

For engaging and motivating tertiary creative arts students through sustained development of innovative, industry relevant, flexible subjects and resources that stimulate deep and collaborative learning

Summary of Contribution and Context

My teaching philosophy is based on building students' self-confidence and inspiring them to learn, be adaptable and achieve. Prior to commencement as a lecturer at James Cook University (JCU) nine years ago I worked as a commercial photographer in different guises for over 15 years. During that time I regularly hosted tertiary work experience students and became fascinated with their levels of preparedness for the industry that they were hoping to join. However the gap between workplace realities and student preparedness was often significant. Although the level of technical skills was generally sufficient, world-view, self-reliance, resourcefulness, problem-solving skills, notions of teamwork, initiative and *industry savvy* were often lacking. These students were also unaware that effective collaborative and interdisciplinary activities are central to the professional lives of most industry embedded artists, whether employed or freelance. In the transition from photographer to tertiary teacher I set out to reference my teaching practice against this other real world set of experiences. My essential response is to consistently embed interdisciplinary and collaborative practice into graduate attributes, and employ technological innovation, and original resource development within the undergraduate subjects that I design and teach. This has been recognised in two previous JCU Faculty Teaching Awards (2005 and 2006).

In 2006 a complete restructure of the College of Music Visual Arts and Theatre at JCU resulted in a new School of Creative Arts. My key contribution was the concept of *Creative Exchange* both as a subject of study, and a school philosophy centred on collaboration and interdisciplinary endeavour. My role in the new school is also as curriculum leader of the digital imaging subjects within the newly formed Bachelor of New Media Arts degree (BNMA) and to guide and oversee the transition to a fully digital environment. I sustain an emphasis on collaboration and engagement and strive for expanded subject flexibility through the implementation of new online strategies and resource developments including discussion boards, wikis and podcasts. Within each subject there also lies an embedded research focus that stimulates engagement with, and reflection on, critical contemporary debates both within and external to the discipline. At all times the primary motivation is for students to fully and creatively engage individually and with each other in the pursuit of deep, and industry relevant, learning. I maintain contact with eighty graduate students, monitoring their professional growth, learning from their insights and drawing on their workplace experiences to inspire and motivate undergraduate students.

Criterion 1: Approaches to learning and teaching support that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn

I influence, motivate and inspire students to learn through a commitment to student-centred, industry relevant learning, by developing original technology-based resources and by channelling the experiences of graduate students back to the undergraduate program. This commitment is deep seated and has been sustained throughout the past nine years. In 2002 two students nominated me for the Vice Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence:

At almost every lecture Clive demonstrated something new in the field of digital technology and used this to generate enthusiastic discussion on how students can use this technology in their work. Clive was always enthusiastic about the work I showed him but he always challenged me to think about where I could take my concept, how I might improve upon it, try new things and create new works. (Bunder, R. 2002)

Often in lectures, tutorials and through written feedback, he is able to provide practical examples of commissions or circumstances that reinforce the theoretical components of his teaching. Photography is not just a profession for Mr. Hutchison – it is a passion and an endless realm of exploration. (Turner, L. 2002)

In supporting that nomination the Head of School, Professor Diana Davis, added the following:

Mr. Hutchison has made an exemplary contribution not only to the teaching of Photography [at JCU] but also to College wide innovations in teaching. Indeed his commitment to

interdisciplinary and to internationalisation has provided significant leadership across the College. Exemplary teaching involves more than curriculum design, delivery and evaluation however. Concern for students' learning is fundamental, as is concern for each as an individual. Students have a very high respect for Mr. Hutchison in this regard and he has a rare capacity to customise his teaching so that each student develops an idiosyncratic profile - not simply as a clone of the mentor. (Davis, D. 2002)

Central to my teaching philosophy is the design of subjects that motivate and inspire students to learn as active and creative participants. Rather than examine a number of subjects superficially I cite in greater depth the development of first year subject *Introduction to Digital Imaging*. With a desire to promote engagement the subject centres on a variety of assignment and assessment types each scaffolded and designed to suit a variety of learning styles and directly aligned with identified student outcomes. The early building of confidence to participate and achieve lays a foundation to positively embrace new challenges of rapidly escalating complexity. Each assignment poses questions requiring individual inquiry across a range of online and library based resources. Each inquiry intersects with either practical work or interactive online class discussion and debate of relevant contemporary issues. The subject was further resourced with a wide range of original (lecturer produced) video podcast software tutorials to which students responded positively. After these tutorials were introduced in practical classes students could access them online indefinitely via LearnJCU. Student feedback on this subject in 2007 included:

I really enjoyed this subject, I learnt a LOT, and could apply it to my own work easily, and there were podcasts that I could listen to if I forgot anything.

The assignments were diverse and challenging. The criteria were broad with enough scope for individual creative expression

Ways in which the contribution has influenced student learning is evidenced by:

- Receiving JCU teaching awards.
- Invitations to give guest lectures and make presentations based on my teaching expertise.
- Inclusion of my T&L practices in JCU FYE (First Year Experience) publications.
- Consistently high level scores on the JCU measures of teaching and subject effectiveness: SFT *Student Feedback on Teaching* and SFS *Student Feedback on Subjects*.
- Positive peer reviews and Invitations to conduct peer reviews of colleagues.
- Regular unsolicited positive correspondence from graduate and undergraduate students.
- Contributions to the Faculty of Law, Business and Creative Arts (FLBCA) teaching and learning academic plan, 2007, as an active member of the Faculty T&L committee.
- Contributions to the FYE (First Year in Higher Education) web portal project to provide authentic examples of 'what university is really like'. I was approached by project leader Tanya Acheson, on the basis that: *Your colleagues and students have identified elements of your subject materials as representative of best practice at JCU.*

Research (Kuh, 2003) tells us that to be engaged 'Generation Y' students want to create and be active participants in the learning process. They want the freedom to experiment with the new digital tools as they search for their own creative voices in a radically evolving creative landscape. With this in mind the language and methodologies I have built into assignments maintain an emphasis towards individual motivations, and artistic visions rather than directive and prescriptive pathways. These students also seek relevance and connectedness to other disciplines and outcomes and therefore are often not motivated by learning experiences that they perceive to be isolated and self-serving. They prefer to engage within a framework of problem solving, experimentation, intellectual inquiry, and rigor. Student feedback confirmed these aspects of the subject:

You are allowed to experiment with the programs and design your own creative output. It was fun, interesting and invigorating subject matter. We learnt about a whole spectrum instead of a specific industry.

Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning 2008: Mr Clive Hutchison (JCU)

The best aspects of this subject were new knowledge of digital media, challenging tutorials and assignments.

At week six, a confidential, comprehensive, online survey was conducted titled: *How Are We Going So Far?* This survey gives valuable guidance to the effectiveness of content, subject structure, assessment and feedback. Assessment and feedback is via rubrics, written comments, and whole class discussion of outcomes. Podcasts are also created to showcase the work of the entire class on each assignment. Students are able to share their creations easily with each other, and at home. This experience adds to each student's sense of engagement with, and mastery of, the material, and belonging to the group. Student assignment work from this subject in 2007 makes up the predominant visual content of the School of Creative Arts recruitment poster for 2009, again reinforcing the value and relevance of their work.

I also regularly undertake standard / independent / formal, institutional student feedback surveys in order to validate delivery modes and relevance.

Summary of student responses, Introduction to Digital Imaging, TP2, 2007

(Ratings: 1 *completely unacceptable* to 5 *outstanding*).

SFS/SFT	QUESTIONS	SCORE	JCU AV.
SFS	1. The quality of the learning experiences in this subject was?	4.5	3.6
SFS	2. The interest level generated by this subject was?	4.5	3.5
SFS	3. The explanations given by staff in this subject were?	4.4	3.6
SFS	4. The organisation and structure of this subject was?	4.4	3.4
SFS	Average score of all 8 questions SFS:	4.3	3.5
SFT	1. The quality of this teacher's explanations was:	4.5	3.2
SFT	2. This teacher's interest in assisting students to learn was:	4.4	3.4
SFT	3. The structure of this teacher's presentations was:	4.0	3.1
SFT	4. This teacher's accomplishment of the aims of the subject was:	4.3	3.1
SFT	Average score of all 20 questions SFT:	4.4	3.3

The above scores are generally representative of my results over the past nine years at JCU.

Invitations to contribute to other disciplines and disseminate scholarly developments

I have been delighted to be invited to participate in other academic programs and staff development forums at the University. In 2006 and 2007 I was invited to give guest lectures within the Bachelor of Journalism on the topic of Photojournalism.

In 2007 I presented *teaching windows* to JCU academic staff on the integration of podcasting into an academic setting. Ms. Audrey Milton, FLBCA Assoc. Dean - Teaching and Learning, summarised observations of these sessions as follows:

In summary, Clive's teaching materials and his approach to teaching, learning and assessment are exemplary. They are stimulating, relevant, well researched and resourced and allow students opportunities to learn and interact with the subject in a variety of different ways and at different times. In short, Clive's work is amongst the most innovative and stimulating that I have recently seen. (Milton, A. 2007)

On the invitation of the Teaching and Learning Development Unit, I have repeated these podcasting presentations with Graduate Certificate of Education students in Cairns and Townsville. In summarising a review of these sessions Ms. Lisa Westcott, Academic Developer writes:

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Clive's mastery of this technology and his ability to use it in a classroom environment for both his students' learning and the showcasing of his students' work is truly amazing and represents a genuine attempt at showing his students that their work is valued. (Westcott, L. 2007)

In a 2005 report to the Vice Chancellor, 'Implementation of Organisational Change - COMVAT' (College of Music Visual Arts and Theatre), Emeritus Professor Des Crawley made the following evaluation of my key contribution to the restructure of the JCU Art School:

A pleasing development here is the introduction within the new awards of a content and process nexus based on the notion of "creative exchange." Mr Clive Hutchison (Photography) has been responsible for its progressive definition and testing of its relevance with a representative working party. Essentially, this element will be present within each core subject to provide scope for students to "engage, exchange, explore and experiment" with pooled ideas and experiences drawn from the students' own practice. Collaboration is the key defining quality of learning process within the new awards. (Crawley, D. 2005)

This curriculum vision is now an integral feature of the BNMA (Bachelor of New Media Arts). I have made presentations on the role of Creative Exchange at both the Photographic Imaging Educators' Assoc. conference in Orlando, USA, 2006, and at Apple Create World Conference in Brisbane in 2007. Positive audience interaction and feedback were features of these presentations.

Additional Teaching and Learning activities that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn and bring the wider world of work to the classroom.

My creative arts practice is overtly collaborative and cross-disciplinary and acts involuntarily as an inspiration for students. Examples include the publicly performed multimedia works: *60 Blacksmiths* (a collaboration with music and photography students and with music lecturer Dr. Steven Campbell), *Gabriella Takes a Bath* (with Campbell), *I Think I See Its Head* (with theatre students and lecturers Thomas, Campbell and Salisbury), and *Words for Glass* (with Campbell, Salisbury and others). The latest collaborative work (April, 2008) is *Sweet Crush*, based on the North Queensland sugar industry with JCU music lecturer Dr. David Salisbury. These works authenticate the theoretical rationale that I speak of in the classroom and act as genuine motivational models for students.

For me the process of education does not end at graduation. Lifelong learning should continue to nourish the intellectual and cultural growth of every individual. My current focus is to create a cycle of nurture, and engagement back to the classroom from graduate students. I have maintained contact with many of these graduates for almost a decade. New online tools now allow stitching the contemporary industry know how of these graduates back into the undergraduate experience. The website *Postcards from Postgrads*, showcases the latest works and achievements of past JCU photography students, now operating in many countries and genres. I have also established an online *Facebook* community of over 80 graduate students; this group is an invaluable resource for current students. Graduate JCU photography students engaging current students firstly on work experience, and later in full time employment, adds further evidence of the value of this cycle. Such is the experience of recent graduate Justin Schaller:

Hi Clive... So what more can I say but thank you? I would have never bothered with trying to get out of Townsville for this experience had it not been for your help and more importantly, what you have taught me. ...I started work at WXS on the 8th, and I have loved every second of it! And it is you I have to thank - if it were not for your influence and your helping hand, I would have never made it down here nor would I now be working in a secure, full-time job, with endless possibilities, no more than two months out of uni. Thank you Clive. You are a wonderful teacher and an inspirational person... (Schaller, J. 2007)

Conclusion

My passion for teaching is fuelled by student outcomes and their career successes. The search for new ways to design and deliver relevant and inspirational programs that empower students as independent lifelong learners is ongoing. Motivating collaborative and interdisciplinary activities at undergraduate level to build a dynamic framework for participation in the contemporary creative arts workplace will continue to excite me and define the core of my practice.