

## Joining the Dots and Demonstrating Public Value: Engaged Students (and Impact) Toward 2020

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### Proposal for a demonstration project to the Engagement Executive of The University of Melbourne

**Purpose:** To create a series of evidence-based narratives across Melbourne programs and portfolios which link investments in student engagement, to engagement, and engagement to impact. Data will be managed through a structured public knowledge resource which, through this pilot demonstration project, begins to systematically document the structures, functions and activity at The University of Melbourne.

#### **Rationale:**

- The most significant challenge for Engagement at Melbourne is to join the dots and demonstrate public value.
- This is about things we need to know, and how they are connected to one another.
- Things (e.g. people, events, investments, opportunities, organisations, developments, outputs) can be called 'entities'. The work is creating an enduring record of the entities themselves, and then to make visible the relationships between these entities.
- Such a move might be understood as making the difference between anecdotes and evidence.
- The University has identified a series of strategic goals, and is seeking effective ways to measure engagement and impact.
- A series of public statements have been made about creating Global Citizens (Graduate Attributes), Engaged Students (Engagement at Melbourne), students being the driver of sustainability outcomes (Sustainability Plan), key to global impact (Global Strategy) and drivers of impact in communities (Atlantic Fellows).
- Narratives can highlight impact and nuance in a way that framework-based statistics will rarely capture. However, the generation of narratives needs to be well organized, with a clear methodology. Rigor is needed to form a visible and scale-able evidence base.
- A shared evidence-base could be developed across any or all of the platforms identified above.
- Reporting and narratives for publics could be shaped to each portfolio.
- A narrative evidence-based program of activity started in 2018 would begin to demonstrate impact by 2020. The evidence base would become more powerful and compelling over time.
- Responding to this 'bold and ambitious agenda', the V.C. has requested that Engagement take the lead in investigating what is possible.

### **Outputs and Outcomes:**

- A series of tailored narratives demonstrating student engagement and impact, which could be for multiple purposes (e.g. reporting, external relations and for use by scholars and partners in their communities of practice).
- A key outcome for Chancellery is a demonstration project which would investigate the capability and reach of a structured public knowledge resource for Engagement at Melbourne.
- A further key outcome for Chancellery will be that narratives demonstrating public value would be built from a sustained evidence base – ensuring rigor – and the form of these could be replicated, updated, and /or tailored to suit purpose.

### **Methodology, Process and Technology**

- The University has in-house expertise in narrative reporting, and a proven process for thematically scaling narrative reporting upwards to demonstrate program impact. This is captured in our 2013 research monograph ‘Educating for Global Citizenship’, (Wierenga and Guevara 2013) which was a result of a large Melbourne-led ARC Linkage project. Drawing on an [open source] process developed by Dart and Davies (2003) students and other key stakeholders can very simply be guided to offer summations of the ‘Most Significant Change’. Analysis follows, across the key domains set by the lead organisation. International organisations including UNESCO have cited this research in their own quest to find effective demonstrate student engagement and Impact in global education processes.
- The University of Melbourne, through the eScholarship Research Centre [ESRC] and particularly through the work of Gavan McCarthy (see Appendix 1<sup>i</sup>), is acknowledged as a world-leader in historic knowledge curation and public expression, with a depth of expertise that has accumulated since 1985; The ESRC has a data curation tool, the Online Heritage Resource Manager [OHRM], which is already equipped to serve as the enduring evidence base required for rigor to underpin this type of work.

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<sup>i</sup> ‘The Scholarly, Teaching, Research and Engagement History of The University of Melbourne’, by Gavan McCarthy.