



OVERVIEW

On 23rd November, attendees heard about the initiatives and activities that had been undertaken and led as part of the Strengthening our Culture Program which ends as planned in December. Guests also heard that the work on culture will continue as a key strategic focus for Curtin as part of the new Strategic Plan for 2017-20. All speakers acknowledged the excellent work that has been delivered under the Living our Values Initiative and Strengthening our Culture Program and noted that the work will continue into the future as part of Curtin's People and Culture strategy.

STRENGTHENING OUR CULTURE

As Program Sponsor, the Vice Chancellor thanked everyone who had been involved with the Strengthening our Culture program.



Professor Deborah Terry also spoke about the importance of culture to an organisation and reflected on Curtin's journey in creating a 'remarkable culture' and the need to continue building this as we move into the next strategic plan phase and beyond.

The Vice-Chancellor shared her views on various aspects of Curtin’s culture including the establishment of the Law School and the use of AO Neville’s office as a space for the Reconciliation Office; the conversion of Carrolup to a healing place and the important agreement reached for work integrated learning on this site. In reflecting on the importance of culture in all aspects, the Vice Chancellor noted her agreement with John Curtin’s views shared in the West Australian in 1932: *“the great university should find its hope in the future; it should look ever forward; for it the past should be but a preparation for the greater days to be”*.



LEADERSHIP – INSPIRING SUCCESS



John Cordery, Curtin’s Provost and Chair of the Leadership Working Group reflected that he had found the work and initiatives led by this group affirming and noted that Curtin’s culture is reflected in its people as well as its environment.

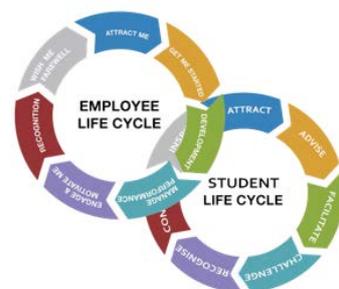
The leadership working group had delivered several important initiatives to support Curtin in continuing to grow its leaders and it was highlighted that all staff are considered leaders. The key initiatives highlighted were:

- New leadership narrative designed to clarify our expectations of our leaders;
- Clarifying Head of School roles;
- 360 feedback program for our managers;
- New values-based leadership development programs;
- New Starter mentoring program to help our new members settle into their roles and share leadership practices and understanding about our culture;
- Building our Change Capability through a community of practice to help strengthen our understanding of change and through developing our capability to manage change as individuals and as leaders.

The Provost also noted how impressed he had been by the Culture Representatives when he met with them and their passion for supporting the growth of Curtin’s culture across the University.

SYSTEMS CHANGE: NIMBLE PROCESSES & SYSTEMS

Michael Berndt, Pro Vice Chancellor Health Sciences and Chair of the Systems Change Working Group, thanked specific members who had been involved with the group during its lifetime, including Gary Carpenter and Casey Ball, acknowledging the passion and commitment of all Working Group members. The group had focused on the life cycles of employees and students, with the following achievements:



- Working with HR to ensure Curtin’s staff recruitment practices result in effective selection of candidate’s for cultural fit. An external review of the 2015 initiatives resulted in 11 recommendations which are being progressed by HR.

- Working with HR to improve the staff exit process ensures staff feel respected and their contribution to Curtin is acknowledged and updating the Staff Exit Checklist and reviewing the Staff Exit Survey questions.
- The Working Group identified that the *Values and Signature Behaviours*, established in 2013, incorporated and expanded on many of the elements covered in Curtin's *Guiding Ethical Principles*, adopted in 1993. This project resulted in Council formally rescinding the Guiding Ethical Principles in October with changes to policies, websites and guidelines underway to reflect this change.
- In 2015, a number of frameworks and policies were updated to ensure alignment with our values including strategic procurement, compliance/integrity frameworks, the code of conduct for students, and governance documents.



Michael noted the importance of the Suggestion Box in contributing to the development of a continuous improvement culture. This will continue to be developed and managed by the Office of Strategy and Planning who are taking on this initiative in 2017.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT: EXCELLENT CURTIN EXPERIENCE

Ian Jackson, Director People & Culture and Chair of the Staff Engagement Working Group, thanked all members and specifically acknowledged the contributions of Abdullah Sheikhi, a sessional academic who volunteered his time in supporting the group and its initiatives. Ian also thanked the Culture Representatives and Karen Metcalf for their support and contributions.

Initiatives led by this Working Group included:



- Curtin Weekly replacing the 4pm emails;
- The Curtin Pocket Guide providing highlights and statistics for the University;
- Staff engagement activities to develop Curtin's new Strategic Plan;
- Working with the Culture Reps and gaining their insight and advice in problem solving;
- VC Awards for Professional Staff – this has now seen its second annual event;
- Developing a Participation Continuum to create a shared language in engaging with our staff;
- Investigating and reviewing the engagement of our casual academics who represent 2,379 of our staff and support approximately 70% of our student cohort. It was noted that some great initiatives were being implemented in Science & Engineering and that it was hoped this could be extended to other Faculties.



GENDER EQUITY: PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY



Amanda Willis, Director Corporate Values and Equity, provided the update on behalf of the Gender Equity Working Group. Amanda opened by reflecting on the role of this group originating with the SAGE Athena Swan Project which commenced in 2015 and was pleased to see it had now broadened into wider initiatives across Curtin.

It was noted that Curtin had a strong foundation of delivering initiatives in line with its values, including the Ally Program and Reconciliation Action Plan.

Achievements for the Gender Equity Working Group during 2016 included:

- Launch of SAGE Athena SWAN Project;
- Trajectory Program focusing on career development for female academics at Levels C and D;
- Establishing the Faculty Self-Assessment Teams which would be an important contributor to the application for the Bronze award.

CULTURE REPRESENTATIVES: CULTURE ADVOCATES

Karen Metcalf, Organisational Development Consultant and Chair of the Culture Reps, thanked the Culture Reps for their work and for sharing their views and ideas as to how Curtin's culture could be strengthened. Karen also noted how important it had been for the Culture Reps to hear directly from the Working Group Chairs on activities such as the Suggestion Box, Leadership at Curtin and engaging with them to develop solutions to providing better support for staff who were approaching them with questions. Karen also thanked Marie Clarke and Amy Bowater for their development of the short video outlining the Culture Reps own reflections of 2016.



2017: PEOPLE AND CULTURE PLAN

John Cordery, Provost and Sponsor of Curtin's People and Culture Plan, reflected on the significant signs of cultural growth across Curtin, including the White Ribbon initiative and the high application and success rates for promotions of female academics.

The following items are key areas for focus and development as part of the 2017-20 plan for Curtin's People and Culture:

- Empower staff to lead by values;
- Global, collaborative and connected workforce;
- Innovate, lead and strive for excellence;
- Strengthen values based leadership;
- Improving gender and Indigenous equity.

To progress these goals, expressions of interest will be opened in January. Those who are keen to support the work and activities in these areas were encouraged to apply. Individuals who had been involved in Strengthening our Culture may wish to continue providing their support and nominations and suggestions from all staff would be welcomed as Curtin continues to focus on embedding its focus on its people and its culture.

CONCLUSION

The event was viewed as uplifting and provided an excellent opportunity for everyone to hear about the progress that has been made and future plans for continuing to build on and strengthen Curtin's culture.

For the full set of slides and the Culture Reps video, please visit the Strengthening our Culture blog at: <http://blogs.curtin.edu.au/strengthening-our-culture/>

