Festival of Learning Showcase Session

Facilitator: Professor Dawn Bennett, John Curtin Distinguished Professor, Research and creative Production, Faculty of Humanities and Curtin Academy Fellow (Curtin) Associate Professor Lynne Roberts, School of Psychology and Speech Pathology and Curtin Academy Fellow and Chris Creagh (Murdoch)

Strategic theme: Rich, interactive learning experience

Subject Title: Could the question ‘What am I doing here?’ influence engagement and grades?

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Brief Description: Many science programs have poor graduate full time employment rates and high levels of continued post-graduate study. This is indicative of disciplines for which few full time positions exist at graduate level. This presentation shares a two-semester study conducted with first year undergraduates students at an Australian university. The research involved 93 students who were enrolled in one of two semester-long, foundational science units. The unit had a history of low pass rates and high attrition, and the study asked whether engaging students in activities that focused on the value and relevance of their learning might counter these challenges. Students attended one of two workshops designed to foster their ability to imagine and plan for their lives and careers. They completed a number of activities and also pre- and post-unit measures relating to professional identity and sense of community. At the end of the unit, 82% of students agreed or strongly agreed that thinking about their future had helped them to persevere with their studies and 70% reported moving closer to their desired professional self. Despite this, there was little difference in pre- and post-test measures of professional identity or sense of community. The presenters unpack these possibly conflicting results and discuss what else might be done without committing additional curricular time.

Time/Day: Monday 16 March 2015, 12:30 – 1:00pm

Duration: 30 min

No. of Sessions: One

Venue: Building 300:Room 215

Special Requirements: No special requirements needed