

4

Programs which activate students' motivation and self-efficacy assist in building identity and engagement

Influences on these practices

The two practices described in this statement focus on student motivation, skills, identity and self efficacy, all of which are influenced by the emotions students experience as they participate in university education. Both practices are drawn from institutional case studies in different regional universities that have demonstrated the positive impact of engaging students emotionally in their interactions with the university – the first case study involves a university level initiative that allows commencing students to choose who mentors them through the first stages of their university life and the second demonstrates the importance of authentic workplace experiences in students' identity development.

Good practices at Regional Universities

These practices influence students' psychosocial states, and act to influence and engage students throughout their time university.



James Cook University (JCU) Case study
theme: Peer support and advising enhance the student experience

Good practice 4.1

Promote and resource mentor programs to support new students as they negotiate the structural environment of the university.

JCU has a practice of providing incoming students (mentees) with the opportunity to personally choose a discipline-based mentor for their first semester of university study. Mentors are academically successful students in their second year or above who have been identified as positive role models. They participate in a competitive selection process and a one day training session

that focuses on their role, university-based support services available and cross-cultural awareness.

At JCU, the Student Mentor Program has been identified statistically as the university's most effective influence on retention.

Incoming students have the opportunity to meet prospective mentors on Welcome Day in Orientation Week of both semesters. On Welcome Day, mentors, based in their discipline groups, introduce themselves to incoming students and share aspects of their 'story' as a means of providing students with sufficient information for them to make a decision about whom they wish to choose as a mentor.

we have such a diverse demographic of people, a lot of mature age, it's an absolute salad bowl of students, and we can always match them up... we look after absolutely everyone. (Interview)

The JCU Student Mentor Program is a practice designed to support incoming students to negotiate the university environment during their first semester of university. Mentors act as role models who foster academic success and support appropriate help-seeking behaviours in the incoming student.

once you recognise a community like that [the mentor program], you start to recognise how that fits into a broader community. Then that has really helped me to feel deserving, to belong somewhere, because I can give back. (Focus group)

Mentors take on the role because they experience a sense of belonging in and to the university, which is created either by feeling fully supported as a mentee or recognising and valuing the sense of community found as a mentor. The mentor program should be viewed as more than just a retention strategy because of the skills and attributes that are developed in the mentor cohort.



University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)
Case study theme: Work integrated learning enhances graduate capabilities, employment and career opportunities

Good practice 4.2

Work with students to design opportunities for innovative, authentic work integrated learning in programs where there is not an embedded placement component.

Student engagement in work integrated learning (WIL) enhances students' identity with their profession, employability and graduate outcomes. This case study highlighted the practice of working with students to devise authentic learning experiences in workplace settings, in programs where there was not embedded, structured and scaffolded WIL throughout the program but rather a single required or elective course.

Students in Entrepreneurship and Tourism WIL courses undertook a specific group project with local businesses, with whom they worked to resolve unique business issues. Students approached this task by applying and adapting a business framework in a real context.

But this was a real-life course, you actually had to come up with real ideas, you had to pitch to real people. (Student 6)

Students in the Drama and Law WIL courses undertook an experience characterised as an internship. Eight students from the case study sample had undertaken one or other of these courses. Their placements facilitated a process where they practice, rehearse and craft skills relevant to the activities of the profession. In all disciplines, developing as a reflective practitioner is emphasised, and having everyday professional practice and learning assessed is key.

Practising and crafting professional skills was a key feature of the WIL experience that students took note of and reflected on.

So it's the physically meeting the client, figuring out the issue, doing the research and writing the letter has been very good because that's a fairly standard operation for a lawyer and we've done it quite repeatedly. (Student 4)

on a daily basis, take note of the things that I was learning. And it was so good to do on a daily basis too because it meant that I had the opportunity to reflect (Student 8)

Sourcing, designing and co-designing innovative, authentic WIL opportunities for students has a positive impact on their motivation, satisfaction, identity, interest and achievement. It also positively influences relationships between staff and students, and enhances employability and graduate outcomes in locally relevant contexts