UNDA Round-table Workshop

11 February, 2011

UNDA Staff/Jim Reynoldson

"The thing to do is to create legitimate teaching-only universities," director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne Richard James says.

“But we don’t have the capacity yet to measure teaching quality, which would help some of these less research-intensive universities prove the case that they are effective teaching and learning environments.”

While the argument is compelling on one level, it breaks one of the strongest and most enduring belief systems in universities: that quality teaching is irrevocably tied to research activity. It’s a nexus written in stone in the national protocols that define what kind of educational institution can use the name university. It is also central to the hearts and minds of most academics.

But Terry Cutler, author of a 2008 report for the federal government on innovation, says ERA doesn’t have the capacity to recognize research that is small in scale and has a positive impact on the local community.

“A lot of the second and third-tier activity could be really important in terms of knowledge transfer with local communities and businesses, which this process cannot identify,” Cutler says.
Necessity of undertaking research

- Retain status of ‘university’ – 18 year legacy
- Satisfy objects of university – ”The provision of an excellent standard of: (i) Teaching, scholarship and research”
- Positioning UNDA within the sector – credibility or downgraded perception
- Downward spiral – low outcomes, low funding, lack of track record, low funding etc...
- Quality – AUQA – ‘...fostering of team research and team building...’
Current status and the workshop

• UNDA: assessed in 7 of 157 4-digit codes. Of these, 3 were relevant to IHRR.
• The ERA process will be repeated next year, then results will help determine allocation of more than $1bn in federal funding.
• Clearly there is a need to drive research at UNDA and create an environment in which research can thrive in key areas relevant to the institution.
• The issues that are key to advancement are:
  – Time
  – Collaborative initiatives/interdisciplinarity
  – Building profile – what can IHRR do for researchers and v:v?
  – Initiating research programs
  – Funding research programs
Notre Dame’s position

• May be opportunities to do it differently:
• Julie Hare, Higher education editor, The Australian (February 5, 2011) – ‘But Terry Cutler, author of a 2008 report for the federal government on innovation, says ERA doesn't have the capacity to recognise research that is small in scale and has a positive impact on the local community. "A lot of the second and third-tier activity could be really important in terms of knowledge transfer with local communities and businesses, which this process cannot identify," Cutler says.’
• Gavin Moodie – The Australian HES (February 2, 2011) – ‘What is possibly less expected is the extent of research strength in the other universities, areas that would probably have been starved of funding had their access to block research grants been restricted. One discipline most at risk would have been nursing, in which 80 per cent of world standard research and two-thirds of research above or well above world standard is conducted outside the Go8. This is largely because most Go8 universities don't teach nursing, and therefore conduct little, if any, research in the field.’
• UNDA’s approach has been to develop research foci which notably includes IHRR and sees opportunities for the institution – needs to seize opportunities.
• Thus ‘niche market’ development may be the way ahead but it will need to be effective.
Funding Drivers - Block Grants

- Sustainable research excellence – overall grant-getting determines
- CRN:- eligible – need to apply
- Research Training Scheme (RTS):- Completions 50%, Research Income 40%, Publications 10%
- JRE:- JRE Performance Index – Research Income 60%, HDR Load 30%, Publications 10%
- RIBG:- Category A funds proportioned
Discuss: Approaches to increase opportunity to do research of a high quality

• What can UNDA do for the researcher/group?
• Time – how?
• Foster collaborative groups/linkages – role of compacts?
• Build profile by making key groups fundable – how?
• Initiate start-up support – mentoring, developing collaborations – how best to do this?
Mapping of expertise and inter-relationships may be useful

Also consider outside relationships

Arts & Sciences
- Exercise & Cancer Recovery
- Mental Health (depression/suicide)

Health Sciences
- Lung cell biology/genetics
- Health promotion/adolescents
- Diabetes/Obesity
- Outdoor recreation
- Biomechanics
- Alzheimers

Physiotherapy
- Back pain
- Fall prevent’
- Neurotrauma

Nursing
- Indigenous health experience
- GHAWA

Medicine
- Clinical Sciences and education – probably many connections
- Indigenous?

Education
- Possibly contribute to many as well as own education research

Regular informal discussions will generate project and grant ideas – capitalise via funding support
To discuss: Overlaps / mapping of relationships between research groupings, and the optimisation of time usage

• Time is probably your biggest challenge – how do you make time?

• Collaborations? Maybe one of the most difficult things to develop – research is often very personal although the culture nationwide seems to be changing – the early stage of UNDA may make your attempts somewhat easier – how best to do this?

• Do you need drivers? – e.g. Postdoctoral fellows – how to fund these?
Funding options

• Traditional approach – external grants – a measure of quality
• Traditional approach – subsequent federal block grant funding shared by university and successful researchers
• Modification – use the funds strategically:
  – How is it used now?
  – Can you make a case to use it strategically?
  – What would be a reasonable approach? Scholarships? Fellowships? Time buy-out? Seed funding? Infrastructure that could be used by many?
• Must have conditions
  – collaboration (internal and external?),
  – industry partners matching funds,
  – must be relevant to objects of the institution and be ‘ERA sensitive’,
  – aim at generating new grants,
  – bring in key people,
  – allow time to do some quality research
Other funding approaches

• Sponsors – network –
  • High level networking by high level UNDA people and friends, ‘exploiting’ contacts, etc

• Resources companies – indigenous relevance

• Industry contracts with ‘profit’ put to researcher and projects on a shared basis
  – How do we do/manage this?
  – High level networking by high level UNDA people and friends, ‘exploiting’ contacts, etc
  – Match to expertise
Possible strategies – your earlier discussions

- Completion scholarships
- Supervision load recognition – research recognition
- Increase PhD levels in staff
- R+T appointments
- Maintain research culture – regular for a
- Buy-outs where appropriate
- Postdoctoral fellowships (costly)
- Research support officers
  - Strong networkers
  - Puts plan together
  - Gathers team(s)
  - Writes/helps write (may need ‘polisher’)
  - Ensures outcomes!!