A collaborative project of the Faculties of Commerce and Education through the UOW Social Innovation Network University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia

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Program for Preparing Early Leaders

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succession planning at universities

AVOIDING THE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION CRISIS

There is reason for concern that Australian universities will soon be facing a leadership succession crisis.

Australia needs to prepare a new generation of effective and capable leaders to ensure a prosperous future for its tertiary education sector. Pro-active development of such leaders needs to start in the early stages of their academic career, well before they commence their first leadership roles.

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is developing a one-year intensive leadership program for early career academics (Program for Preparing Early Leaders – PROPEL) which will immediately start to train future academic leaders, locally and nationally, as well as resulting in a model that is transferable to other institutions. This project is supported by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council institutional leadership grant scheme.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT STAGE

January 2010 – August 2010

The PROPEL Project Group will work with senior UOW leaders and other key stakeholders to explore future leadership and to develop the program components that will deliver leadership training most effectively.

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PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

September 2010 – August 2011

The 12-month PROPEL program will be delivered to 15 early career academics. The program will commence with a three-day workshop and will include mentoring sessions, interdisciplinary fora, attendance at high-level university committees, an active leadership project, and a final day of reflection.

The success of the program will be assessed, a resource kit developed, and information about the program disseminated nationally and internationally.

THE PROPEL VISION

The project aims to develop future academic leaders who:

- truly live the learning-teaching-research nexus
- live collaboration
- think beyond disciplinary boundaries
- react quickly to internal and external challenges
- inspire people
- genuinely care about the development of their staff.

PROPEL IS A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG SOCIAL INNOVATION NETWORK, LED BY THE FACULTIES OF COMMERCE AND EDUCATION.

A SINGLE, HOMOGENEOUS PROGRAM BRINGING TOGETHER THE MULTIPLE FACETS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

leadership development reconceptualised

MENTORING COMPONENT

Each PROPEL participant will be assigned a mentor. Participants will develop leadership skills through their mentored relationship, but will also develop skills in mentoring others.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS COMPONENT

PROPEL participants will attend a three-day workshop at the commencement of the program. On the first day the focus will be on generic leadership skills, and on the second and third days on teaching and research specific leadership skills, respectively. At the end of the workshop, participants will focus on one leadership skill from each of the three areas, which they will work on developing with the help of their mentor over the 12-month program.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COMPONENT

“Global problems and challenges cut across traditional boundaries of the academic disciplines” (Teaching-Research Nexus, 2008). The PROPEL program explores the benefits that can be obtained by approaching an issue from different directions. Participants will attend two Interdisciplinary Fora, each centred around one topic (e.g. water, youth).

BIG PICTURE COMPONENT

Potential future leaders need to gain understanding about how their university and the university sector work in order to see the big picture and develop inspired leadership visions. PROPEL participants will gain insight into how universities work on a day-to-day basis through attendance at high-level committee meetings. They will develop a realistic picture of how the university operates, which will enable them to “connect the dots”, to experience the complexity of academic management.

ACTIVE COMPONENT

“Role-specific, practice-based, peer-supported and self-managed learning” is seen by university leaders as the most effective means for learning about leadership (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). Participants will choose one project, which they will lead during the program. At the end of the year participants will submit a final report in which they reflect on their achievement of the leadership task.

REFLECTIVE COMPONENT

At the end of PROPEL a one-day event will be held, at which each participant will report on their journal throughout the training year.