Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2011

Final Project Report

Submission date: 29 February 2012

Title of project: Extension studies feasibility study

Strategic objective(s) addressed:
• to be urban in innovation and impact
• to support the participation, retention and/or success of low Socio Economic Status (SES) higher education students in undergraduate studies.

Project leader: Dr Audrey Tam, School of Computer Science and Information Technology, College of Science, Engineering and Health

Contact details:

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<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>99253202</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:audrey.tam@rmit.edu.au">audrey.tam@rmit.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Project team members:
• Consultant: Sheila Howell
• SCSIT School Manager: Adriana del Mastro
• SCSIT Marketing, Communications: Robert Este, Daniel Walder
1. **Executive summary (up to half a page)**
   - Provide a summary that describes the project and what was achieved.
   
   *This will appear on the RMIT website and the full final report will be linked to the summary.*

Extension studies (now called Higher Education studies by VCAA – Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority) offer high-achieving Year-12 students the opportunity to enrol in first-year university courses. The offered courses should challenge these students but must be within their capabilities. If these courses are part of an undergraduate degree that the student subsequently undertakes, the student may obtain advanced standing in that program. Secondary schools in areas with a high concentration of low-SES students may lack adequate resources for teaching Information Technology; extension studies would give their high-achieving Year-12 students access to RMIT’s teaching staff, equipment, and infrastructure, at RMIT’s central urban locations. Thus, extension studies in appropriate courses, targeted at suitable schools, could attract high-achieving low-SES students into RMIT’s programs. The School conducted a feasibility study to identify suitable schools and appropriate courses, estimate demand, and determine efficient processes for developing effective relationships with target schools. These processes, the list of schools, and the project’s methodology are available to other RMIT Schools that wish to offer extension studies. VCAA accepted Programming 1 and Web Programming into the HE Studies program. These courses were publicised on the VCAA web site and via email to SNAP schools. SCSIT received 11 applications and made offers to 6 applicants. 5 applicants accepted: 3 are from SNAP schools, and 1 non-SNAP student lives in a low-SES area. SCSIT is implementing processes for enrolling these students and reporting their results to VCAA. Also, SCSIT needs to better communicate to secondary schools, that good results in mathematics units is a better predictor of success than good results in IT units.

2. **A list of outcomes**
   - Provide a brief overview of the project’s outcomes and impact.
   
   *List any scholarly output in the form of conference presentations or journal papers. This will appear on the RMIT website.*
   - The School conducted a feasibility study to identify suitable schools and appropriate courses, estimate demand, and determine efficient processes for developing effective relationships with target schools. These processes, the list of schools, and the project’s methodology are available to other RMIT Schools that wish to offer higher education studies.
   - VCAA accepted Programming 1 and Web Programming into the HE Studies program. These courses were publicised on the VCAA web site and via email to SNAP schools.
   - SCSIT received 11 applications and made offers to 6 applicants. 5 applicants accepted: 3 are from SNAP schools, and 1 non-SNAP student lives in a low-SES area.

3. **Project outcomes and impacts**
   - Process and interactions
     - RMIT Equity and Diversity (ongoing from December 2010): Joyce Kirk recommended that we meet with Milly Fels to discuss involvement of RMIT Schools Network Access Program (SNAP) schools (listed at [http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=tr6ilqtzcfzy](http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=tr6ilqtzcfzy)), to leverage existing relationships and coordinate communication with these schools. E&D selected a handful of SNAP schools to invite to a SCSIT focus group, and assisted SCSIT with emails to all SNAP schools.
     - RMIT event: SNAP school Principals consultative forum (Dec 2010) provided background information about RMIT’s relationships with these schools. Attendees welcomed information about RMIT plans for activities that would bring Year 9 students into the CBD, seeing these as partial replacement of a discontinued government program. The Footscray Secondary College mathematics coordinator told
Audrey Tam that they did not teach Information Technology units because the students were not interested in them.

- VCAA – Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (March and November 2011): at the March meeting we learned their process and timeline (course applications were due 11 April so the decision about which courses to offer had to be made much earlier than we had expected); representatives from University of Melbourne, Monash University, and Swinburne related their experiences and recommendations; at the November meeting, we learned why some applications had been rejected, and VCAA’s administrative process for our 2012 HE Studies students.

- RMIT VET in Schools (ongoing from March 2011): VCAA informed us of other RMIT applications, submitted by Elise Toomey-Brown, manager of RMIT VET in Schools; we met with Elise to discuss RMIT processes, especially concerning fees – based on early discussions, we planned to charge $600 for the year, waived for SNAP school students; based on a later communication, we decided to charge no fee: [emails from Elise]... the Higher Education in the VCE student cohort will be eligible for CGS funding via the Enabling course structure. An enabling course is a course of instruction provided to a person for the purpose of enabling the person to undertake a course leading to a higher education award. Through this, the provider is NOT allowed to charge the student, however, subsequent funding is also given on top of the CGS which equate to approximately $250 (indicative funding). As advised by Stats and reporting, for the purpose of 2012 enrolment, RMIT will establish 3 Enabling programs which will be coded and this particular cohort will be enrolled in one of the 3 according to the colleges. Enabling funds are the Commonwealth funding you will receive for each of the students. For each program, for each student you will receive income of approximately $1343.00.

- RMIT event: Careers Advisers Seminar (March 2011): Elise Toomey-Brown and Robyn Douglass (VCAA) presented a seminar to Careers Advisers; some of the Careers Advisers volunteered the surprising information that many students are afraid to come into the CBD, e.g., northern suburbs students specifying that they will only apply for university programs located in Bundoora.

- SCSIT SNAP focus group (April 2011): IT coordinators and teachers from six SNAP schools attended; they were enthusiastic about SCSIT’s plans and choice of courses; most of the discussion was about suitable timetabling, to fit around students’ Year 12 units. Note that one invited school declined, saying that they did not teach IT.

- SCSIT: timetabling, teaching staff, marketing materials (April to September 2011): SCSIT staff worked to resolve timetabling issues and to design marketing materials; teaching staff were identified, who have working with children certificates.

- RMIT Open Day (August 2011): VCAA approved SCSIT courses the week before Open Day; this information was included on the information postcards that SCSIT marketing staff created for Open Day

- SCSIT Information Evening (October 2011): SCSIT staff created a web page where students could register interest in attending the Info Evening; emails were sent to SNAP schools and VCAA listed SCSIT courses on their HE Studies page; 27 students registered, 23 attended, some with parents; one of the parents expressed concern that her son might neglect his other VCE units to spend more time on SCSIT courses.

- HE Studies applications (November 2011): SCSIT received 11 applications and made offers to 6 applicants; SCSIT had decided not to visit schools but, in retrospect, visits could have helped to clarify SCSIT requirements (mathematics, not IT) especially at schools that teach few or no IT units.

- HE Studies enrolments (February 2012): 5 accepted applicants enrolled: 3 are from SNAP schools, and 1 non-SNAP student lives in a low-SES area. The SCSIT School Manager worked out the detailed process for enrolling them so that they would not have to pay fees.
List and discuss the outcomes the project was designed to achieve and the outcomes the project has achieved, including any literature review and evidence of the impact the project has had on students.
  o The project was designed to attract high-achieving low-SES students into RMIT’s programs.
  o SCSIT received 11 applications and made offers to 6 applicants. 5 applicants accepted: 3 are from SNAP schools, and 1 non-SNAP student lives in a low-SES area.

Describe briefly any issues that may have prevented you achieving all the original outcomes stated in the application.
  o Demonstrated ability in mathematics units, rather than in IT units, is a better predictor of success in computer programming courses; however, many of the secondary schools we contacted delegated student selection to their IT coordinators. Consequently some of the applicants had good IT results but unsatisfactory mathematics results.

Describe any disciplinary and interdisciplinary linkages that have emerged as a result of the project.
  o SCSIT has engaged with the Equity and Diversity unit and with the VET in Schools unit at RMIT.

4. Dissemination strategies and outputs

List materials or outcomes that will be made available to the university or groups of stakeholders within the university or sector and provide information about where any project material is available

The following are available from SCSIT, upon request:
  Messages and documents sent to VCAA and secondary schools
  Promotional materials for Open Day
  Web page for prospective students
  Powerpoint presentations for SNAP focus group and public information evening

Describe the ways in which the project’s outcomes have been or will be shared across the university, the sector and/or nationally and internationally. For guidance refer to the ALTC Dissemination Framework (url: http://www.altc.edu.au/print/resource%2Ddissemination%2Dframework%2Daltc%2D2008 )

This report, to RMIT and federal government
Informal reporting at VCAA HE Studies meetings

5. Evaluation of project outcomes

Provide evaluation outcomes including evidence of the impact of the project and the value it will bring to the university and/or the sector. For guidance refer to the ALTC Evaluation Framework (url: http://www.altc.edu.au/extras/altc-gsep/index.html )

All six SNAP schools that participated in the focus group were enthusiastic about the project.
27 prospective students registered for the information evening; 23 attended
11 applicants; 6 accepted; 5 enrolled: 3 from SNAP schools, 1 from a low SES area

6. Budget report

What was the amount of funds approved? $35,000
• What was the final amount of funds acquitted? $34,732
  Please attach a financial statement: see attached spreadsheet

All financial claims related to your project must be processed against your internal order number before the end of 2011. Claims cannot be accepted in the New Year 2012. Unexpended funds will be retained by the university and unclaimed costs will be borne by your School/College.

A financial statement (in PDF), signed by the team leader and relevant Finance Manager of acquittal of funds must be attached to the report. It should include a statement of income and expenditure against the budget categories specified in the approved project proposal. Please consult your Finance Manager for further information.

7. Appendices
• Include any material that may support your claims of outcomes and impact.
• Attach pictures, presentation material, website links and so on that may be important. In particular, please provide an image that can be used for publications, such as a poster.

Submitting the Final LTIF Project Report
• Please follow the headings listed above.
• Please save the report in Microsoft Word using the following formula: team leader’s surname_College_LTIF2011_finreport.doc (e.g. brown_DSC_LTIF2011_finreport.doc).
• Please include a Table of Contents.
• Submit the final report by close of business, Friday, 17 February 2012 to diana.cousens@rmit.edu.au

Further information
Diana Cousens
Senior Coordinator, Awards and Grants
RMIT University
Telephone: 9925 0895
Email: diana.cousens@rmit.edu.au