

29 August 2017

**Curtin University**

**Submission – Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education**

I agree to the Privacy Notice and Terms and Conditions of Submissions

I agree to have my submission published – YES

I am lodging as an Organisation

Susan Takao

[susan.takao@curtin.edu.au](mailto:susan.takao@curtin.edu.au)

WA 6845

I confirm I have the organisation's agreement to make this submission

University

Curtin University

**Curriculum and assessment**

No comments

**Teachers and Teaching**

*(word count: 349)*

Establish recognised 'categories of teaching', with incentives for 3 year commitments to teaching in identified communities. Improvement in financial rewards, family support, better housing and security and better orientation for staff moving to such communities.

Expectations and perceptions about what rural life is like need to be based on units dedicated to this idea. Providing 'rural' practicums is one way to achieve this.

Engage top teachers in school 'teacher leadership training cohorts' with innovative funds to institute improvements in regional schools. Attract high performing students from the regions to return as teachers, including scholarships and incentives similar to the medical training scholarships. It is noted, that the best outcome for these students is not always to return when a better outcome would be to find career opportunities not available in these communities.

Deliver professional development within the community that is embedded in work routines. Include two critical dimensions into free or low-cost professional development for 'top teachers' (e.g. those 3 or more years of experience in a rural or regional school): distributed team leadership for communities and schools, and systems thinking for educational leaders. Curtin's School of Education Professional Learning Hub is one example and if supported financially the outreach could be substantial. Offer financial incentives for reaching benchmarked performance levels that require individual and group leadership, productivity, using data to make decisions, and moving the dials on key performance metrics of value to the local community. Develop free-to-enter and free-to-learn basics delivered via self-paced online learning modules that include immediate feedback, self-tests, and authentic projects.

Develop personalised professional portfolios that assist each individual on their learning trajectory and integrate their private trajectory into a team or cohort model that is continuously focused on improving the school and community. Curtin had success with its WA Cluster of Schools in the Make It Count Project. EAs and AIEOs were given explicit training in modified First Steps in Mathematics skills which enabled them to take on more of a genuine teaching role, including planning, task selection, assessment etc. Specific programs such as this, need to be introduced on a state-wide basis.

## **Leaders and leadership**

*(word count: 350)*

Equivalent access to services and support should be facilitated for regional students and schools similar to what they would get in metropolitan areas –internet access, access to information and knowledgeable others, social connections, etc.

Consider establishing Executive Principals - experienced principals with innovation experience, connected to clusters of regional schools to assist school principals in school-led decision making, strategy and skills development and providing mentoring.

Utilising, training and support of dedicated paraprofessionals for administration of support programs, eg bus route planning, community liaison, at some levels. A VET school in regional WA employs trained trade teachers before they are fully qualified which allows them to hire local staff committed to the locality and to support them (with block release and mentoring) to complete their teaching qualification. This model is also being used in the Goldfields with Aboriginal Education assistants (AIEOs) when they retrain to become teachers. Current regulations make this difficult for non-Aboriginal 'intending' teachers in all but independent schools to take up such an opportunity. Expanding this program and including non-Aboriginal 'intending' teachers' is suggested.

DETTWA could consider, in collaboration with HEPs, offering 'research-based' teaching and administrative positions in R/R/R schools where people teach and also conduct a relevant research project. These projects might be 2-3 years, earning a Master's qualification and a promotional incentive from DETTWA.

Provide a balanced set of incentives (grants, tax credits, loans, innovation funding) in response to balanced (principals, community and business leaders, community social organisations) cohort. Proposed innovations need to improve school and community leadership as well as technology infrastructure.

Develop a planned pathway of promotions with 5-year rotations into and out of various levels of the educational and community leadership infrastructure (e.g. 5 years as a top teacher, 5 years as a vice-principal, 5 years as a principal or central office leader) and ensure that leadership roles are valued as a promotional opportunity rather than as a gateway to metropolitan roles.

HEPs could assist in developing learning communities that provide opportunities for networking and mentoring. Principals and teachers working in remote areas regularly contact Curtin's researchers for advice and to share ideas.

## **School and community**

*(word count: 350)*

The greatest challenges for students transitioning to university are financial, being away from family and lack of emotional support. Conversely for students to succeed they need support from family but also have the cultural capital so they understand the 'system' of universities. Just as there are mentors for Aboriginal students (AIME), there should be mentors for rural and remote students.

Regional students' motivation can suffer due to lack of subject choice, or lack of face to face learning. Subjects, particularly STEM subjects, are unavailable in some regions, unless undertaken via SIDE. Insufficient internet speed is a frustration for teachers and students.

Libraries, if given appropriate infrastructure (high speed internet, laptops, etc) and appropriate training and support, have the potential to offer rural students access to connect with information and learning experiences as well as acting as a hub for school support/outreach services to offer support of students.

Provision of quality face to face career advice including professional development support to school career advisors.

Regional students are motivated by seeing evidence of available support in relation to their transition to post school opportunities or higher education. Studentbox.com (a portal designed to help students smoothly transition from high school to university) allowed high school students access to chat online with other regional students or with current university students who have successfully transitioned from a region and are achieving success. University led camps can motivate regional students through the interaction with like-minded students. Summer or between semester residential intensives are another example.

The philanthropic sector may play a role in creating regional employment (e.g. by moving industry into regional centres) and investing in community infrastructure and services that support/enable student learning.

Scholarships such as Curtin's Harry Perkins Memorial Scholarship for regional students can be a source of motivation. Philanthropic support for scholarships and other financial support, including for regional boarders in metro schools, financial support for teachers and communities, and transport/accommodation funding for students/classes to visit university campuses and engage with the university outreach programs. From a university outreach perspective, one of the biggest barriers to engaging with rural students is transport costs.

### **Information and communication technology**

*(word count: 101)*

Education providers should provide targeted and tailored support that addresses the unique needs of online and external students, many of whom may reside in regional areas with limited access to common services available in metropolitan areas.

Unreliable and low speed/bandwidth connections are a very real and significant barrier to regional student participation. It is critical for regions to have access to infrastructure and support necessary for them to access and participate in their learning activities (e.g. reliable internet connections, working technology, sources of information/knowledge and support services). While the NBN has great potential, it has been less than successful to date.

### **Entrepreneurship and schools**

*(word count: 326)*

Opportunities to socialise students into university during their earlier years, would assist in fostering tertiary aspiration and overcoming psychological barriers of attending university. It is vital to create a solid foundation of confidence that will encourage students to transition to university and set expectations of success. Student and parents need to be aware of the various support services in place at universities.

Structural and institutional gaps (e.g. schools not offering appropriate pre-cursor courses) need to be addressed via distributed learning and individualised self-directed online learning (in addition to pre-arranged 'classes or units').

Curtin's enabling program UniReady can be offered online within regional high schools as a standard or advanced offering that prepares students for higher education. Curtin's AHEAD program can offer aspirations-raising experiences integrated with UniReady or offered as a stand-alone program

The 2017 Curtin AHEAD survey of students and parents engaged in the 2017 Aspiration Camp Program indicated for students the top three barriers to accessing university: adapting to city lifestyle, accommodation and living costs and being independent. The top concerns from parents about their child attending university: cost of living and cost of study, the unknown level of support their child will receive and will their child be safe. The top three areas identified by students and parents where more support is needed: cheaper accommodation options, financial support that doesn't require students to work while waiting 18 months for the Youth Allowance, and education for families about the support available to help students transition.

ALTC provided earlier funding to document ways to provide greater support (e.g., Oliver, Rochecouste & Grote, 2013). Such funding is no longer available and yet it provided ideas and resources that addressed exactly these needs.

Other options for addressing the gap: internships and workplace experiences which helps students transition to the work force; visits by high school students to university campuses helps break down barriers; and ongoing access to generic post-secondary options (ongoing aspirations raising) delivered digitally and in person.

### **Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding**

*(word count: 242)*

Consideration should be given to alternative models of education delivery, particularly for remote communities or where students are travelling several hours each day. For example, block delivery of intensive teaching for part of the week rather than daily classes.

Increased training of career advisors in the regions regarding flexible pathways and opportunities for students should be undertaken on a regular basis. Provision of quality face to face career advice including the appropriate support given to those who hold the role as career advisor within the school. Often the role is appointed as an added extra for teachers, not necessarily because they have career advising experience, and they should be provided with adequate training to best assist students.

Inclusion of STEM subjects needs to be offered in regional areas.

Connectivity is crucial and will continue to form the gateway to many of the new opportunities that will arise in education. It should be a priority, beyond infrastructure that enables connectivity, to embed tech focused workflows into students' everyday learning experiences. This includes the basic use of word processing applications (digital literacy), etc, but also critical-tech-thinking skills including digital skills that provide the opportunity to gain basic levels knowledge of digital languages, eg coding/block chain. etc.

Financial support for quality outreach programs to expand enriching learning experiences to rural and regional communities such as roadshows, for example Curtin's School of Education Professional Learning Hub could undertake 'roadshows' between semesters and before school term starts.

### **Diversity**

*(word count: 350)*

Provide access and financial support to attend professional development relating to: mastery learning, game based learning, use of MOOCs in classrooms, and how to collect student engagement data from learning platforms and utilise data analytics to personalise the learning experience.

Exploit technological innovations to help connect regional students, schools and communities with other communities. Find ways to connect teachers and school leadership with community leaders and those in similar roles in other communities. Investigate integrated and interdisciplinary learning experiences in collaboration with other schools and communities, and the local community.

Encouragement and assurance of opportunities available to students should be clearly communicated to regional high school students and career advisors, especially where it may be misunderstood or believed that admission is not within their reach. For example, entry to the Curtin Medicine program is more achievable for regional students than often realised. Curtin has a specific quota for regional students, plus support with covering UMAT costs for regional students etc. Motivation increases through strategies and engagement that debunks myths around university not being as achievable or suitable for regional students.

Increase the availability of pathway programs to university in regional locations and provide outreach programs targeted to regional students. Curtin recently hosted the 2017 Future Footprints Expo organised by the

Association of Independent Schools of WA and Woodside which saw more than 250 regional and remote Indigenous students who attend boarding schools in the metropolitan area attend.

Curtin AHEAD is a collaborative and innovative outreach program that provides a range of skills-building, self-confidence and career development activities that help students discover their potential to pursue higher education. It exposes participants to university life and supplies information about their options. AHEAD works with regional and remote communities, including the ATSI Youth Development in the Kimberley and Youth Development in the Wheatbelt. Since 2014, Curtin AHEAD has supported over 1000 students into university, with nearly 60% enrolling at Curtin. Programs such as AHEAD should be encouraged and funded.

Availability online of at least the first year of particular undergraduate programs, plus increased online availability and promotion of these opportunities should be encouraged.

### **Transitioning beyond school**

*(word count: 350)*

'Re-thinking and re-framing education' with creative and innovative ideas is welcome. It is also important to address some of the persistent problems that continue to create barriers to success for young people from R/R/R communities.

Successful initiatives will require significant funding, currently beyond most university outreach programs. Attending campus outreach programs plays a major role in successful transition. HEPPP funding continues to play a critical role in innovative outreach programs.

Emphasis should be on increasing R/R/R students' access to universities, both metropolitan and regional, to provide them with a meaningful educational experience with career prospects. Encourage all students, not necessarily just those from regional communities, to consider employment in the regions after graduation with appropriate incentives.

Changes to Centrelink benefits should be made earlier to provide for R/R/R students relocating for study.

Some schools do not offer key ATAR subjects due to lack of specialist teachers and facilities. Develop a combination of online and intensive residential training, perhaps with a sister metropolitan school, for practical laboratory sessions. An option for regional students who can demonstrate that they are disadvantaged due to ATAR subject selection may be the development of portfolio entry/alternative entry to university, whilst still at school.

Suitable accommodation options for regional students, including college style (with meals), or apartment style with mentors and dedicated Indigenous accommodations with culturally appropriate support and mentors.

An 'Air B n B' type of program to place regional students into families for semester-length stays could be considered. Government could provide some financial incentives for the local family and monitor effectiveness.

Block release programs provide a 'do-able' way for regional and remote students to study – they can live mostly in their community, get the support they need to study and then develop strategies to work independently when not on campus. This approach is currently used at UNE, Deakin and for some courses, at Curtin. This removes some of the fear/cost and gives students the opportunity to gain learning experiences and access to resources (on campus) that they may not have if it's a choice only between studying on campus or just by distance learning.

### **Would you like to add any other comments or expand on any previous answers**

*(word count: 437)*

While the review is an important one, the complexity of the barriers to success would be better addressed by having a multi-sector review that takes into consideration health and social factors that affect education in the

regions, particularly in remote communities, and the importance and contribution that allied health professionals such as occupational health and speech therapists make in achieving educational success by students.

It is difficult to address the education of regional/rural/remote students in the absence of a long-term strategy for employment in the regions. There is often no clear incentive for students to return to the regions after graduation as there may be limited employment opportunities and a greater measure of success would be for students to find career employment in cities where greater opportunities are available. Encourage all students, not necessarily just those from regional communities, to consider employment in the regions after graduation with appropriate incentives as opportunities allow.

Greater support is required by students post school. Income support for regional and remote students and their families, and related changes to relaxation of income tests for eligibilities as discussed in the recent HESP paper *on Improving retention, completion and success in higher education* will be very useful for students transitioning beyond school. Youth Allowance payments generally do not start until a student has been independent for eighteen months, with many students from these communities deferring enrolment for a year to work. Changes to Centrelink benefits should be made earlier to provide for rural, regional and remote students relocating for study.

Universities can and do play a key role in the success of students who aspire to university. Many of the most successful initiatives will require significant funding that is currently beyond most university outreach programs. For example, as noted previously, providing funding for students to attend campus outreach programs and develop connection and affinity with universities plays a significant role in successful transition to higher education.

While this paper focuses on the important concept of re-thinking and reframing education, it is also important to consider and address some of the persistent problems that continue to create barriers to success for young people from rural, regional and remote communities. While some of the creative initiatives can be done by using existing resources more effectively, many of them will require funding for support.

As all of the categories for this review are closely integrated and dependent on each other for success, they should be addressed holistically as equally important. The success of students in the regions are linked to recruiting and retaining excellent teachers, leadership, community involvement and the others as discussed in this paper.