

MEDIA RELEASE

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UTAS receives major grant to study student retention rates

The University of Tasmania, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Department of Education, has been awarded a major grant to investigate why Tasmania's student retention rates are the lowest of any State in Australia.

The Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Ian Hay, is the lead chief investigator for a project that has received \$264,000 over three years under the Australian Research Council Linkage Projects scheme.

Professor Hay's project will investigate the factors that influence student retention in rural, regional and disadvantaged communities.

"The project team is a very strong research team, and this is a collaborative project between the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Department of Education," Professor Hay said today.

"The goal of the project is to enhance the quality of education for a diverse population of students within Tasmania.

"Student retention is an important issue in Tasmania because of the correlation between school achievement and earning ability as an adult. As society changes and new technology becomes prevalent, having completed pre-university courses facilitates a person's ability to move into meaningful work, and to be competitive as a life-long learner."

Professor Hay said that a particular concern in Tasmania is that the issue of retention is not uniform, with some schools and districts being more successful in encouraging students to stay in school than others.

"This research is interested in finding out what is best practice in terms of encouraging students to stay in school beyond the compulsory level to reach their full potential.

The project aims to do this by working with families and communities to establish the best model for transitioning into effective learning for late adolescent students.

"Further education not only benefits the student, but also benefits the community that the student lives in. The issue about retention is rarely about student ability, but

more about changing the aspirations so that individuals can reach their greatest potential as a learner and earner.”

The Department of Education Secretary, Colin Pettit, said today that the department was excited to be working with the University of Tasmania on the student retention project.

“Retention is a crucial aspect of improving post-year 10 outcomes and we look forward to the findings of the project.”

Professor Hay’s project is one of four University of Tasmania projects which have received a total of \$814,096 in ARC Linkage Projects funding.

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