

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Thursday 19 June 2014

University's learning and teaching scholarship recognised in latest funding round

The University of Tasmania's expertise in learning and teaching scholarship has been rewarded sharing in more than \$600,000 in Federal Government funding across three national research projects.

The University will lead a national study into the design and delivery of student leadership programs across Australasian universities.

The study, *Building institutional capacity for peer leadership: informing strategic decision-making to enhance student leadership capabilities*, has received a \$225,000 grant through the Federal Government's 2014 Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) programme.

The University is also a partner institution on two other research projects – *Students, universities and open education* (\$238,000) and *Effective open licensing policy and practice for Australian universities: making online education really work* (\$222,000).

"The University of Tasmania continues to forge a strong reputation in successful collaborative research projects," University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said.

"This funding is fantastic news with the University's researchers making a huge contribution to the development of teaching and learning frameworks and practices across Australia's higher education sector."

Project leader Dr Jane Skalicky from the University of Tasmania will conduct the peer leadership study with colleagues from the University of Wollongong, Monash University, Curtin University and the University of Otago (NZ), University of Tasmania colleagues Kristin Warr and Sally Fuglsang. Dr Skalicky will also work with colleagues at the National Resource Centre in the United States to connect the work to international understandings of peer leadership.

Dr Skalicky, who is the University's Associate Director, Student Life and Learning, said peer leadership roles provide invaluable learning and development opportunities for students.

“These roles play a vital part in a student’s university experience as students are actually contributing to supporting other students in learning, social and broader student experience contexts,” she said.

“We will gain an understanding of the types of peer leadership roles within the higher education sector, as well as the leadership skills these roles develop within the student leaders themselves.

“The study will also enable program leaders and institutions to determine the sorts of training and evidence required to maximise the benefits of peer leadership for student outcomes, retention and student experience.

“Developing the leadership skills of our students is an increasingly important part of what the University of Tasmania does. We have led the way in programs such as Peer Assisted Study Sessions and student mentoring and engagement.

“Employers are looking for broader skills such as communication, team work, problem solving and a sense of social responsibility; and our potential students want to see that the University will provide opportunities for them to develop these skills and contribute in a wide variety of ways while undertaking their studies.”

Dr Skalicky said the study will also enable institutions to benchmark peer leadership activities nationally and internationally.

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education) Professor Sue Kilpatrick congratulated the scholars on their efforts.

“These projects are addressing important issues which are at the forefront of how teaching and learning will be shaped in the years to come,” she said.

“They will not only ensure best practices are employed across Australian universities, but help strengthen international standing.”

Research projects the University of Tasmania is collaborating in:

- Project - *Students, universities and open education*; Funding - \$238,000; Lead institution - Charles Sturt University; Partner institutions: University of Tasmania, University of Technology, Sydney; Abstract – The study will prepare a National Policy Roadmap and evidence-based case studies to help support universities in creating, adapting and incorporating Open Education Resources (OER) in their technology-based curriculum.
- Project - *Effective open licensing policy and practice for Australian universities: making online education really work*; Funding - \$222,000; Lead institution - Swinburne University; Partner institution - University of Tasmania; Abstract – The project will address a critical need identified in previous OLT projects; to review the copyright and legal issues effecting open educational practices (OEP). It will survey current OEP in Australian universities and use the data collected to develop an Open Education Licensing Toolkit. The toolkit will be a practical online resource for university teaching and learning and business planning professionals.

A list of all the 2014 OLT grant and fellowship recipients can be found at www.olt.gov.au.