Program for Preparing Early Leaders

PROPEL

a one-year intensive leadership program for pre-leadership academics

2010 applicant information
THE PROPEL VISION

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 UOW Social Innovation Network, funded by the Australian Teaching and Learning Council.

**PROJECT LEADERS AND COORDINATORS**

Prof. Rob Castle, DV-C (Academic)
Prof. Sara Dolnicar, Faculty of Commerce
A/Prof. Wilma Vialle, Faculty of Education
Ms Karen Lovasz, PROPEL Project Manager

**ENQUIRIES:** klovasz@uow.edu.au or 02 4252 8218
The environment within which the tertiary education sector is operating has become an unprecedented dynamic one. The key challenge for us is to learn how to not only survive in this rapidly-changing environment, but also how to prosper in the future by capitalising on the opportunities that present themselves. Doing so will require a new generation of leaders in the tertiary sector who are open-minded, understand the necessity for true teaching-research nexus, value diversity and interdisciplinarity, and are able to quickly understand and adapt to external pressures.

UOW is leading the way in preparing for this future. The PROPEL Program is a unique leadership program which aims to equip early career academics with both the required skill-set and mind-set of successful future academic leaders. A very small number of carefully selected participants will have the opportunity to participate in the PROPEL program in 2010. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague to be part of the first cohort to undertake this exciting program.

Professor Gerard Sutton AO
Vice-Chancellor
University of Wollongong
Overview of PROPEL

Most universities offer some form of leadership training program, however a recent study of over 500 university leaders concluded that “current approaches to leadership development in higher education need to be radically reconceptualised” (Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008).

Unlike many other leadership programs, PROPEL’s major focus is on breaking down the borders between disciplines and closing the gap between learning, teaching and research. As a PROPEL participant you will be immersed in collaboration and interdisciplinarity. You will work together with your peers and academic leaders across all faculties as you complete the SIX ELEMENTS of the program over a twelve-month period. Through this process you will develop your leadership skills more fully than you ever could in a discipline-specific environment.

Mentoring Component
Each PROPEL participant will be assigned an experienced academic leader to be their mentor throughout the program. Through the mentoring relationship you will develop your own leadership skills and will also develop your ability to mentor others; a valuable which you can carry forward into future leadership roles.

Leadership Skills Component
All PROPEL participants will attend a three-day residential workshop at the commencement of the program which will cover a blend of generic and academic-specific leadership issues and skills. Workshop presenters will include high-level academic leaders from the research, teaching and executive leadership fields. At the end of the workshop you will choose a number of leadership skills which you will work on developing, with the help of your mentor, throughout 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. As a participant you will attend at least two Interdisciplinary Fora, each centred around a specific over-arching topic (e.g. water, youth).

Big Picture Component
PROPEL participants will gain a realistic insight into how universities operate by attending a number of high-level committee meetings. Through your involvement on these committees, you will gain an appreciation of the big picture and experience some of the complexity of academic management.

Active Component
“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). As a participant you will choose a project which you will lead during the program. At the end of the year you will produce a report reflecting on your achievement of the leadership task.

Reflective Component
At the end of the PROPEL program a one-day event will be held at which you and your fellow participants will reflect on your journey throughout the training year.
Applications open for the 2010 PROPEL program.

Information session for applicants.

Applications close.

Participants selected and mentoring partnerships determined.

Mentors and participants introduced and attend mentoring training.

Leadership Workshop (residential).
Participants select specific leadership skills which they want to develop, and also choose ‘Big Picture’ committee meetings to attend and an Action Project to complete.

Mentoring meetings commence (one hour per month). Mentors and participants work on plans for developing the selected leadership skills.

Network gatherings commence. One-hour each month for participants, mentors and program co-ordinators including leadership guest speakers and networking time.

Participants attend first Big Picture committee meeting.

Interdisciplinary Forum #1.

Mentors and participants work on plan for leadership Action Project.

Participants continue work on Action Project with support from mentors.

Participants attend second Big Picture committee meeting.

Interdisciplinary Forum #2.

Reflection Day to conclude program.

Final mentoring meetings held to conclude partnerships.

WHAT MAKES PROPEL DIFFERENT?

PROPEL is a single, homogeneous program which brings together the multiple facets of leadership development.

PROPEL focuses on leadership in three areas: generic leadership ability, leadership in teaching and leadership in research.

PROPEL begins the pro-active development of effective and capable leaders well before they commence their first leadership roles.
Becoming a participant

Is PROPEL for me?

PROPEL aims to develop leadership skills in pre-leadership academic staff, preparing them for possible leadership roles throughout their career. To gain the full benefit of participating in PROPEL, you must be prepared to commit sufficient time to the program. This will include attending the three-day workshop and the one-day reflection session, around 12 mentoring sessions, 10 network gatherings and at least two fora and committee meetings. You will also need to regularly devote time to the development and implementation of your leadership project. All together the time commitment is estimated at around three hours per week spread across the 12-month program. To support your involvement in the program, Deans of all Faculties have committed to providing one-hour per week face-to-face teaching relief for PROPEL participants.

Am I eligible to apply?

The PROPEL Program is open to:
- Academic staff at Level A, B or C (Level D and E may be considered on a case-by-case basis).
- Permanent or fixed-term staff.
- Staff who have NOT held an institutional leadership role (defined as Head of School or Discipline; Associate Dean or above; Director of University Research Strength or Strategic Research Initiative).

Staff who have held other leadership roles are eligible to apply. These roles can include Chief Investigator on grant; Subject Coordinator; Committee Chair; Director of Faculty Research Centre. Staff who have acted for a period in an institutional leadership role but have not held the role substantively are also eligible to apply.

What is the selection process?

If you are interested in applying you must register with the Project Manager at klovasz@uow.edu.au. You will then be invited to an information session to learn more about the program. Applications must be submitted on the form provided by 30 July.

A selection committee will assess applicants on:
- characteristics of leadership (see opposite page);
- energy and enthusiasm for new ideas and ways of working;
- interest in collaborative and interdisciplinary work;
- strong research and teaching performance (relative to opportunity, but not necessarily equal);
- how participating in PROPEL will benefit both the applicant and their Faculty.

The committee will also contact applicants’ nominated referees and Heads and Deans and may interview some or all applicants. Twelve participants will be selected for the 2010 program from across UOW. See the PROPEL website for full selection criteria. research.uow.edu.au/propel
Understanding leadership in the academic environment

The PROPEL program is underpinned by original research into academic leadership. Project Leaders aimed to identify those skills and personal characteristics found in excellent university leaders, and particularly those which are specific to the academic environment. The research also aimed to identified which of those skills and characteristics are able to be taught. These questions were examined both from the perspective of current academic leaders and academics who are not in leadership roles. The results of this research have directly informed development of the PROPEL Program content and structure, as well as the participant selection criteria.

Characteristics of leadership

PROPEL Project research has identified certain characteristics as necessary to excellent university leadership but difficult to teach. Participants will be selected for the PROPEL program who already demonstrate many of these identified characteristics:

- Direction, vision, originality.
- Role model who demonstrates a quality of excellence and is passionate about their discipline (in either teaching, research or both).
- Genuine interest in people and the ability to connect with staff on a personal level.
- Genuine regard for diversity and seeing difference as positive.
- Personal traits including drive, energy, enthusiasm, positive attitude, conviction, cooperativeness, patience, consideration.
- Maturity, self-understanding, self-motivation, being true to own personal values.
- Comfortable working in complex situations of ambiguity and incomplete information.

PROPEL leadership development

PROPEL Project research has provided insight into a range of teachable leadership skills and attributes which are highly valued by academic staff. These will form the basis of the PROPEL leadership development program and are summarised in six key statements:

- POSITION Think and work strategically to position yourself, your staff and your unit within UOW and the wider context.
- REFLECT Reflect on yourself as a leader and be prepared to make changes.
- OPEN Open out to your staff on both the professional and personal level.
- PROVIDE Provide a supportive environment in which your staff will thrive.
- ENABLE Enable your unit to always move forward.
- LINK Create links and connections with other staff, faculties and institutions which will strengthen your unit and your discipline.
The PROPEL project benefits from the rich leadership experience of a range of university and industry leaders.

**PROPEL MENTORS**
- Prof. Hugh Brown, Faculty of Engineering
- Prof. Brian Ferry, Faculty of Education
- Prof. Barry Harper, Faculty of Education
- Prof. Sandra Jones, Faculty of H&B
- Prof. Leon Kane-Maguire, Faculty of Science
- Ms Yvonne Kerr, Dean of Students
- Prof. Roger Lewis, Faculty of Engineering
- A/Prof. Pauline Lysaght, Faculty of Education
- Prof. Fazel Naghdy, Faculty of Informatics
- Mr Ron Perrin, Faculty of Commerce
- A/Prof. Paul Sharrad, Faculty of Arts
- Prof. David Steel, Faculty of Informatics
- Prof. Julie Steele, Faculty of H&B
- Prof. Simon Ville, Faculty of Commerce

**UOW PROJECT TEAM**
- Dr Lois Burgess, Faculty of Commerce
- Prof. Kathy Eagar, Sydney Business School
- A/Prof. Helen Hasan, Faculty of Commerce
- Prof. Lesley Head, Faculty of Science
- A/Prof. Garry Hoban, Faculty of Education
- Prof. Sandra Jones, Faculty of H&B
- A/Prof. Tim Scrase, Faculty of Arts
- Prof. Stephen Tanner, Faculty of Creative Arts
- A/Prof Michael Zanko, Faculty of Commerce

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- Dr David M Williams (CEO DMW Group)
- Ms Karen van Druten (Leadership Consultant)

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A collaborative project of the University of Wollongong Social Innovation Network.

University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia
+61 2 4252 8218  klovasz@uow.edu.au

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