Learning and Teaching

Priority: To provide a broad range of programs that reflect strongly the need and demand patterns of students and the region, and provide a learning environment that maximises students' chances of success.

Graduate Attributes

The University strives to enable its graduates:

To understand:
- To have relevant, discipline-based knowledge, skills and values
- To be able to apply and evaluate knowledge

To think:
- To value and respect reason
- To be able to reason competently

To learn:
- To be self-aware, independent learners
- To be able to collect, organise, analyse, evaluate and use information in a range of contexts

To interact:
- To be able to interrelate and collaborate
- To value and respect difference and diversity

To communicate:
- To speak, listen and write competently
- To be competent users of information and communication technologies

To initiate:
- To be constructive and creative
- To be enterprising

To value:
- To have self-respect and a sense of personal agency
- To have a sense of personal and social responsibility
- To understand and apply ethical professional practices

In 2005 the University introduced new programs and planning commenced on a range of professional programs to be introduced in 2006 and 2007. For details of these programs refer to page 9.

■ Enhancing and promoting the unique Core Courses undertaken by all first year undergraduate students

Core Courses

Undergraduate students complete two core courses designed to provide the skills and knowledge to successfully complete tertiary study and encourage lifelong learning. Core courses in 2005 were *Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship* and *Communication and Thought.*

Two major external reviews of core courses were conducted in 2005. The first, conducted by Dr Jim Beck of Beck Consulting, focused on the sustainability of core courses in the context of University growth with the main issue being efficiency of delivery of such large courses. The Beck review recommended that:

- the core courses become exemplars of the University's emerging 'hybrid learning environment' (a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning delivery modes);
- the existing core course curricula and their purposes be reviewed; and
- the Learning and Teaching Management Committee take responsibility for maintaining the framework within which core courses are designed and delivered.

The second review, conducted by Dr Duncan Nulty of Griffith University, examined the alignment of the core courses with University priorities. The Nulty review recommended that major changes be made to the design of

the core courses, including the introduction of new hybrid learning strategies. All recommendations will be implemented in 2006, including the introduction of a third core course entitled *Environment, Technology and Sustainability* to be managed by the Faculty of Science, Health and Education.

■ Fostering and supporting inter-disciplinary and inter-faculty initiatives to maximise student choice

Combined Degrees

In 2005 the University commenced delivery of three new combined degrees involving the three faculties. These were the Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts, the Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Business and the Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Science.

■ Ensuring that emphasis is given in course and program development to the promulgation of the University's Graduate Attributes alongside the in-depth discipline based knowledge expected of graduates

Graduate Attributes

In 2004 the University identified attributes that all graduates should attain during their years of study.

In 2005, for the first time, all undergraduate programs and courses conducted by the University explicitly addressed the way in which students would achieved this set of attributes (refer to Graduate Attributes on left).

■ Ensuring that teaching is characterised by a high level of interaction between staff and students, especially expressed through staff-student ratios

Human Scale

The University is committed to 'human scale', (refer to page 10) which is a term used to indicate that all possible efforts will be made to keep student and staff interactions to a scale that encourages meaningful experiences. In 2005 the University identified the retention of small classes in most programs as a key priority in preserving and extending the institution's reputation for excellence in teaching. To support this strategy, and to understand fully the impact of small class sizes on students, an analysis will be undertaken in 2006 in relation to:

- students' small class experience; and
- interventions aimed at maintaining and improving the quality experience.

Student to Staff Ratio

Data published by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) in 2005 indicated that the University of the Sunshine Coast had a ratio of 23.3 students per academic staff member.

■ Supporting the development of library resources and IT capacity

Development of Library Resources

A 2005 survey of Library customers indicated that 89 percent of respondents reported being 'satisfied' to 'highly satisfied' with Library resources and services. Staff were identified as being a strong asset, being seen as fair, professional, friendly and providing quality service. The issue causing most concern for clients was the number of computer workstations and, despite the opening of the Library Commons in 2004, respondents indicated they would like an increase in the number of computers.

During the latter half of 2005, staff worked on the development of a continuous improvement plan which identified:

- the priority areas for improvement;
- actions that had been taken since May 2005; and
- opportunities for future improvement.

More than 33 changes and improvements were made including adding an additional 19 computers to the Information Commons, bringing the total number of computers in the Library building to 124, an increase of 300 percent since 2003. The Library communicated the results of the survey and the actions taken for improvement to the wider University community through its newsletter, *@USC Library.*

In 2005, the Library was ranked within the top four Australian universities for its expenditure on information resources, spending 45.8 percent of its 2004 budget. During 2005, the Library provided additional access to e-research databases such as JSTOR and Web of Knowledge. Through JSTOR, 821 full-text journal titles were added to the Library's growing digital collections. An additional 8,130 peer-reviewed titles were linked and searchable via Web of Knowledge. As of December 2005, the Library had 18,612 full-text titles available electronically, an increase of 39 percent from 2004.

Development of IT Services

A Leadership and Management Survey was undertaken to provide feedback on existing management practices, and the findings were used to formulate strategies to improve performance capabilities. The IT Service Management (ITIL) best practice framework that was adopted in 2004 produced improvements in operational processes in 2005. The established Information Communication Technology (ICT) governance structure continued to develop in 2005 and resulted in the development of an e-learning strategy.

University Portal

A University portal was developed during the year. Though embryonic in its present development, the portal provides a platform for the migration of a number of presently disparate data sources and the opportunity for the integration of many existing systems.
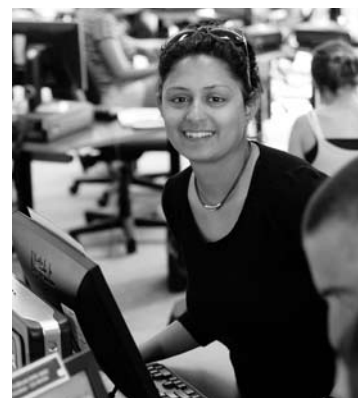
Total number of computers in the Library grew to 124, an increase of 300 percent since 2003.

The University conducted a review of the way in which workplace experiences were provided to undergraduate students.

ICT Infrastructure Projects

Information Technology Services continued to focus on the development of major ICT infrastructure projects throughout 2005:

- new storage area network was implemented to provide enhanced capabilities and support the growing needs of the University, including the needs of the managed operating environment, the large data stores required for GIS, online course delivery and information management initiatives;

- enhanced bandwidth services were negotiated to support the growing teaching, research and engagement activities of the University and an increased capacity will become progressively available over the next two years;

- the development of a managed desktop operating environment was a major initiative in 2005. Following a pilot program late in the year, an up-to-date desktop platform for both staff and students will be rolled out in 2006;

- two teaching laboratories were redesigned in 2005 to support the Bachelor of Information and Communications Technology (BICT) in the Faculty of Business; and

- the University was successful in becoming a shareholder in AARNet Pty Ltd providing the opportunity to participate in the development of the Australian University network provider, and securing an equal footing with other Universities.

■ Providing opportunities in all programs for work–related experience

Work Integrated Learning

The University conducted a review in 2005 of the way in which workplace experiences were provided to students as part of their undergraduate programs. An Internships Working Group was formed to provide guidance on the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) project. The following primary outcomes were achieved:

- a model was created that recognised the value of guest lecturers, work-related research projects, internships and placements;

- academic quality standards and assessment quality standards were developed in relation to each of the three tiers of WIL;

- a Professional Skills Set was established, which lists profession-related skills that students may be expected to acquire whilst on placement;

- an action plan of WIL implementation was drafted. This action plan includes considerations such as insurance, workplace health and safety, customer relationship management database, and marketing and promotion;

- a Smart State Internships Grant application was submitted to the Queensland Government, requesting funding for the support of internships and placements for science and technology students; and

- a list of key recommendations were put forward by the Internships Working Group, recommending in particular, the appointment of a centralised WIL Coordinator for the implementation and ongoing management of WIL at the University.

All of the recommendations of the WIL review will be implemented in 2006.

The Office of International Relations won the Queensland award for 'Outstanding Student Service to International Students'.

■ Developing a high level of service culture in student support services

International Relations wins State Award

The Student Services unit within the Office of International Relations won the Queensland award for 'Outstanding Student Service to International Students' from Overseas Student Health Cover provider, Worldcare Assist (Mondial).

■ Ensuring that teaching is informed by research

Teaching Informed by Research

In 2005, the Academic Board commenced development of a Council statement on the teaching-research nexus. In addition, a common goal on this matter was included in both the Learning and Teaching Plan, and the Research and Research Training Plan. In accordance with the actions related to this goal, the University commenced systematic collection of data about the extent and impact of the teaching-research nexus in programs in each of the University's three faculties. This data will contribute to teaching and research planning decisions to be taken in 2006.

Overall Performance in Learning and Teaching

The University's overall learning and teaching performance, as judged in 2005, is reflected in the institution's performance in the new Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. This data, related to student satisfaction, student progress and student success, reveal three important points that will influence the development of learning and teaching over the next few years.

These are:

- The University already performs very well on the 'good teaching', 'overall satisfaction' and 'generic skills' scales in the Course Experience Questionnaire. The University should deliberately invest in maintaining and improving this performance, including maintaining the provision of popular programs.
- The University needs to understand its situation in relation to student attrition and take deliberate steps to improve its apparent under-performance in this area.
- The University needs to expand provision of high demand professional courses that result in high employment rates, and extend provision of high demand postgraduate coursework programs.

These points assisted in setting priorities for 2006.

Indicators of Success

■ Graduate satisfaction with educational experience as measured through the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) good teaching scale

The University's raw score for the CEQ Overall Satisfaction Index was 70.26 percent and adjusted score was 70.18 percent. On the adjusted score, the University was 17th out of 38 institutions (3rd in Queensland). The raw score for 2004 was lower than previous years (2000-2003 average was 75 percent) and in the preliminary data from the 2005 GDS the overall satisfaction is around 75 percent.

■ Student feedback on programs, courses, teaching and services

In June 2005, following two years of development and piloting, the University Council approved a new policy: Program Review and Course Evaluation Policy that requires all course coordinators to collect student feedback on courses using a common instrument.

■ Feedback from employers

Employer feedback is not currently gathered through a formal process.

■ Student–staff ratio

The University of the Sunshine Coast had a ratio of 23.3 students per academic staff member, which is above the Queensland average of 21.6.

■ Number of awards for teaching

There have been no awards for teaching received during the period under review.

From 2006, the University will maintain aggregated student feedback on teaching data, and student feedback on courses data, on the University website.