

BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING CULTURE FOR SCIENCE ACADEMICS

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of the Bradley voucher system has resulted in many universities focussing on specific strategies to enhance student engagement and retention. This is particularly the case with undergraduate science programs where interest is already lower than other disciplines (Norton, 2012). In one strategy, our SaMnet team has been working to facilitate an active culture with all teaching staff (both continuing and sessional) involved in the learning journey of second year science students. In the hard, pure world of science academia (Becher & Trowler, 2001) the pressures to produce high levels of quality scientific research actively compete with academic priorities towards issues around teaching and learning and student experience. Identifying and overcoming potential barriers to success (Buckley & Du Toit, 2010) and ensuring key elements of community of practice (CoP) development are addressed (Kimble, Hildreth, & Bourdon, 2008), are critical to the success of this strategy.

Our SaMnet team has been guided by the knowledge and resources of both the SaMnet team leaders and our own dynamic group capabilities. We have been strategically identifying and developing information to support the implementation of a Second Year Student Experience CoP within a research-focussed science school. These include the "What's In It For Me?" matrix to help facilitate this process.

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