



OECD Conference: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged – Higher Education and Regions 19-21 September 2007, Valencia, Spain

# Balancing Competitive Agendas: The dilemma of the modern university. The USQ Experience



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- a non-elite, medium-sized regional university
- campuses in Toowoomba, Fraser Coast and Springfield; QCWT, Sydney, RLO
- a recognised leader in resource-based education – flexible blended learning
- student constituency dominated by groups traditional under-represented in h.e.



# Recognition of USQ's Resource-Based Education



2005 Distance Education Training Council (DETC), USA accreditation



2004 Commonwealth of Learning Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement in Distance Education



Joint Winner 2000 – 2001 Australia's Good Universities Guides' University of the Year Award for Developing the e-University



1999 ICDE Institutional Prize of Excellence for Dual Mode Operations



## External Drivers of Higher Education & their Impact

Economic, social, political, technological and business changes have culminated in:

- a more deregulated, competitive and discerning higher education market;
- greater exposure of universities to public scrutiny via indicators not of their choosing
- changed student behaviours; and
- changed requirements for learning & teaching
- obliged to respond to government reforms



For regional universities, in particular, these have resulted in a series of challenges – manifested as:

- tighter budgets and greater demands on resources;
- greater competition for students and declining enrolment density - meeting enrolment targets is increasingly difficult;
- increased emphasis on business best practice; becoming “Enterprise Universities”; and
- growing expectation for increased impact and relevance as assessed by government



In the current climate:

*“Business as usual is not an option”*

USQ is obliged to respond by:

- Forging a unique identity – a USQ ‘brand’.
- Striving for consistent excellence in L&T and the SLJ – optimising the whole student experience and achieving graduate qualities.
- Improving student demand, retention, progression and completion; and quality.
- Optimising operations in terms of efficiency, focus, quality and impact.
- Building capacity.



## Change is required to:

- Institutional culture
- Institutional policies
- Institutional practices
- Institutional standards
- Institutional norms and attitudes



## Learning & Teaching

- Improve ranking in Learning & Teaching Performance Fund
- Increase student recruitment and retention
- Concentrate on optimising the Student Learning Experience - service standards
- Focus on aspects of flexibility that matter
- Ensure cost-effective and efficient operations to free up resources
- Continue to build capacity



## Indicators of Success

### Will include:

- positive financial contributions from all academic programs,
- streamlined processes and services,
- increased market share,
- improved student entry standards,
- improved conversion of student applications,
- improved student performance and retention,
- the consistent meeting of load targets,
- improved student satisfaction, and
- improved institutional performance in national rankings.



## Research & Research Training

Positioning for success in the RQF through a new Research Centres Strategy

- small number of internationally competitive multidisciplinary centres of research excellence around areas of strength
- performance-based funding
- academic workload formulae that recognise realities
- strategic partnerships and linkages



## Balancing Entrepreneurism with Regional Responsibility

- Regional engagement as one of eight institutional goal areas
- Business reforms based on excellence and consistent with Mission
- Keeping true to traditional student constituency
- Exploiting success for the benefit of the regions eg. international education
- A focus on regionally relevant research



## Conclusion

- **Embrace and manage change**
  - **Employ multiple strategies across entire organisation**
  - **Ground in excellence**
  - **Make the tough decisions**
  - **Base on solid data and measure impact**
  - **Become an enterprise university but remain true to the institutional Mission – don't jettison the things that are important**
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