Progress Report Review of Indigenous Transition programs (pathway, support) as part of Transitions Project at CSU- 30 April, 2010

Terms of Reference
1. The performance of current generic and course specific pathway programs at CSU for Australian Indigenous students;
2. The performance of current transition arrangements for Indigenous students, especially in their first year of enrolment, and opportunities to improve these;
3. Alternative transition arrangements;
4. The effectiveness of TAFE articulation pathways for Indigenous students and opportunities to improve these;
5. Developing more effective pathway programs for Indigenous students;
6. Links with high schools to support Indigenous pathways and transition;
7. Means to enhance pathways and transition for Indigenous students from rural and isolated communities (including the use of mobile study centre); and
8. Need for an Indigenous foundation or enabling certificate or diploma at CSU.

Professor Chambers has indicated that, in responding to the Terms of Reference, the Review will take into account:

- CSU’s goal to increase the enrolment numbers of Indigenous students at CSU.
- Data on CSU Indigenous students and their access, participation, retention and progress rates;
- Income support for Indigenous higher education students; and
- Effective learning and teaching models for CSU Indigenous higher education students, particularly those in transition programs.

Purpose of Review
To gather information that is relevant to CSU’s commitment to designing, developing and delivering effective and highly-valued Indigenous Transition programs (pathway, support) to ensure the retention and success of Indigenous students at CSU.

Data will be gathered from sources, including:

- relevant literature and statistical data from CSU’s Planning and Audit Division, Finance Division, Faculties and ISS and external sources such as DEEWR Higher Education collections;
- staff who deliver the programs as a vital component of CSU’s higher education service delivery for Indigenous Australians;
- Indigenous students who access the programs as a means of building their capacity to effectively participate in higher education programs that will enable them to take control of their lives and/or access secure, well-paid employment opportunities;
- Indigenous individuals/communities within the CSU catchment who have an interest in increasing the numbers of Indigenous peoples effectively engaging in Higher Education courses; and
- Public and private sector employers who seek to employ qualified Indigenous Australians.

Review needs to be inclusive of:

- all campuses – Wagga Wagga, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Albury, Distance Education students;
- interest groups such as Land Councils, Elders Groups, youth groups, throughout CSU catchment area; and
- major stakeholders, including:
  - past & present students;
  - CIS, ISS & Indigenous lecturers;
members of the Indigenous communities serviced by CSU especially local AECGs;
staff of identified Indigenous units in DET – schooling and TAFE programs;
representatives of federal (DEEWR, FaHCSIA, DIISR and DEHA); state (DET, Department of Health, Department of Environment, etc.) and local government agencies; and other representatives of public & private sector employer groups;
CSU Heads of Schools, in particular those who have an interest in increasing Indigenous enrolment and participation in degree programs that traditionally reflect low Indigenous retention and completion, such as dentistry, environmental health, etc.

This focus on comprehensive data collection will ensure informants are able to share their knowledge, understanding and experience of the current programs and to provide suggestions for change that would have the potential to:

- create culturally safe learning environments for Indigenous students coming from a diversity of previous educational backgrounds and seeking a transition into studying in a university;
- provide Indigenous students with the knowledge, skills and understandings they need to effectively engage in higher education courses; and
- improve transition program delivery and outcomes, i.e. increasing the number of Indigenous students who enrol in university courses and successfully achieve completion within allocated time for the particular course.

Time is a factor but we are on schedule. Clare & I are finalising questionnaires prior to circulating whole document for feedback from Steering Coomittee before organizing data collection activities. Hope we are going to be able to do electronic surveys – best way to gather data quickly.

To date, have had a few meetings with Ray Eldridge – 1 x face-to-face and rest telephone conversations. Pettina Love & John O’Neill (with Laurie Crawford on phone) also attended our meeting in Wagga Wagga where we worked way through draft proposal and Ray provided an overview of ISS comments on the Terms of Reference and indicated he would like John O’Neill to assist with this review. To this end, John indicated that he would provide the statistics concerning:

- CSU Indigenous enrolment; and
- Actual numbers and ratios for Indigenous retention and success across all discipline areas of CSU.

Following discussion at that meeting, have set up Indigenous Steering Committee comprising:

1. Wendy Nolan, Acting Director, Centre for Indigenous Studies
2. Ray Eldridge, Manager, Indigenous Student Services, Health Promotions & Counselling Services
3. Mel Smith, Lecturer in Faculty of Education – teaches DE subject & DE student.
4. I am seeking an additional lecturer, preferably in another discipline – science?

There was strong support for using outcomes-based approach that focuses on asking informants to identify what is working and then to use their knowledge/experience of those elements to make informed suggestions about possible change and/or strategies that have the capacity to increase successful outcomes. Key stakeholders will be interviewed using a questionnaire that focuses on identifying:

- the current successful elements and outcomes of the programs;
- change that is necessary to address specific issues; and
- alternative strategies/options for increasing successful outcomes of programs.