



The Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program

Enhancing the Student Experience



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Executive summary

For over 30 years from 1966 to 1999, **Lawrie McCredie CBE served the Faculty of Law at Monash University** as a teacher, mentor, administrator, friend and colleague to literally hundreds of staff and thousands of law students. Lawrie's reputation as a teacher and a scholar in the field of wills and probate was exceeded only by his renown as the Faculty's Sub Dean, a position he held for many years. In this capacity he was widely respected and admired and is remembered by all for his relationships with, and tireless support of, students of the Law School. Since retiring, Lawrie was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in recognition of his outstanding contribution and services to legal and tertiary education.

To honour and continue his work, **the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program offers a range of much needed and important programs**, designed to assist Monash Law students by enhancing their student experience, building community and helping to develop leadership, communication and other highly valued skills. The chief elements of the program include leadership development, the acknowledgement of excellence, community engagement and service, peer-to-peer and alumni mentoring, pastoral care, counselling, and careers advice. Each element of the program supports *Monash Directions 2025* and improves the employability of our graduates by helping to develop their potential.

The Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program

Monash's highest-level planning document, *Monash Directions 2025 (MD 2025)*, sets out the main strategic directions and characteristics of the University for the next 20 years and the Monash statement of purpose:

*Monash University seeks to improve the human condition by advancing knowledge and fostering creativity. It does so through research and education and a commitment to social justice, human rights and a sustainable environment.*¹

MD 2025 also outlines a distinctively Monash student experience and promises students opportunities that are 'unparalleled in higher education institutions'.² Improving the student experience was identified as a priority for 2006 at Monash University's Planning Conference in 2005.³

Over the past several decades, dramatic changes have occurred in both the higher education system and to the students who enter it. Because of its history and its current situation Monash is uniquely placed to respond to those changes and to redefine the student experience.⁴

Monash wishes to set itself apart by providing 'a transformative educational experience that will encourage our students to contribute to the world'.⁵ 'Objective 1' of the *Monash Academic Plan 2006-2010* is to help our graduates become ethical, engaged and employable, capable of addressing the challenges of the future in a global context.⁶ A goal of *Excellence and Diversity 2004-2008* is to 'Design and deliver student leadership programs to assist students to achieve their full potential'.⁷

The Monash Passport model, launched in October 2008, strives to 'provide environments that promote student excellence' and to 'provide every Monash student with the opportunity to make a tangible contribution to improving the world'.⁸ It aims to offer students 'a broad menu of opportunities, combining degree programs with international exchanges, leadership programs, work training programs and volunteer and research opportunities as a grounding for outstanding careers'.⁹

The student experience today

Since the mid-80s, the changing demographics and characteristics of tertiary students and university life make the task of delivering value to the contemporary student more difficult.¹⁰ The 'massification' of higher education, along with the more market-driven nature of the sector, has resulted in fundamental changes to Australia's universities and students.¹¹

'Student disengagement' and increasing involvement in part-time work have become the short-hand for describing how many of these changes are manifest in patterns of student behaviour.¹² It seems to be the case that Generation Y students are less prepared to accept the binary oppositions of work or study or indeed one degree or another, choosing instead to work and study and combine degrees in increasing numbers.¹³ These trends are continuing with the introduction of voluntary student unionism diminishing student involvement in university life.

1 Monash University, *Monash Directions 2025*, 2005. www.monash.edu.au/about/monash-directions. p 2.

2 Monash University, *Monash Directions 2025*, 2005. www.monash.edu.au/about/monash-directions. p 3.

3 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 3.

4 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 3.

5 Monash University, *Monash Directions 2025 Annotations*, 2005. www.monash.edu.au/about/monash-directions/staff-only/annotations.html. p 3.

6 *Academic Plan 2006 – 2010*, pg 2.

7 *Excellence and Diversity Strategic Framework 2004-2008* p 1.

8 Monash Passport Insert, page 2, in *The Age*, Monday, October 6, 2008.

9 www.monash.edu.au/teaching/passport

10 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 6.

11 For a good account of changes affecting students in the last ten years see, Moodie, G. "Older, in debt and foreign". in *The Australian Higher Education Supplement*. (March 8, 2006). p 28.

12 In Australia, this discourse has been led by Craig McInnis from the University of Melbourne, with Papers such as McInnis, C. Signs of disengagement? The changing undergraduate experience in Australian Universities. Centre for the Study of Higher Education. (2001) <http://eprints.unimelb.edu.au/archive/00000094/>. and McInnis, C. New Realities of the Student Experience: How should universities respond? Centre for the Study of Higher Education. (2003).

13 See Sheahan, P. Generation Y is about more than just Supply & Demand. (2004). www.petersheahan.com.au/content.asp?id=24&t=2. and Rood, D. and Leung, C. "Supersizing their futures", in *The Age*. (March 6, 2006). www.theage.com.au/news/education-news/supersizing-their-futures/2006/03/04/1141191856963.html. for a discussion of these trends.

More of today's students are driven by financial imperatives and so must work to cover education and living expenses whilst studying. Compared to twenty years ago, the proportion of full-time students who are in paid employment during semester has increased from 5 in 10 undergraduates (1984) to more than 7 in every 10 (2000). Those who are in paid employment work longer hours than ever before (1984, average of 5 hours per week; 2000, average of 14.4 hours per week).¹⁴ The 2003 Monash Experience Questionnaire confirmed this trend, with 62.7% of respondents reporting that they were engaged in paid employment. A further 24.5% reported that they had other significant responsibilities or commitments, such as volunteer work or family responsibilities. Other changes in the sector such as reduced contact hours and electronic delivery have also contributed to these trends. Combined, these factors have resulted in students spending less time on campus and displaying less exclusive engagement with their studies.¹⁵ It is clear from this data that contemporary students face many life challenges and impediments to their university experience.

What do we know about what Monash students want? The Monash Experience Questionnaire responses in 2003 and 2005 showed a need among students to feel they belong to their university community. Monash students are looking to university to provide a sense of connectedness with a community where they are recognised as individuals. In order to produce systemic change for students based on their own need to belong, Monash must invest in strengthening the student community.¹⁶

Student engagement, both academically and socially, is a major indicator of a student's success at university. It is necessary to look beyond the traditional measures of student success such as retention and completion rates and employability on the graduate market.¹⁷ The extent to which students feel welcomed by their institution, are at home on a campus they attend regularly, develop meaningful interactions with their peers and perform well in their studies are critical measures of their success. The more time a student spends on campus, the greater their engagement with other students regarding academic work, their development of friendships at the institution, their enjoyment of the social side of higher education, and their sense of belonging to an academic community.¹⁸ For this reason, institutions must integrate engagement into their core teaching and research activities as well as their strategic planning.¹⁹ Engaging the whole institution necessarily means engaging students.

The ongoing contribution of student associations to the student experience through a range of services, projects and initiatives underpins the University's efforts through the Student Experience. These associations play an important role in engaging students and promoting a positive student experience.²⁰ Student-centred initiatives and the provision of pastoral care programs and support services within faculties are also central to the delivery of a valuable experience to Monash students.²¹

Monash intends to equip graduates to 'live, learn, work and contribute globally'.²² This key statement provides a thematic springboard from which to develop projects to support the student experience. It is this vision that underpins the core objectives and activities of the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program.

14 See Long, Michael and Hayden, Martin, *Paying their way: A Survey of Australian Undergraduate University Student Finances, 2000* (2001, AV-CC study), www.avcc.edu.au/documents/publications/policy/statements/final_report_rev_22_oct_01.pdf, p iii.

15 Krause, K. et. al. *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne. (2005). www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/first_year_experience.htm

16 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 8.

17 Yorke, Mantz. "Student engagement: deep, surface, or strategic?". Keynote presented at the 9th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, Griffith University, Queensland, 12-14 July, 2006. p 2.

18 Yorke, Mantz. "Student engagement: deep, surface, or strategic?". p 9.

19 Holland, B. A. *Exploring the challenge of documenting and measuring civic engagement endeavours of colleges and universities: purposes, issues, ideas*. Campus Compact Advanced Institute on classifications for civic engagement, Campus Compact (2001).

20 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 12.

21 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 12.

22 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 5.

Live

*'Within their courses and on their campuses, students will have opportunities to develop not just as students, but also as individuals. They will have opportunities for personal development in areas such as interpersonal skills, communication skills, and team-building. Through participation in clubs and societies, students will develop meaningful connections with their fellow students and feel genuinely connected to a broader community. On graduation, they will demonstrate the benefits of exposure to a holistic, transformative educational experience.'*²³

The Law School Ambassador Program was launched in 2007 to supplement the Vice Chancellor's Ancora Imparo Leadership Program. Community minded law students receive leadership training and a variety of developmental experiences to facilitate personal growth. Community outreach and engagement projects are selected by students under their own initiative, and offer those experiences to the wider law school student community. Their stated goals are to develop relationships between students, students and Faculty, and Faculty and Community. The Peer Mentor Program also facilitates the reaching of these goals.

Learn

*'The University will provide opportunities for students to become engaged learners, both within their academic programs and external to them. In this way, Monash students will break beyond surface learning to develop their intellectual strength. Because of the international, research-led experiences available to them, they will become outward-looking, curious and questioning. Their learning will be challenging and will stretch them to become tomorrow's discoverers.'*²⁴

The Law School Ambassador Program aims to break down the barriers between staff and students, making staff more approachable and fostering a learning-focussed and friendly Faculty. Interactive events and seminars are arranged to engage staff and students and to communicate opportunities and challenges to foster an open and productive learning environment. Ambassadors are considering holding informative and engaging events for the wider student population to interact with staff. Engagement in university life and community facilitates enhanced learning outcomes.

Work

*'Monash will create opportunities for part-time student employment that is related to their field of study. The development of work experience within academic programs such as internships, placements and workplace visits will add value to the student experience. In this way, Monash will produce graduates who are highly sought after in the employment market. With assistance in employment preparation (resume development, interview skills) they will be prepared to make the transition from study to chosen career. Because of the unique nature of their opportunities, Monash graduates will be attractive to global, international and domestic employers.'*²⁵

The Law School Alumni Mentor Scheme matches students to mentors who can offer specific advice, support, experience and wisdom to the student's chosen area of professional life post-university. Many successful alumni contribute their time and energies into making this a valuable transition from academia into practical employment opportunities. Support is also given to students in choosing their course components through Student Services, the Student Experience Office and the extensive networks established by the LSS Careers Office. Central Careers and Employment Services ensure information and support is readily available to students. Investigations into a volunteer/work experience database of opportunities within the Alumnus network are proposed to facilitate exposure, networking and work experience for students among future potential employers.

23 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 14.

24 Ibid.

25 The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 14.

Contribute

*'Monash will inspire students to use their talents for the benefit of the university and wider community. Through student mentor and volunteer programs they will develop as leaders, and contribute directly to the wellbeing of their fellow students. In so doing, they will feel a part of a greater University community to which they very much belong. As students of a leading international University, they will be positioned to become world leaders themselves, either in their home country, or through their global connections or international standing. At whatever level they aspire to contribute, Monash students will seek to improve the human condition.'*²⁶

The Law School Peer Mentor Program offers all incoming students to the Faculty the support and assistance of two Peer Mentors within a group of fellow Mentees to share experiences, advice, information and referrals to the range of support services and facilities offered at Monash. The volunteer Mentors, second year and above law students, have an opportunity to exercise initiative and leadership skills in their role, learn to work as a team and develop their interpersonal skills as they contact their mentees regularly throughout their first year of Law School. Regular events are held to bring these groups together to further enhance relationships and create a sense of community within the Law School. By encouraging civic responsibility during education students are prepared for a responsible, community-focussed life post graduation.

In a global context

*'Through the internationalisation of the curriculum and opportunities for cross-cultural communication and relationship-building, Monash students will be global citizens. The Monash multi-campus network, the mobility and diversity of its staff and student population, and Monash's international research-led agenda will assist students to develop a global focus. They will have the opportunity to travel between campuses and countries but also, to connect with other cultures in their relationships with a truly internationalised population.'*²⁷

The Law School is expanding the Prato program, developing similar programs in Malaysia, and supports a range of global internships to facilitate an international educational experience. An ever growing number of institutions are joining our network of exchange programs allowing our students to study units around the world and in turn encouraging their students to come and study at Monash Law School.

The role of the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program

The initiatives under the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program assist the student in enhancing communication and building community and networks, and are supported by pastoral care through a law-specific Counsellor and through additional Learning Skills services provided by the Law Library. The aim is also to enhance graduate employability attributes through fostering effective communication skills and networks within the Law School, with the School's Alumni and with the wider community.

The Student Experience Office also supports the Honours Convenor in organising the High Academic Achievers' Program, launched in 2008, which aims to reward and inform high achieving students of the possibilities open to them in the areas of Higher Degrees by Research, academia and other non-traditional career pathways. This should also assist the faculty in attracting the most qualified staff and students of the future.

The initiatives conceived and delivered under this program are designed to enhance the Law School's core curricular activities and support the vocational and student experience provided by existing programs and activities such as the Monash Oakleigh Legal Service and Springvale Community Legal Service.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 14.

The Program recognises the work undertaken by the Law Students' Society and the International Law Association particularly in the provision of career information and advice to students, and aims to enhance and support the work undertaken by these groups.

Student engagement, development and support are the key missions of the work of the Law School under the banner of the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program.

The further development of the student experience project will comprise the following:

- obtaining a sound understanding of where we are now with respect to the Monash student experience, across our eight campuses and multitude of student cohorts;
- identifying what needs to be done to reach the vision of 2025;
- progressively building the range and quality of the experiences available to student cohorts, across all campuses; and
- regularly evaluating students' perceptions of those experiences for the purposes of continuous improvement.²⁸



²⁸ The Monash Student Experience: Discussion Paper, p 17, 18.

Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program: 5 Year Plan

Core objectives

1. Provide leadership skills training and opportunities to Monash Law students to enhance graduate employability
2. Promote student engagement and learning by facilitating a sense of community within the Monash Law School
3. Add value to the core curriculum of the Monash Law School by providing a suite of co-curricular support activities and services
4. Encourage and acknowledge academic excellence within the student body
5. Engage alumni in the activities of the Monash Law School
6. Develop a flexible, responsible program which meets the needs of students, alumni and the legal profession, and thereby attracts sufficient personal and financial support.

Objectives	Strategies/Actions	Measures/Targets	Timeline
1, 2, 3, 5	Establish a Law School Ambassador Program which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances and develops participants leadership and communication skills; • Reduces barriers between staff and students; and • Enhance relationships between student and student, students and Faculty, the Faculty and the wider community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot launched Semester 2, 2007. • Dual stream program in 2008 (currently 25 Junior and 15 Senior Ambassadors). • Conduct 2 'Leadership Skills Training Sessions' per year. • Conduct 2 'Lunchtime Topical Discussion Forums' per year with Faculty Staff, to educate and inform in areas of legal research and career interests, whilst breaking down student and staff barriers. • Conduct 2 'Alumni Sunset Seminars' per year introducing Ambassadors to distinguished Alumni and ideas/concepts/experiences to educate, facilitate networking, build communication skills and social confidence. • Conduct 2 community outreach projects per year, some with ongoing project viability for future generations of Ambassadors to inherit. • Evaluate and improve Program annually. 	2008 – 2013
1, 2, 3	Establish a Peer Mentor Program which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists first year and new students' transition into Law School; • Facilitates the process of settling, connecting and engaging with the Faculty and tertiary learning; • Provides leadership role opportunities for student mentor volunteers in their 2nd year and above; • Facilitates relationships between students both within and across year levels; and • Enhances efficient referral, guidance and enhanced sense of student community and identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot launched Semester 1, 2008. • Establish and maintain a mentor-student ratio of 1:4 • Mentors receive appropriate and thorough training and guidance. • Conduct 4 Peer Mentor Program events annually to facilitate group dynamics and community. • Identify and improve Mentor & Mentee benefits. • Evaluate and improve annually. 	2008 – 2013

Objectives	Strategies/Actions	Measures/Targets	Timeline
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Establish a High Academic Achievers' Program which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies high achieving students within the Monash Law school; Provides encouragement and support to high achieving students; Promotes academic excellence in scholarship and research; and Promotes participation in the Law Honours program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot launched Semester 1, 2008. Maintain 40 High Achievers in the cohort. Conduct 2 skills training sessions per year. Conduct 2 Alumni information / networking events per year. Evaluate and improve annually. 	2008 – 2013
1, 2, 3, 5	Establish an Alumni Mentor Program for undergraduate students which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates opportunities for Monash alumni in a variety of fields of employment to participate in Monash Law School and in the education and development of current students; Broadens the learning environment and opportunities for students; and Creates links between the profession and current Monash law students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract and support participation by Monash Law School alumni in the program. Attract and support participation by students in the program. Conduct one appreciation event annually for alumni mentors. Evaluate and improve annually. 	2006 – 2011
6	Undertake research into the Monash Law School student experience which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances the Law School's knowledge and understanding of the needs of students; Aids in the development of existing and new programs within the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program; and Assists in the evaluation of the success of existing programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and administer Student Surveys to discover current trends and issues. Undertake a Longitudinal Study of incoming undergraduates, with support from Law Student Counsellor, which tracks students' engagement and mental health during their progress through Law School. Monitor trends within counselling referral statistics to respond to common undergraduate student concerns and conditions. 	2009 – 2014
3	Facilitate timely careers advice to all students which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists students to explore career options related to their course of study; Guides students in the choice of study options; and Supports students in the development of co-curricular skills necessary for employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and advise the Law Students' Society and the International Law Association in delivering careers services to students. Investigate, design and deliver careers information enhancement services and initial career counselling to students. Refer students to central Monash Careers service for resume checking service, careers advice and unit options advice. Evaluate and improve annually. 	2007 – 2012
3, 5, 6	Explore the possibility of a Legal Volunteer/ Work Experience database and matching service which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates work experience opportunities for law students; Provides information relating to employment opportunities for our students; and Provides a relevant service to Monash Law Alumni. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake feasibility study ensuring no duplication with Central volunteer or LSS ideas. Investigate current programs and design a larger and more comprehensive program. 	2009 – 2014

Objectives	Strategies/Actions	Measures/Targets	Timeline
3, 6	<p>Provide additional Counselling Services within the Monash Law School which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the service provided to students by Monash Health, Wellbeing and Development; • Provides support specific to the needs of law students; and • Supports law staff in their work with Monash Law School students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service launched 2007. • Extended counsellor hours negotiated through Monash Health, Wellbeing and Development and documented in Service Level Agreement. • Counsellor present within Law School at least two days per week. • Regular communication with Law School staff to improve faculty response in the management of 'at risk' students and critical incidents. • Annual report produced highlighting key activities, emerging opportunities and recommendations. 	2007 – 2012
3, 6	<p>Extended Learning Support Services to Law Students which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the service provided to students by Monash Library learning skills advisers; • Develops and enhances students language and learning skills; • Contributes to the development of advanced research and writing skills in law graduates; and • Supports law staff in their work with Monash Law School students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service launched 2007. • Extended learning skills advisor hours provided to undergraduate and postgraduate students. • Learning skills advisors available to students studying at Monash University Law Chambers, Bourke Street. • Regular participation in core legal research and writing units. • Regular communication with Law School staff to improve learning skills opportunities for students. • Evaluate and improve annually. 	2007 – 2012
5, 6	<p>Revitalise Monash Law School Alumni Committee in a model which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a sustainable alumni engagement model; • Addresses the needs of alumni and the Law School; • Facilitates alumni identification with the Law School; and • Promotes ongoing and relevant participation of Monash Law alumni in the mission of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research relevant strategies for engaging Alumni. • Engage interested alumni in the revitalisation of the Monash Law School Alumni Committee. • Design an appropriate strategy which fosters and supports ongoing engagement between Monash Law School and its alumni. • Evaluate and improve annually. 	2009 - 2014
6	<p>Investigate alternative funding models for future delivery of these services under this Program which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secures the ongoing development and growth of the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program; and • Ensures the provision of relevant core and additional support programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to seek financial donations to support the Lawrie McCredie Student Support Program with an aim to ensuring financial self-sufficiency of the program. • Explore funding and sponsorship models for particular programs, such as the High Achiever's Program. • Source funding for specific events within particular programs. • Utilise the expertise of Monash Alumni Relations staff in support of the program. • Apply for research funding in support of aspects of this program, where applicable. • Apply for Monash Central Funding assistance, where applicable. • Evaluate and improve program funding annually. 	2009 - 2014



Further information

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