

INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 2012 ANDREW HEISKELL AWARDS FOR INNOVATION IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: A GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING PROGRAM - VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA, AND UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

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What inspires leaders from two universities located tens of thousands of kilometres apart across the Pacific Ocean to build a strong and enduring partnership focusing on internationalising the student experience? Victoria University in Melbourne Australia and the University of Texas at El Paso are both universities with significant non traditional student numbers. Each is dedicated to building excellence and accessibility in their education and research activities to serve the needs of 21st century students.

Some may say that the two universities are part of different systems with different funding arrangements and different political contexts and even different student profiles. Victoria University is a multi-sector university with over 58,000 students participating in school education, technical and further education and higher education while UTEP with its 22,000 students is an emerging research university with bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs and a strong regional focus.

Over the past five years, the relationship has developed and enough common ground has been identified for the two institutions to benefit from the exchange of ideas and programs and to build collective knowledge to benefit students and staff.

In the initial stages of the partnership, programs which would benefit each organisation were planned and implemented. The three pillars of the partnership which were recognised in the recent Institute of International Education (IIE) with an honourable mention in the category of International Partnerships in the 11th Andrew Heiskell Awards for Innovation in International Education were 'The Global Learning Community', 'Student Employment' and 'Exchange and Library Exchange'. The award honours the most outstanding initiatives in international higher education among the member campuses of the IIE Network with membership of more than 1,100 higher education institutions. The Andrew Heiskell awards showcase the most innovative and successful models for internationalising campuses with particular emphasis on removing institutional barriers and broadening the base of participation in international teaching

and learning. The award recognises the unique commitment that the two universities share in providing an excellent and accessible educational experience for students from culturally diverse and educationally disrupted backgrounds, who are often the first in their families to gain a degree.

In the Global Learning Community, first year students from UTEP in their freshmen-level seminar classes known as University Studies 1301 and Victoria University Liberal Arts students study joint subjects via videoconferencing, teleconferencing and social media. This program has been conducted since 2007 and has attracted much international attention in terms of providing hundreds of students with an international learning experience which is culturally rich and stimulating and does not necessitate international travel. During 2011 the program was selected as one of the 22 national universities in the US to participate in the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities.

The Student Employment and Exchange program enables UTEP and Victoria University students to trade places for a semester of study and work. Since 2010 sixteen students have participated in this program and each university has benefited from learning from the students as they work and learn in another cultural context. The students have had an affordable international study experience through their paid work on campus.

The Library Exchange has been a strong component of the program since 2008, and has influenced the thinking around Libraries as interactive learning spaces at each university. Sharing of resources and system understanding has enhanced the operation of the two libraries over this period.

As the relationship has matured the activities have been broadened, and all have a focus on internationalising the student experience in teaching, learning and research. In addition to the three areas outlined above, the 2011 activities include:

- The electronic publishing of a high-end creative magazine by creative writing students from the two universities
- Teaching of an international accounting program using technology where Victoria University holds the accreditation and delivers to UTEP students
- Continuation of the Health Research seminars with post graduate students presenting findings of their research to peers
- Investigation of methods of accelerating pathway progress of Victorian students from school through to university based on the US Early College High School and Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) models
- Collaborative desalination research facilitated by a US Fulbright Specialist grant to support a UTEP researcher to visit Victoria University for a month in 2012 to conduct cooperative research
- One week delegation to Victoria University by UTEP leaders in August with a focus on reporting on developments in the program areas and building on the face to face meetings by linking UTEP students and staff in to the sessions by videoconference

Throughout the past five years the senior leadership of each university has encouraged students and staff to participate in areas of collaborative interest. The driving principles are that there is mutual benefit, that knowledge exchange and growth will enhance the operations of each university and that the students will have an enhanced international experience. The funding to underpin this partnership has been kept to a minimum largely through the innovative use of technology – videoconferencing, teleconferencing and social networking.

Recognition by the Institute of International Education for innovation and success in this international partnership encourages each university to continue to strive for excellence and achievement to benefit students and staff and add to the collective knowledge of the sector.

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