BY STAFF AND FOR STAFF: BUILDING, SUSTAINING AND EMPOWERING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR ALL UNIVERSITY STAFF.

Suzanne Boniface[a] , Rhian Salmon[a], Sue Cherrington[b], Marcus Harvey[c], Anne Macaskill[d], Stephen Marshall[e], Diane Ormsby[f], Sydney Shep[g], Beth Smith[j], Rohini Biradovolu[c], Stuart Brock[h], Michael Dudding[i], Jonathan Flutey[j], Kevin Gould[f], Tony Hooper[k], Jan Stewart[m], Jo Walton[n], Richard Norman[o]

Presenting author: Suzanne Boniface (suzanne.boniface@vuw.ac.nz)
[a]School of Chemical and Physical Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[b]School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[c]Library, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[d]School of Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[e]Centre for Academic Development, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[f]School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[g]Waiteata Press, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[h]School of History, Philosophy, Political Science & International Relations, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[i]School of Architecture, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[j]Information Technology Services, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[k]School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[m]Student Learning, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[n]Graduate School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand
[o]School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington 6014, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

VicTeach was established in 2013 as a part of a Learning and Teaching Development initiative. It promotes cross-disciplinary dialogue between Victoria staff interested in pedagogy, sharing best practice, implementing new teaching approaches, and participating in and disseminating research on teaching and learning. It has become a particularly helpful network for academics interested in developing and informing their own teaching practice, but for whom education is not their main disciplinary focus; and for general staff supporting academics in their teaching and student support.

Regular bi-monthly meetings have addressed issues such as:
- new technologies and pedagogies,
- supporting Maori and Pasifika students,
- large classes,
- internships and placements,
- social media,
- flipped teaching,
- active learning and
- transition from high school.

Meetings are held around the distributed VUW campus, streamed live, and archived for future-viewing. The community itself also continually tests, promotes, and profiles new technologies that all Victoria staff can use in teaching.

Every seminar in the VicTeach programme attempts to include:
- Best practice examples from a real teaching scenario
- Pedagogical grounding / research related to the topic, technology, or teaching concept
- Academic staff championing the topic/ technology / teaching concept
- Support staff with expertise in the area, or able to support development of this technology/ concept
- Time for discussion

Over 200 academic and general staff members from across the university voluntarily subscribe to the VicTeach listserv and approximately 20-45 attend each event. The group is led by a volunteer steering committee consisting of academics from all Faculties, teaching award winners, and representatives from the Centre for Academic Development, Student Learning, the Library, and IT Support. This structure has been designed to ensure the organisation is sustainable and can continually respond to staff needs in learning and teaching. Future plans include the development and support of research hubs which will foster cross–disciplinary initiatives into particular aspects of teaching and learning.

VicTeach appears to address an unfilled professional development need for Victoria University staff. In a survey conducted at the end of the first year the community reported that they had gained value from VicTeach, and most appreciated that it is pan-University, pan-staff, self-selecting, occurring at a regular time, grass-roots, and participant-led. As such it appears to be distinctive and unique in the tertiary sector.

REFERENCES

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