

ATN INPROFILE

BUILDING
PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING
SOLUTIONS



AUSTRALIAN
TECHNOLOGY
NETWORK
OF UNIVERSITIES

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University of South Australia

Curtin University of Technology

RMIT University

University of Technology, Sydney

Queensland University of Technology

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From the Director

Welcome to the first edition of the Australian Technology Network's newsletter. **ATN INProfile** is designed to keep you up to date on the latest developments across the Network.

The ATN is a powerful coalition which is responsible for teaching more than 170,000 students - or almost 20 per cent of the Australian university system including over 37,000 postgraduates and 43,000 international students.

Increasingly Government policy is stressing the importance of collaboration for economies of scale and to build concentrations in teaching and research. The ATN, as an established, successful and dynamic collaboration is well placed to benefit from these directions with its emphasis on building partnerships with industry, business and the community, and focusing on solution based research.

The national debate is currently centered on the nexus between teaching and research. ATN universities have invested strategically to build up concentration in areas where we have strength and see opportunity. In close liaison with our industry partners, ATN universities are developing research strategies that contribute to Australia's highly-skilled professional workforce through

teaching and curriculum development.

We have established research programs and partnerships that benefit from, and contribute to, our close industry and government connections, deriving a combined total of 65.7% (2002) of our research income from industry-related and non-NCGP public sector sources. As a national network, the ATN universities have:

- established ATN collaborations and partnerships in research and research training that span 5 states and capital cities;
- partnered, in our home states, with other universities and state governments to build research, share infrastructure and address state priorities; and
- been active participants and leaders in developing research partnerships that compete successfully in major national funding programs, including ARC Centres of Excellence and Research Networks, and Co-operative Research Centres.

In contrast to many 'research intensive' universities and the CSIRO, building effective partnerships with industry and other research institutions has always been in our best interest.



Ms Vicki Thomson
Director
Australian Technology
Network

Thus, the ATN has been and will continue to build national capacity in collaboration. We will also remain a strong advocate for diversity within our higher education system and have made vigorous representations to Government on behalf of our member institutions in that context.

Yours sincerely,

Response to reform

A quick flick through the DEST web site reveals a myriad of reviews and reform processes currently underway. In addition there are several inquiries emanating from Federal Parliament including inquiries into teacher education, student income support and most recently into the abolition of compulsory upfront union fees. In 2005, the ATN has made submissions on behalf of its members to the following inquiries:

- Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training Inquiry into Teacher Education
- Building University Diversity: Future approval and accreditation processes for Australian higher education
- Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia

- A National Quality Strategy for Australian Transnational Education and Training

Copies of these submissions can be accessed via the ATN website: <http://www.atn.edu.au/newsroom/submission.htm>

As outlined in each of our submissions, we believe it is critical to consider the environment within which they are being discussed. The ATN has stressed that it would be meaningless to consider these inquiries in isolation to others currently being pursued by Government.

It would appear that the reforms being explored by Government through its various reviews reflect its desire to encourage a system of HE

provision which is

- Responsive to external requirements (driven by demand rather than supply)
- Characterised by a greater mix of public-private higher education provision

It is the ATN view that teaching and research are intrinsically linked, with the latter ensuring the continuing high quality of the former. The ATN believes that, particularly when it comes to Australia's international reputation and ability to attract high-quality staff, it is important that 'universities' continue to maintain a balance between the two. This is not to say that there is not scope to encompass teaching-only higher education institutions.

“it is meaningless to consider these inquiries in isolation to others being pursued by government”



The Centre will employ a great deal of community testing and engagement to develop effective health optimising strategies

Metabolic Centre a research first

The ATN has a new weapon in the battle of the bulge, the ATN Centre for Metabolic Fitness. The new Centre, to be officially launched in July by ATN Chair and University of South Australia Vice Chancellor, Professor Denise Bradley, AO, is a national consortium aimed at developing a sustainable solution to the main health and socioeconomic burden facing Australians – the so-called “Metabolic Syndrome” and its primary driver, the looming epidemic of obesity.

With a total budget of more than \$6 million for its first five years, the ATN Centre is being supported enthusiastically by the food industry, the CSIRO and other public health agencies.

This project epitomises the strength of the Australian Technology Network and is a clear demonstration of its capacity to engage in what is an international, as well as a national priority. In undertaking this research project, the ATN is demonstrating the value that it can bring to national innovation by working to bring many disciplines together from outside the more traditional medical research disciplines which tend to focus more on reactive than preventive health care.

Bypassing many of the normal barriers to research collaboration, the Centre has been brought together by the good will and genuine commitment amongst its members to pursue a worthwhile concept.

Initiatives like this are an important step in fostering collaboration amongst academics who have previously been working as individuals in a highly competitive environment, but are now prepared to commit to a new atmosphere of openness and collaboration.

In line with the key ‘partnership’ tenet of the ATN the new Centre will also work strongly with industry - towards better understandings of the potential for bio-active nutrients to elevate mood and enhance cognitive function.

“the Centre has been brought together by the good will and genuine commitment amongst its members to pursue a worthwhile concept”

ATN working groups

In addition to the core membership, the ATN has a network of 13 established working groups which work collaboratively across every aspect of university administration, teaching and research to consolidate the ATN's position as a leader in building partnerships and finding solutions.

Full details of these groups and their activities can be accessed via our website: <http://www.atn.edu.au/wgroups/index.htm>

Working group in profile - Research & Innovation

ATN universities are leaders in opening up new research fields and disciplines such as in the creative industries, and in bringing together diverse areas of academic research to work on practical problems. The ATN Research and Innovation Working Groups ensure that the ATN not only takes advantage of the national innovation agenda but assumes a leadership role in driving it.

Its core objectives are:

- To pursue a joint approach to developing research and development in newly emerging discipline areas;
- To investigate whether complementary research strengths can be identified

with a view to pursuing collaborative research grants (government and industry);

- To pursue joint approaches in improving the quality of research training and maximising the career outcomes of ATN research graduates.
- To focus research into areas that have measurably useful applications in industry and business.
- To develop education programs that increases both the learning capability and employability of graduates.

The ATN is particularly active in the research area, and therefore maintains two working groups, ATN P/DVCs Research and ATN Research Directors. (Pictured)



From left to right: Ms Lorraine Bridger (RMIT), Dr Mark Hochman (UniSA), Mr Michael McArdle (QUT), Mr Stephan Wellink (UTS) and Mr Tony Tate (Curtin)

Online learning with the ATN

In one of the largest studies of its kind in the world, a team of evaluators from the ATN universities has found that although staff are still largely using e-Learning to supplement existing face-to-face classes, students have been the winners in the move to e-Learning. Students derive great benefits from the increased access to learning afforded by e-Learning technology, enabling them to juggle their studies with their busy work and home lives.

The evaluation study was carried out in each of the five ATN universities during September and October, 2004. More than 20,000 students and 800 staff completed a

questionnaire designed to provide a broad description of the use of e-Learning across the ATN, and to enhance understanding of the consequences of the move to e-Learning for both staff and students.

Although there were large differences between individual universities, the combined results indicated that almost 70% of the use of e-Learning is for the purpose of supplementing face-to-face classes with 10% of use being to provide a partial alternative to face-to-face. Only 6% of use was to support fully online courses.

The ways in which e-Learning

is used also differs significantly between individual universities, but overall, approximately half of its use is to provide information only to students, with the other fifty percent being for information provision as well as facilitating communication between students, and between staff and students.

Students participating in the survey also took up the opportunity to suggest ways in which their e-Learning experience can be improved, and these have been analysed separately in each of the 5 universities.

“Students derive great benefits from the increased access to learning afforded by e-Learning technology, enabling them to juggle their studies with their busy work and home lives”

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BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING SOLUTIONS

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Building Partnerships: Finding Solutions

Clare Burton scholarship for gender equity

The ATN Women's Executive Development Program is offering a \$10,000 postgraduate scholarship to focus on gender equity.

The Clare Burton Scholarship honours and continues the path-breaking work of Dr. Clare Burton, a leading researcher, public sector administrator, academic, consultant and writer on employment equity, who passed away suddenly in August 1998. It is awarded bi-annually and provides funds to support post-graduate research into gender equity.

A scholarship of \$10,000 is available to a student enrolled, or intending to enrol, in an ATN university, in either a post-graduate coursework or research degree where the major piece of work is focused on gender equity. The field of gender equity encompasses women and equality in all spheres of endeavour such

as employment, education, health, communications and so on.

For more information, please visit

<http://www.atn.edu.au/wgroup/s/wex.htm>



From left to right: Mary Kelly (QUT), deputy chair of scholarship committee, Colleen Chesterman (Director ATN WEXDEV), Robyn Kemmis (Chair of WEXDEV Management Committee), Sarah Wendt, recipient of inaugural Clare Burton Scholarship (2002), Eleanor Ramsay (UNISA), immediate past chair of scholarship committee and Rachael Krinks, Clare Burton's daughter and member of scholarship committee.

The Australian Technology Network is an influential alliance of five prominent Australian universities of technology located in each mainland State.

They share a history of collaboration, a commitment to partnerships with industry and the community, a focus on educating graduates who are innovative, entrepreneurial and highly employable, a dedication to the advancement of knowledge and a desire to make a difference to the well being of the nation through education, research and innovation.

ATN universities teach around 180,000 students, or almost 20 % of Australia's student population. With 6 in 10 students from Asia choosing to study at an ATN university, we are also the largest provider of international education, both with our onshore and offshore students

The ATN's aim is to help secure Australia's reputation as the clever country, and contribute to its social and economic wealth, while championing the principles of access and equity that have ensured its members are the universities of first choice for more students.

For more information about the ATN, or organisation and our activities, please visit our web site at <http://www.atn.edu.au>