Dear colleagues,

I am very happy to say that the Portfolio has got off to an auspicious start to the year. The first big challenge was our capacity to handle the process of admissions and enrolments, and the newly formed Portfolio team (Deborah Warrender, Phil Craig, Meredith Seaman, Barbara Russell, Eileen Luk and Annie Holdsworth) worked most efficiently together, with a genuine Portfolio perspective.

In the Portfolio office, Associate Professor Barbara de la Harpe has been appointed as the new Dean Academic Development. Barbara will be working closely with Heads and Program coordinators/managers to identify the main teaching and learning projects requiring Portfolio support in 2004.

At the first Portfolio Executive meeting of the year we considered the recently released AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency) report on RMIT, which contains a number of specific commendations and recommendations for action. There report particularly commended RMIT for the commitment of its teaching staff and its practically focused education. However it pointed to a number of areas where it felt RMIT needed to take action – including clarifying the nature and role of the VRIIs, strengthening TAFE representation in VCE, and clarifying accountabilities. The Executive felt that AUQA had made several specific recommendations that we should support, and it was agreed that a DSC response should be prepared as part of the University’s overall response.

I have also been consulting with the Executive about a draft ‘vision’ for the Portfolio – or at least an initial clear statement about the areas of teaching, learning and research for which we are known – with an emphasis on what is distinctive about our approach, our curriculum and our values as educators. An initial draft of this should be available for wider circulation next week.

Working with the Heads and Deans of the Portfolio to describe ourselves and our passions has made me acutely aware of what I will really be leaving when I cross the Nullarbor. So it is good to know that the Vice Chancellor is moving quickly to appoint my successor, with an explicit endorsement of the work we have been doing so far. An advertisement for the position of PVC will appear on 25 February. My last day at work will be Friday 5 March (though you’ll see me sorting through books and papers for a while afterwards!).

Professor Alan Cumming will take over as acting PVC as of 8 March. We will be having farewell drinks on the Building 8, Level 8 Balcony (outside my office) on Tuesday 2 March at 5.00pm. I hope to see many of you there, and it’ll be an opportunity to meet Alan as well.

Cheers,

FROM THE PVC

Associate Professor Barbara de la Harpe, Dean Academic Development

Professor Alan Cumming, Acting PVC (DSC) from 8 March
PORTFOLIO OFFICE IMPLEMENTATION

With the recent appointment of Barbara de la Harpe to the position of Dean Academic Development, three of the four senior portfolio office positions are now in place. The recruitment process for the remaining position, that of Dean Research & Innovation, is also under way.

Whilst we are unable to settle staff into definite ongoing roles until the services integration project is completed, interim roles and accountabilities are in development. The following is a summary of portfolio office roles as they currently stand:

Planning & Projects
Phil Craig has taken up the position of Project Officer in planning & projects. His focus to date has been on assisting with the portfolio office implementation, the FELCS schools implementation and on developing and implementing a Portfolio workplanning process (see the report from Phil in this newsletter).

Human Resources
Cheryl de Leon is coordinating Human Resources across the Portfolio, and is being assisted by Bronwyn Hughes. Appointments queries and paperwork should be directed to Cheryl in the first instance.

Finance
Eileen Luk and Scott Roderick are managing the Portfolio's finances with the support of Irene Prentice and Bronwyn Hughes. Eileen will continue look after Architecture & Design; Built Environment; Social Science & Planning; Property, Construction & Project Management; and has taken on the new schools - International & Community Services and Education. Scott will continue to look after Art & Culture; Creative Media; Fashion & Textiles; Applied Communications; International Centre for Graphic Technology and oversee the Portfolio office. Scott is also looking after the coordination of international fee setting, and assisting with commercial contract development whilst Eileen is assisting with the Profile development and monitoring.

Laurie Reid from FELCS has accepted a secondment to the SET Portfolio to assist them in establishing their financial management team.

Information Technology
IT is continuing to be managed under the previous Faculty structures with David Bellchambers heading the AD&C team, Eric Joosten - Constructed Environment and Jim Skevis - FELCS. John Benwell has taken on responsibility for coordinating the three IT teams and supporting their integration in the longer term.

Facilities, Technical Services and OH&S
Peter Datson has taken on this role with the assistance of Con Seretis and Irene Prentice. He is currently very much consumed with accommodation issues, particularly the co-location of Portfolio Office staff in Building 8, co-location of Portfolio research centres in Building 15, addressing urgent school accommodation issues and developing an accommodation strategic planning pro forma to assist the development of a Portfolio Accommodation Plan.

Marketing/Information Management
Monika Engelhard, Lawrence Martin and Kristin Almond form the Portfolio marketing team. The team will be meeting with schools to discuss priorities for the year. Lawrence is working on the Portfolio website, particularly the sites for the two new schools.

TEACHING & LEARNING AND STUDENT/ACADEMIC SERVICES PLANNING DAY

The Teaching and Learning and Student/Academic Services team are holding a planning day in the first week of March. The team will be defining portfolio roles and models of working and formulating a vision and philosophy for the group.

Ellen-Jane Browne from the Major Change Group will be presenting the latest information of the Portfolio Services Integration Project.

The results of interviews with 11 of the Heads of School late last year will help inform the planning day. It is envisaged that the results will help focus the way support for Teaching and Learning for leaders, staff, and teams is implemented across the Portfolio.

The results of the interviews identify the following as Schools’ most important Teaching and Learning needs:

- The development of a culture of Teaching and Learning that helps build and support quality programs by building expertise and knowledge, guiding, enabling, engaging and facilitating, encouraging research, collaboration and cross fertilization and recognition of good practice.

- Support and resources to enable new teaching and learning initiatives; development, renewal and implementation of HE and TAFE programs; offshore program development and delivery, internationalisation and integration of technology into the curriculum.

- Assistance and support with University compliance activities and initiatives including implementing policies, processes, steps and systems.

[Barbara de la Harpe]
**UPDATE ON SCHOOL WORKPLANS**

RMIT has embarked on a new more refined approach to planning. This year’s approach brings together existing documentation around relevant performance indicators, work plans, initiatives and strategies thereby reducing duplication of effort. This approach by the University is to be applauded and will benefit all concerned.

The Portfolio has been asked to take a lead role in trialling and developing the School Planning template that will be used.

To date Deborah Warrender has been leading the project for the Portfolio and has been working with the SET and Business Portfolios, Central Planning and People Services team members to refine the template.

The Portfolio has distributed the template, populated with performance data, to Heads of Schools to start the Portfolio’s planning process.

The DSC executive has met individually with most of the Heads to discuss their schools’ first drafts. This has given the Portfolio the lead running on the planning process in the University. It has also provided a unique opportunity for the Portfolio to capture the initiatives that have been developed for 2004 and planned for 2005. From this collection of information a clearer picture of the Portfolio’s role, strengths and pursuits is emerging. The work will help inform the Portfolio process, which is upon us and needs to be completed in the next two weeks.

The planning documents are living documents and will continually be updated as new initiatives and strategies emerge. They will also define our targets and will be utilised to reflect back on our achievements against those targets in quarterly reviews of School activities.

One of the additional benefits of developing the planning pack is the accelerated sharing of information across Schools as Plans are distributed, discussed and refined. This will lead to the development of joint projects and integrated ways of working across the Portfolio.

[Phil Craig]

**HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH TRANSITION**

In 2003 there was a great deal of work done by a group of academic and administrative staff from all three faculties in DSC. The group met regularly to discuss HDR management and work out ways of working in the new structure.

A transition Portfolio HDR committee has been formed with representatives from all Schools. It is anticipated that this will be the actual committee once the governance framework has been approved by council and the Portfolio Board has been formed. Membership consists of Head of School nominees and postgraduate students with co-opted members as required. However, it is essential that admin staff continue to be involved. Fiona Nolan is the admin person responsible for the committee.

In February, the transition DSC HDR Committee met to:

- finalise terms of reference for the committee
- set meeting dates for 2004
- compare school HDR processes
- recommend portfolio office support where needed
- make recommendations concerning candidature, progress, examinations etc as required.

During the transition period, prior to the formation of Portfolio Boards, executive powers will rest with the PVC and Deans.

[Gretel Lamont]

**PROGRAM MANAGERS WORKSHOP**

There was lots of discussion, enthusiasm and laughter as twenty-five program managers, coordinators and leaders from all three faculties participated in a workshop on 10 December. Together they identified issues of importance to program management, discussed what the Portfolio should be known for in five years time and finally actions and opportunities.

Outcomes from the workshop have been circulated - let me know if you have not seen them.

Watch this space for information about further workshops!

[Gretel Lamont]