [Bette.Ellis@uconn.edu], so that she, in concert with Dr. Stuart Brown, Director of Student Services and Jamie Caruso, Director of Special Programs, may make the appropriate inquiries into the student's status. The committee's belief is that such inquiries are in the best interests of the student and the Waterbury campus, particularly if those absences are addressed in a timely manner.*

If students miss two consecutive classes, the faculty forwards the names of the students to our Registrar, Bette Ellis. Ms. Ellis forwards those names to Dr. Brown and Jamie Caruso. Dr. Brown keeps a spreadsheet with the student's names, class(es) missed, instructor, date the absence is reported, and action taken. Working as a team, the determination is made how best to contact the student, usually by email or phone. If, after several attempts, there is no response, a written letter is sent to the student's mailing address or a follow-up phone call is made or email sent. During this process Dr. Brown and Ms. Caruso are in continuous contact with the student's faculty member. The two also meet weekly to discuss and update the status of the student on the spreadsheet.

Once contact is made, the staff member seeks to understand the reason for the absences and to identify academic needs and/or personal issues. Students are advised to connect with their faculty for missed lectures and assignments should the student decide to continue with the course. Sometimes the issue(s) could be as simple as an illness. Often, though, there are more substantial reasons. Based on the circumstances, the staff may refer the student to campus resources such as Tutoring, the Office of Financial Aid, or to the campus personal counsellor. In some cases a course withdrawal or a complete withdrawal from the University is recommended.

Example: A Spring 2017 student missed two consecutive English classes at the start of the semester. The instructor notified Bette Ellis, who referred the student to Dr. Brown and Ms. Caruso. Ms. Caruso met with the student four times; referring him to the Writing Center, the Study and Life Skills Tutor, and back to the faculty. Keeping in regular contact with the student, Ms. Caruso met with the student just prior to the course withdrawal deadline and advised him to drop the course. The withdrawal put the student in Good Standing at the end of the semester, preventing him from being academically dismissed from the University.

Conclusion

The *Two Consecutive Absence Policy* has had a direct impact on the number of students on probation and on the semester ending dismissal list. The number of students on probation has consistently dropped while the retention rate has consistently risen. In Spring 2017 there were only five students up for dismissal, the lowest number to date in recent memory. Below are retention statistics for students on probation from the last three semesters:

Spring 2016:	52 students on probation	37 retained	(71%)
Fall 2016:	46 students on probation	36 retained	(78%)
Spring 2017:	39 students on probation	34 retained	(87%)

Another way to evaluate the *Two Consecutive Absence Policy* is to compare the number of students who were eligible for academic dismissal after Spring 2017 with the other three regional University of Connecticut campuses.

Campus Est. #	Students #	Eligible for Dismissal
Avery Point	598	19
Hartford	1045	49
Stamford	1252	29
Waterbury	699	5

Based on the percentage of undergraduates at the four regional campuses the number of students who were eligible for academic dismissal at the Waterbury Campus was much lower then at any of the other campuses.

The *Two Consecutive Absence Policy* has been an important strategy of the retention efforts at the University of Connecticut at Waterbury. It has helped the campus be successful in connecting with students, offering guidance, and supporting their decisions in achieving their academic goals.

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Consent is Sexy When it is Peer to Peer

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Abstract

The release of the 'Respect. Now. Always.' survey results on sexual harassment and sexual assault at Australian universities highlighted the need to help students navigate issues related to sexual consent. The Student Wellbeing service at the University of the Sunshine Coast launched a health promotion campaign to address this need. 'Consent is Sexy' is a peer to peer mentoring campaign designed to increase students' knowledge and confidence in asserting their sexual rights. Trained student ambassadors lead the campaign to engage in open conversations with their peers on what consent is and is not. Findings from the 'Consent is Sexy' ambassador training workshops showed the students had increased knowledge of sexual consent and respect, and that the students were comfortable talking to their peers about these issues. The 'Consent is Sexy' campaign is promoted at organised wellbeing events and whenever ambassadors wear their distinctive t-shirts around campus.

Background

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) is dedicated to developing and delivering best practice education and training opportunities and preventative campaigns to contribute to ongoing cultural change. In 2017, our commitment to these campaigns and connection to other universities was renewed through the *Respect. Now. Always.* campaign. We have focused on establishing a governance framework for responding to matters related specifically to sexual harassment and assault. A 'Safer Community Model' has been adopted to develop safety programs, community interventions and to build collaborative partnerships both within USC and with relevant external agencies. Peer to peer mentoring opportunities are a part of our Safer Community Model.

Consent is Sexy

An example of our peer to peer mentoring initiatives is *Consent is Sexy* (CIS). This public awareness health promotion campaign led by trained student ambassadors promotes the principles of responsible and respectful behaviour for staff, students and visitors (www.consentissexy.net). CIS provides a platform to further develop our suite of health and wellbeing education, training and ongoing leadership opportunities for students as peer mentors.

The CIS campaign is a peer to peer based campaign promoting the practice of respect, consent and open discussion; responsible, safer sex; sexual health and emotional wellbeing; and gender equality and equality of rights in relationships. Furthermore, the campaign promotes conversations between peers relating to matters of interpersonal and relationship abuse, sexual assault, intimate partner rape, acquaintance or date rape, gender discrimination and homophobia.

USC Student Wellbeing obtained permission from the copyright owners of the *Consent is Sexy* campaign, which has been implemented in universities and colleges throughout North America, Europe and Africa (www.consentissexy.net). The campaign was chosen as a novel way to engage students, due to its provocative title, vibrant marketing materials and clear messages of consent, respect and safety. Student Wellbeing worked with a project team of four health promotion students who completed an implementation project as part of course-based assessment in a third-year public health course in Semester 1, 2017.

The CIS campaign is part of the USC Student Wellbeing Service's response to the Universities Australia's *Respect. Now. Always.* (RNA) campaign promoted by USC in 2016 and relaunched in

2017. The CIS campaign was initiated to have student ambassadors trained and visible for the release of the findings of the *Respect. Now. Always.* campaign survey in August 2017.

The campaign aligns with one of the key strategies of the USC Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017-2020 (Nelson, 2016) – to 'enable support for learning – intentional, proactive, timely access to life and learning support'; and the key initiative to 'strategically extend and enhance peer to peer networking and learning'.

Rationale

Consent training is one of the 'good practice responses' recommended in the '*On Safe Ground' Strengthening Australian university responses to sexual assault and harassment*' good practice guide developed by the Australian Human Rights Centre at UNSW (Durback & Keith, 2017). The guide recommends consent training should be included "as a part of any university sexual violence prevention framework" (Durback & Keith, p. 105).

Findings of the RNA survey showed 54% of the USC respondents reported being sexually harassed in 2016 (Australian Human Rights Commission 2017). Furthermore, 60.4% knew little to nothing about 'where to go within the University to make a complaint about sexual abuse' (AHRC 2017). The training of CIS ambassadors seeks to address these issues by giving the ambassadors the skills and confidence to provide peer to peer support and promoting the prevention, support and report services for sexual harassment and assault provided by USC Student Wellbeing.

Campaign objective

The aim of the CIS campaign is to increase USC students' interest and understanding of the principles and practice of respect, consent and open discussion. It emphasises positive sexual behaviours, through increased knowledge and positive attitudes towards sexual consent. The expected outcomes of the CIS campaign were for students to be more informed about their sexual rights and more confident at negotiating boundaries and resolving differences in their intimate and other relationships through open, respectful communication.

Consent is Sexy ambassadors

Skills training workshop

Student Wellbeing counselling and health promotion staff facilitated two-hour workshops for student volunteers to become *Consent is Sexy* Ambassadors. Volunteers for the CIS Ambassador training were recruited after responding to an expression of interest published in the student newsletter that is emailed to all students. Sixty-five students responded to this initial expression of interest and 50 of these students were trained as ambassadors in 2017.

Within the workshop students were introduced to the rationale of the campaign, including the RNA survey statistics on sexual assault and harassment on campuses. The ambassadors were encouraged to 'take ownership' of the campaign - to creatively collaborate, plan, organise and be 'out and about' on campus to deliver the consent based messages and hold the often-difficult conversations with student peers. Once trained, the CIS ambassadors promoted the campaign to raise awareness of sexual consent issues with their peers, encouraging open conversations about what consent is, how to ask for consent, and how you know you have or do not have consent. Promotional materials to assist the ambassadors included informational posters, leaflets, a website and Facebook content. The attention-grabbing CIS t-shirts made the ambassadors highly visible when promoting the campaign around campus.

Walking the talk

CIS ambassadors promoted the campaign whenever they wore their t-shirts around campus. After their training, the ambassadors were encouraged to wear the t-shirt as often as they liked on campus as an 'ice-breaker' or prompt to engage in conversation with their peers about consent. The other main promotion of the campaign has been at Student Wellbeing events. A major event for the CIS ambassadors was the release of the RNA results in October 2017. *Consent is Sexy* was one of three themes in USC's response to the release of the RNA results:

1. **#webelieveyou**

   #webelieveyou is USC's message to educate students; firstly, that if students report an assault or harassment - USC will believe you. Secondly, to educate students on new USC processes for reporting sexual assault and harassment.

2. '**My Rights are not up for grabs'** is a human-rights based response to the RNA survey release, in conjunction with the globalised 'Pussy Hat Project' and a community partnership with the Sunshine Coast 'Laurel Place Sexual Violence Counselling and Support'. Students are reminded to think about their own rights and those of others to not be assaulted or harassed.

3. **'Consent is Sexy'**

   On the day of the RNA survey release, students were very receptive to the *Consent is Sexy* Ambassadors. Upward of 500 students were reached with our messages. Both students and ambassadors reported the importance of the messages and the positive impact it had on them, and that these messages were backed by the University.

Evaluation of the CIS Ambassador training workshop

A self-reporting pre-and post-questionnaire was designed and administered to workshop volunteers by USC public health students as part of a curriculum based assessment piece. The public health students focused the evaluation on *process* (exposure, participation, delivery & context) and *impact* (attitudes, beliefs & knowledge) variables.

Findings from the evaluation of the first cohort of ambassadors

Key process evaluation findings

Training was delivered to 16 USC students (88% female, 12% male), average age of 24 years. Most participants were satisfied with the workshop; 63% reported a great overall impression, 31% a good overall impression, and 6% an okay overall impression. The majority of participants felt that the campaign is balanced and speaks equally to both men and women; 81% yes, 12.5% no, and one as 'somewhere in the middle'.

When asked whether there were any important issues not covered by the campaign, 75% reported no, and 25% yes. Issues participants reported not being covered were 'homosexuality', 'changing minds', and 'rape reporting'. All of the workshop participants agreed that the *Consent is Sexy* campaign will create more awareness about issues of sexual respect and consent.

Key impact evaluation findings

The workshop participants' attitude toward sexual consent and respect was assessed by asking: "How comfortable would you feel engaging in open discussion with your peers about sexual consent and respect?"; 75% of volunteers reported being 'very comfortable' pre-workshop compared to 81% post-workshop; 25% reported being somewhat comfortable pre-workshop compared to 19% post-workshop.

Participants' beliefs about sexual respect was measured by asking volunteers to rate their response to the question: "I believe sexual respect is"; 100% of volunteers believed that sexual respect was very important pre- and post-workshop.

Participants' knowledge about sexual respect and consent was measured by asking volunteers to rate their knowledge about the following: What is/isn't sexual respect? What is/isn't sexual consent?"

- Pre-workshop, 38% rated their knowledge about sexual respect as very good; 44% as good and 18% as not sure; post workshop 75% very good and 25% good.
- Pre-workshop, 70% rated their knowledge about sexual consent as very good and 30% as good, compared to 81% and 19% respectively post workshop.

The post-workshop evaluation results indicated the training prepared the ambassadors with the knowledge and confidence to engage with other students in frank conversations about sexual consent.

Recommendations/future directions

Feedback from the participants of the CIS ambassador training was that ambassadors were most concerned about how an ambassador should respond if a student discloses they have been a victim of sexual abuse. It is recommended that alongside any sort of peer to peer consent/sexual assault awareness campaigns should be 'responding to disclosures' training as well. In response to this recommendation, Student Wellbeing provided 'responding to disclosures of sexual assault/harassment' training. This consisted of a mixture of communication and counselling skills alongside education on university policy. This additional training was reported to ease the anxiety of ambassadors before going into the field to engage with students.

The ambassadors provided feedback suggesting positive interactions with students who understand the purpose of the campaign and the importance of highlighting and informing students about consent. Informal evaluation of the campaign's reach was conducted by collating statistics on the number of flyers and other campaign materials handed out by ambassadors to students. A formal evaluation of the campaign is planned for 2018.

To extend the reach of consent training, in 2018 USC will introduce the *Consent Matters* program: "an online course to help students understand sexual consent and promote positive change in the university community" (www.epigeum.com). The course will be available to all students as an embedded online Blackboard course. USC staff will also be encouraged to complete the training. The online training will complement the face-to-face interactions on campus with CIS ambassadors, posters and other campaign materials. The online *Consent Matters* training will be promoted at Orientation Week and in lectures during the first few weeks of the semester. The CIS ambassadors and student groups will also promote *Consent Matters* to encourage their peers to complete the online training. Student Wellbeing will monitor the uptake of the training and continue to consult with student representatives on opportunities to promote the training and increase uptake.

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JANZSSA Submission Guidelines 2018

Manuscripts for submission to JANZSSA must be submitted electronically at https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/for-authors

JANZSSA publishes *Refereed* (peer-reviewed by double-blind process) and *Professional* papers; which are reviewed by the Editor/s of JANZSSA to ensure their suitability for publication. Within the Professional category are included full-length papers as well as shorter *Best Practice Case Examples, Book Reviews, Reports* and *Conversation Pieces.*

Word processing platform

All articles should be submitted electronically using Microsoft Word or in another commonly used word processing format able to be converted to an MS Word document.

Language and spelling

JANZSSA uses Australian English so please adjust your spell check in Word to ensure compliance.

Journal format

JANZSSA is published online at https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/issues with full pdf versions of each edition also stored at http://anzssa.com/Public/JANZSSA/Public/JANZSSA/JANZSSA.aspx

Article length:

Manuscripts would normally be fewer than 6,000 words to be accepted.

Manuscripts longer than 6,000 words may be returned to authors to be shortened.

Abstract is required:

All manuscripts submitted must include a brief (<250 words) abstract.

Page layout required:

Articles for inclusion in JANZSSA in either the referred or non-refereed suctions need to be submitted electronically using the following layout instructions.

The following is a normal page layout in MS Word:

Top: 5. 5	Bottom: 5. 5	
Left: 2. 54	Right: 2. 54	
Gutter = 0	Header = 1	Footer = 6

Font type:

Times New Roman

Font pitch:

Manuscript Title:	14 point **BOLD**
Author/s Name, Role, Institution:	12 point
Abstract header:	12 point **BOLD**
Abstract body:	10 point *italics*
Body text:	12 point
Header within body of the text:	12 point **BOLD**
Footnotes:	9 point

Diagrams tables and drawings:

Any diagrams and tables included in the text must be no larger than 21 cm in depth x 17 cms wide.

Any drawings included are inserted with **Paste Special** function so that the drawing is stable in the body of the text.

Text within a table is preferred as centred or left margin aligned.

Use of references:

Referencing protocol is the APA Referencing System. Examples of the APA Referencing system are easily found using an internet search. Below are two examples from Australian Universities.

https://student.unsw.edu.au/american-psychological-association-apa-referencing-system

http://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/APA

Suitable content for articles submitted for publication in JANZSSA:

Manuscripts may include comment and debate on current issues, reports of student services in practice, policy matters, research projects, and reviews of relevant books. The guiding editorial policy is that manuscripts are of interest to student service staff, and are of a high standard.

JANZSSA publishes both Refereed and Professional papers:

Authors who wish to submit an item to be published as a refereed article must include the word 'refereed' as one of the keywords at the time of submission. If an author does not specify for inclusion in the refereed section the editors will consider the article for publication in the professional section.

Refereed (double–blind peer reviewed) manuscripts:

JANZSSA uses a double-blind peer review process for refereed articles. The editor of JANZSSA will consult with the Editorial Board to identify at least two expert referees (who may not necessarily be members of ANZSSA). Each referee will be unaware of the identity of the other referee/s. Each of the referees will be provided with an electronic copy of the article from which the author's name has been removed.

As author/s you should also remove other identifying information, including any other references that identify the author/s, and replace any such words or sentence with "words removed for purposes of author anonymity" so that you are not identifiable as the author/s once the author names have been removed.

Referees will submit a report back to the editor that contains one of three recommendations. These are:

1. That the manuscript be accepted (usually with minor amendments to be approved by the Editor/s of JANZSSA).
2. That the manuscript be revised and re-submitted with major amendments to be approved by the reviewers
3. That the manuscript not be accepted for the refereed section. (Reviewers may choose to recommend that it be accepted as a professional paper, with or without amendments)

At least two referees must be in agreement for an manuscript to be published as a refereed paper.

Professional manuscripts:

Manuscripts submitted for publication without being peer-refereed will be published at the discretion of the editors. Authors may be asked to make amendments to the manuscript prior to publication.

Best practice case examples to showcase:

JANZSSA includes in its non-refereed section examples of best practice and innovation emerging in Student Services.

Contributions to this section would normally be descriptive and not evaluative.

Length of submissions can vary but the upper word limit will normally be 1500 words. Contributions of longer length may be returned to the author for editing or considered as Professional manuscripts.

A Showcase Best Practice Report Template is available from the Editors. See contact details below. Use of the template is not compulsory and is offered simply to assist if required.

Reports, Reviews and Conversation Pieces:

Reports and discussion pieces on aspects of policy and practice within Student Services and the Post-Secondary Education sector are invited. Short reviews of books, articles, journals, reports which would be of general interest to JANZSSA readers are also very welcome.

Quality submissions:

All submissions for publication are required to comply with the layout requirements, and edited for grammar, punctuation and spelling accuracy prior to submission to the JANZSSA co-editors. Manuscripts will be returned to authors for corrections, if required, prior to consideration for publication or distributed for peer review.

Submission deadlines:

JANZSSA publishes issues in April and October each year.

Deadline for submission of professional manuscripts, reports or reviews, and contributions to the section, Best Practice Case Examples:

- January 31 for the April issue
- July 31 for the October issue.

Deadline for submission of refereed manuscripts:

- October 30 for the April issue
- April 30 for the October issue.

Enquiries:

Any queries regarding submission format should be directed to either of the joint editors. See contact details below.

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Before submitting your manuscript:

Please refer to the following check list and complete these actions prior to submission of the manuscript.

Please check:

- JANZSSA page layout has been used
- JANZSSA font type and font size requirements have been used
- JANZSSA referencing system (APA style) has been used throughout and that all references are included in full.
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation reviewed.
- All diagram and table contents are position and text correct (i. e. text abbreviations used are consistent throughout diagram or table and that text is centred or left margin aligned.).

- Drawings included are inserted with Paste Special function so that the drawing is stable in the text.
- Do print and read for final corrections.
- De-identified version of paper as reviewer copy completed and attached (if the manuscript is for submission for the refereed section of JANZSSA).

The editors would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following people in the production of JANZSSA:

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Information about ANZSSA

The Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association provides development opportunities and sector representation for professional staff working in post secondary student engagement, student participation, student wellbeing and student development throughout Australia and New Zealand. Through meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences, experienced practitioners share information, ideas and research within their areas of expertise.

ANZSSA is focused on:

- The quality of the student experience
- Supporting and empowering students to achieve their educational and life goals
- Enhancing student wellbeing and development
- Improving student success and persistence
- Providing outreach to students at-risk
- Raising institutional student retention rates

Membership

Whilst ANZSSA is based in Australia and New Zealand, anyone is welcome to join us, no matter where you may be located. Full details of current membership categories and registration costs are available via the ANZSSA website members' page at www.anzssa.com

Belonging to ANZSSA will connect you to a community of professionals across many institutions and support areas – including:

First year experience and transition services - Mentor programs - Counselling - Learning support - Careers - Academic advisors - Health services - Student advisors - Disability support - Welfare advisors - Housing services - Recreation services - Student guild advocates - International offices - Grievance/Conflict Resolution officers - Chaplaincy and other faith officers –Equity staff - Financial advisers - Volunteer and leadership program coordinators - Directors and Heads of operational areas.

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These provide opportunities for members to share information and collaborate on programs and issues.

Publications

JANZSSA, the Journal of ANZSSA, is published online twice per year at https://janzssa.scholasticahq.com/

A monthly newsletter is published and emailed to all members; also available on the ANZSSA website at http://anzssa.com/Public/Resources/ANZSSA_Newsletter/Public/News/ANZSSA_Newsletter