

# Faculty of Science Learning and Teaching Committee

## Progress Report for 2006

The Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee has been active in completing projects associated with the current 3 year plan and working on issues arising from the Academic Board Review Recommendations. In addition ongoing programs have been reviewed, and modifications made where appropriate, to maintain the standards and to address new learning and teaching directions in the University.

The following is a summary of activities for 2006:

### **Encouraging and supporting high achieving students in a research environment: Objectives 1 and 3**

- The Talented Student Program and Advanced units of study are still running with great success –enrolments have continued to increase and the presentation night for TSP projects has again been very well received.
- Honours enrolments have greatly increased as a result of Honours Awareness activities at the University, Faculty and School levels.

### **The Student experience : Objective 2**

- Analysis of the USE and SCEQ results for the Faculty, as part of a large TIF project *Closing the Loop*, has highlighted the following areas of concern:
  - **Workload** – to be monitored following changes to units associated with the change to 6CP
  - **Computers and online resources** – a faculty focus group met to discuss these issues and e-learning initiatives have been designed to increase use of WebCT (see below)
  - **Feedback** - this will be a focus of activities in 2007 and is being monitored as part of a TIF project on assessment
- The Transition Program continued for its 10<sup>th</sup> year – 35 % of incoming first years attended
- We convened a Think Tank on E-learning initiatives in the faculty. We developed plans to increase the use of WebCT.
- A Large TIF project on *Creating a matrix for the Assessment of Generic Attributes* began late in 2006 to review the teaching of graduate attributes and their assessment across the faculty. A template for writing Learning Objectives and assessment tools will be trialed in the Schools of Biological Sciences and Molecular and Microbial Biosciences in 2007.
- We organised a review of writing skills development across the faculty, as part of a USyd e-learning project. A report has been produced and the following new initiatives developed
  - *A Reading the Scientific Literature* online module for first year students
  - Extending the ‘Spotlight on Good Practice’ website

### **Enhancing the benefits of a research intensive environment: Objective 3**

- We continued to record strong performance in the Scholarship Index funding for 2005. All Schools are now involved and we have increased publications
- We organised a joint Showcase, on Research –led Teaching, with the Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Science
- The Sydney Network of University Science Educators (SNUSE) expanded further in the Sydney Basin, and a joint forum on scholarship and research was held at UNSW
- Members of the faculty gave invited presentations at the Assessment Learning and Teaching forum, were invited to submit chapters for a book on The Transformed University, and were invited to present an international perspective at the Higher Education Colloquium, “Preparing tutors and demonstrators for teaching and academic roles in complex university environments – new research perspectives on GTA teaching practices and policies” at Edinburgh University
- 2 Priority Grants were awarded to the Faculty by the Carrick Institute of Higher Education, in the Schools of Biological Sciences and Physics.

### **Encourage best practice in teaching: Objective 4**

- The Tutor Professional Development Program continued. The program is being reviewed during 2006/7 to determine the extent of dissemination into teaching practices and further professional development needs of tutors. A review of training programs within disciplines has been completed.
- We maintained continued success in receipt of Teaching Improvement grants, TIF equipment grants, progress reports for all completed projects were received
- Faculty Teaching Awards and Teaching development grants were continued
- The Learning and Teaching website is nearing completion
- The Science Faculty Educational Research (SciFER) group seminar program continued, and one research grant was awarded in 2006
- A Teaching Showcase was organized for all staff (see above)

### **Maintaining quality in teaching – Objective 5**

- *Closing the Loop* online trials for giving feedback to students on their evaluations of units were continued
- Guidelines for reporting on evaluations and further action were drafted (see *Closing the Loop* project, Section 2 above)