

**Models of support for student wellbeing in enabling programs:
comparisons, contrasts and commonalities at four Australian universities**

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Abstract

Students in enabling programs bring a richness and diversity to universities. This diversity is important both to the vitality of the institutions, and the social equity outcomes that enabling programs hope to foster. Yet, in crossing the bridge between pre-university and university entry, these students are often confronted by multiple challenges. Within the literature, concerns such as mental health difficulties, complex family issues and being first in the family to attend university have been shown to impact on a student's ability to succeed academically, develop a sense of belonging in the university community and negotiate personal hurdles. While many universities provide counselling services, which are of great value, they are but one element in a more comprehensive model of support for the wellbeing of students in enabling programs.

This paper will present the key features of four models of supporting enabling students' wellbeing that have been developed at four institutions. The participating universities are the University of Tasmania, Murdoch University, The University of Newcastle, and the University of the Sunshine Coast. The models are unique, and also share commonalities, in terms of whether the support is embedded, centrally-located, proactive, informal or holistic.

Introduction

Pre-university enabling programs, also known as bridging courses, have become an increasingly popular pathway to university for under-represented groups, particularly those that have experienced a disrupted or disadvantaged educational journey. Recent Australian research has highlighted that mental health and emotional issues are significant barriers to student success in these programs, and commonly account for student attrition (Hodges et al., 2013; Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016). Foundation and bridging students undertaking pathway programs in New Zealand have also been reported facing mental health and emotional issues (Jeffrey & Hardie, 2010). As a result, student wellbeing has become a topic of increasing concern in enabling programs, as well as in universities more generally, across Australia and abroad (Walter, 2015).

Enabling educators from the University of Tasmania (UTAS), Murdoch University (MU), The University of Newcastle (UON) and the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) met through the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA). The members, who are academic educators and counsellors, established a Special Interest Group (SIG) on Mental Health in early 2015, in recognition of increased awareness of this widespread issue amongst enabling student cohorts (Crawford, 2015). Through the sharing of experiences and practices between the SIG members, it has become clear that the mental health and wellbeing of enabling students is a focus across the four institutions, yet they respond in similar and

different ways. As there is currently a lack of clear guiding or 'best practice' principles to address the wellbeing of students transitioning to university studies, including those participating in enabling programs, this sharing of perspectives and approaches has been of significant value to the SIG members.

The aim of this paper is to impart some insights emerging from the SIG. The current literature on mental health and wellbeing in higher education, including in enabling education, is reviewed. Further, the models used for supporting the wellbeing of enabling students at four Australian universities are described. Common themes and differences are highlighted, as well as future research directions with the view to establishing 'best practice' approaches to supporting the wellbeing of enabling students.

Mental health and wellbeing in universities

The topic of mental health and wellbeing has been recurrent in the Australian media (Walter, 2015). The National Mental Health survey found that 20% of the Australian population suffers a mental disorder, with peak prevalence among young people, particularly those aged 16-34 years, who make up a significant portion of university cohorts (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). In New Zealand, it is said that one in six adults has been diagnosed with a common mental illness at some stage in their lives (Mental Health Foundation, 2014). Research indicates that psychiatric illness is 'associated with lower educational achievement, decreased employment, lower incomes and lower standard of living' (AMSA, 2013). In studies conducted on Australian university students, 30% reported depression, anxiety, eating disorders and/or harmful drinking (Said, Kypri, & Bowman, 2013). Stallman's (2010) research found significantly higher levels of elevated distress in university students (83.9%) compared to the general population (29%), suggesting that university students are an "at risk" population for mental health difficulties, and, therefore, interventions and preventative approaches are required.

Stallman (2010) recommends a multilevel approach to students' mental health with targeted interventions to enable academic success and to reduce the likelihood of some students' mental health declining. A framework that was developed in the UK is the 'Healthy Universities Network', established in 2006. Healthy Universities (2016) promotes a holistic, institution-wide approach to staff and student health. According to the UK National Healthy Universities network, '[a] Healthy University aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, wellbeing and sustainability of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential' (Healthy Universities, 2009). This holistic and institution-wide approach to health (including mental health) and wellbeing in the UK has gained momentum internationally more recently with the release, in 2015, of the Okanagan Charter: an international charter for health promoting universities and colleges (2015), and the establishment of the Australian Health Promoting Universities Network in March 2016 (University of Sydney, 2016).

Concurrently, various initiatives and research projects have focused on the wellbeing of university students, from discipline-specific perspectives, institutional perspectives, alongside those with a focus on teaching and learning approaches. In the British context, the Open Minds project 'aimed to develop a fuller consideration of the role of learning and teaching in developing an inclusive, "mentally well" university' (Marshall & Morris, 2011, p. 14). In the Australian context, research to support student wellbeing has mainly focused on law and medical students, prompted by the high rates of mental health difficulties and psychological distress experienced by these cohorts. For example, teaching practice and curricula has been enhanced to explicitly foster student engagement and lessen psychological distress amongst law students (Duffy, Field, & Shirley, 2011; Field, 2014; Field & Duffy, 2012; Field & Kift, 2010; Watson & Field, 2011). Similarly, the high incidence of mental health issues in law-student cohorts has been acknowledged in New Zealand, and a response has been the publication of a guide book on mental wellness for New Zealand law students (New Zealand Law Students' Association, 2013). In the context of commencing university, Kift, Nelson and colleagues' third-generation transition pedagogy is a holistic, institution-wide approach to student engagement and support (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014). Currently, the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) *Enhancing Student Wellbeing* project team are developing a framework for promoting university students' wellbeing and resources to assist academic staff (Larcombe, Baik, & Brooker, 2015; Melbourne CSHE, 2016).

Student wellbeing in enabling programs

Enabling programs are an alternative pathway for students to enter higher education (Hall, 2015; Hodges et al., 2013; Pitman & Trinidad, 2016). They aim to prepare students for university-level study and provide opportunities for academic and discipline-specific knowledge development. They also facilitate a smoother transition to undergraduate study (Cocks & Stokes, 2012; Habel & Whitman, 2016) and enable students to become acculturated to university life (Crawford, 2014; Klinger & Tranter, 2009).

Enabling programs are largely fee-free, open access, non-award courses that are offered over a shorter period than a degree program. They are a key component of institutional widening participation strategies and provide a bridge to higher education within a supported environment (Johns et al., 2016). Students who undertake enabling programs are often from marginalised, under-represented or 'non-traditional' groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, first in family, mature age, low socio-economic status (SES), and refugee backgrounds (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2014; Crawford, 2014; Hall, 2015; Klinger & Tranter, 2009; Ramsay, 2004). Many enabling students have, for various reasons, experienced disadvantage in their educational experience and their academic capabilities may not have been realised (Lisciandro & Gibbs, 2016), while others have numerous 'non-academic' challenges to contend with, including complex mental health issues (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2014; Crawford & Johns, 2015; Jeffrey & Hardie, 2010).

Students within enabling cohorts who have mental health challenges often face additional hurdles in their journey to higher education. Studies indicate that students with mental health and psychological concerns perform less well than other students (Hunt, Eisenberg, & Kilbourne, 2010; Kessler et al., 1995; McLeod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012). Students often experience multiple psychological conditions at once and there is wide variation in the consequences and impact of living with mental ill health for students (McLeod et al., 2012). Mental health issues can be exacerbated by changes in routine and the challenges of attending to study and transitioning to higher education.

Literature on mental health and wellbeing initiatives within enabling education in Australia has been slowly emerging over the past two years. It is recognised that institutional professional support and guidance services have been, and continue to be, available to enabling students; these include services such as counselling and equity provisions, as well as staff supports such as “Mental Health First Aid” training. However, it has only been in recent times that program-level approaches have been more widely shared within the enabling education community. The initiatives from four Australian universities, as outlined below, are examples of program-based initiatives, which extend and complement the institutions’ centrally-located support services.

Enabling program 1: *University Preparation Program (UPP)* at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), Tasmania

1.1 Program description

UPP is a fee-free open-access enabling program, and a key widening participation strategy at UTAS. *UPP* was developed on the small regional campus in Burnie in 1996 to improve access to higher education for mature-age students. Major expansion since 2011 has resulted in *UPP* being delivered on-campus state-wide in Burnie, Hobart, and Launceston, and by distance. The course delivery mirrors the undergraduate structure at UTAS of students studying units, attending lectures and tutorials, and/or learning online via the Learning Management System (LMS). Students can study *UPP* full-time or part-time, during the two standard University thirteen-week semesters.

UPP aims to familiarise students with the University academic culture, and develop students’ academic literacies, numeracy and skills, all of which are valuable to further study, work, and lifelong learning (Johns et al., 2016). Such foundations and acculturation, in turn, have been found to develop students’ confidence, their sense of belonging to the institution, and their identity as a university student (Crawford, 2014). Typically, the *UPP* cohort is diverse in age, prior educational experiences, and cultural background. Students tend to belong to one or more of the following categories: low SES backgrounds; mature-aged; first-in-family; students from refugee backgrounds; and students with disabilities.

1.2 Model of student wellbeing support

Like all UTAS students, *UPP* students have access to the University counsellors and disability advisors, who are located centrally. In addition, support has intentionally been built into *UPP*, and has evolved, in response to the needs and challenges of the diverse student cohort. The course and staff philosophy is such that staff enact and students experience an ethic and culture of care.

1.2.1 Staff roles

Since 2011, a Campus Coordinator has been located on each campus. In addition to unit coordination, lecturing and tutoring, pastoral care is a major part of their role. With an oversight of the *UPP* students' unit selection, and their disclosed challenges, the Campus Coordinators monitor students through the whole life-cycle of the course. They identify at-risk students, meet with them about academic and non-academic issues, and refer them to relevant staff, such as counsellors. The Campus Coordinator role provides a clear referral point for *UPP* lecturers and tutors, and a clear contact point for *UPP* students.

1.2.2 *UPP* Supported Studies unit

All *UPP* students are enrolled in the non-credit-bearing unit, "*UPP* Supported Studies". This unit is a two-hour weekly drop-in help session. It is an opportunity for students to work on their assignments and to ask questions as required, in an informal setting. Students are encouraged to help each other; they form peer study groups and develop supportive friendships, many of which continue beyond *UPP*, into their undergraduate degrees.

1.2.3 Supporting student wellbeing in the curriculum

One of the core *UPP* units includes lecture topics that aim to assist students in 'learning how to learn', including active learning and motivation, as well as managing time, stress, and procrastination. A second core *UPP* unit introduces students to evidenced-based literature on topics such as growth and fixed mindsets; grit and resilience; and mindful learning, from Carol Dweck, Angela Duckworth and Ellen Langer respectively (Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler, 2013; Dweck, 2009; Langer, 2000).

1.2.4 A student-centred/course-centred, embedded support model

In recent years, a model of support has developed organically on one of the campuses, in which the University counsellors (who are located centrally) are involved in *UPP* staff meetings, which has fostered mutually beneficial learning between academic staff and counsellors. Academic staff learn about specific mental health difficulties that are of relevance to their current cohort, and counsellors learn about the educational context, and teaching and learning strategies. Such communication enables both parties to support the students more proactively, rather than reactively or in isolation. This model for integrating the counselling staff in *UPP* is illustrated in Figure 1 (Crawford & Johns, 2015, 2016).

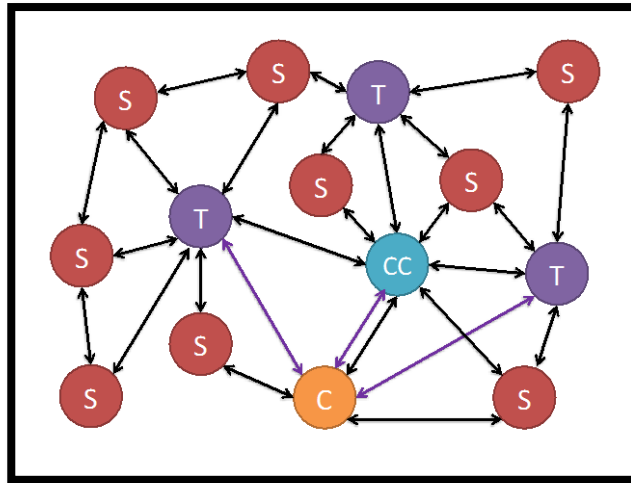


Figure 1.

Key:

S = Student

T = Teacher (i.e. lecturer and tutor)

C = Counsellor

CC = Campus Coordinator

Double arrow (purple line) between C, CC, and T = staff training; informal and formal staff meetings; staff interactions.

1.3 Strengths of model and areas for further consideration

The strength of support provided in *UPP* is that it is personalised, holistic, integrated, and occurs throughout the whole student life-cycle. Lines of referral between staff are clear and staff know their boundaries, which lessens the likelihood of them bearing a counselling role that is outside of their expertise (Crawford & Johns, 2015). The *UPP* Supported Studies sessions offer an opportunity for assistance and the development of peer support groups outside of the more formal and structured classes. Flexibility in studying on-campus or by distance, and part-time or full-time, enables students to choose the mode that best suits them.

One suggestion for improvement in *UPP* is for more embedding of mental health awareness and promotion of student wellbeing in the curriculum across the whole course. Another suggestion is for the proactive model outlined in 1.2.4 to be considered on all three campuses. Above all, it is crucial for staff to have an understanding of diverse and complex cohorts, and to have a holistic, student-centred and inclusive approach to teaching and learning. An ethic and culture of care in the *UPP* community assists students with managing their challenges, developing academic literacies and confidence, and thus making a smooth transition to undergraduate study.

Enabling program 2: *OnTrack* at Murdoch University (MU), Western Australia

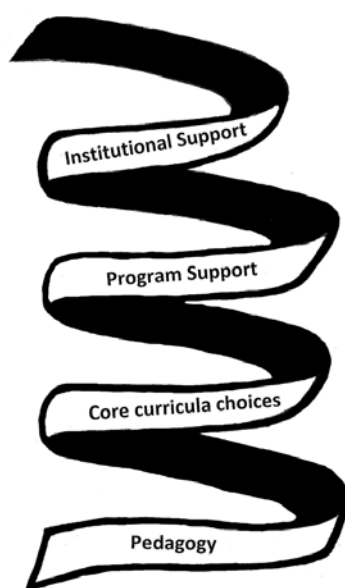
2.1 Program description

OnTrack, MU's key enabling program, has been operating on the University's metropolitan and regional domestic campuses in Western Australia since 2008. It is a fee-free program aimed at providing a pathway for student groups that have not traditionally accessed university. *OnTrack* targets applicants from equity groups and/or those who have experienced educational disadvantage or disruption. Nearly half of *OnTrack* students are first in their family to attend university, many are from low SES backgrounds and one-fifth declare a disability or medical condition. *OnTrack's* curriculum is multi-disciplinary, fully integrated and delivered full-time and on-campus as a single course over fourteen weeks. The curriculum builds foundational academic literacies, transitional skills and aims to acculturate students to the university environment. Further information about *OnTrack* is described in Lisciandro and Gibbs (2016).

2.2 Model of student wellbeing support

During 2014/2015, *OnTrack* staff became increasingly aware of the burden of mental health issues amongst the *OnTrack* student cohort. With growing concerns for student wellbeing, the coordinators put in place a range of measures to better support students in their transition to university. The approach was multifaceted, through the implementation of program level initiatives, curricula choices and specific pedagogical principles, in addition to the existing wider institutional support. Below is an outline of the various layers of student wellbeing support in *OnTrack*, which is also summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Multi-faceted and layered approach to supporting student wellbeing in the *OnTrack* enabling program



2.2.1 Institutional support

MU provides institutional support to address the wellbeing of all of its students, including those in Access programs. The first is an equity service which includes the development of Equity Quality Assisted Learning plans (EQAL) to map out the learning support available for students who have a disability or medical condition that may impact on their learning. The University also offers Counselling and Health Services. Students can access fee-free short-term counselling, and are usually referred to external services if requiring longer-term support.

2.2.2 Program support

At the program level, the MU Counselling Service provides a lecture series on topics like: transitioning to university, grit (based on the work of Angela Duckworth), perfectionism, procrastination, exam anxiety, and managing stress (based on acceptance and commitment therapy principles). The introduction of these lectures, firstly on the regional campuses, was a strategic manoeuvre to foster resilience and capacity for a group of students most in need of these attributes. They were implemented as a compulsory part of the curriculum and were strongly attended. Students reported back to their tutors that the lectures were of great value, improved their sense of agency and made the space for seeking further Counselling support more accessible and user friendly. As a result of this success these lectures are now a compulsory element of the program on all campuses.

2.2.3 Core curricula choices

Core curricula choices have been made to address the addition of new learning outcomes associated with socio-emotional learning, and are aimed at cultivating attributes that are strongly associated with success at university; such as, emotional resilience, academic self-efficacy and sustained motivation. The development of curriculum built around these learning outcomes is described in detail in Lisciandro, Jones and Strehlow (2016). Examples include content related to learning mindsets (based on the work of Carol Dweck), as well as mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

These changes complement the broader *OnTrack* curriculum, which has a structure that emphasises and focuses on the potential for change – in the self, in society and in life more broadly. Accordingly, students are (in nearly every learning element) encouraged implicitly and explicitly to harness this potential for growth, development and change. The new initiatives described here help to embed this premise for change into a set of practices that can assist in lifelong growth and learning.

2.2.4 Pedagogy

Certain pedagogical approaches have been implemented in *OnTrack* in order to model and reinforce the development of students' socio-emotional capabilities. For example, research shows that teaching staff need to embody a 'growth' learning mindset in order to teach it effectively (Dweck, 2007). To address this, professional development opportunities are provided to staff, emphasising their role in modelling desired attitudes and behaviours. These include the conscious cultivation of growth-oriented language use in the classroom and in assessment

feedback. Likewise, assignment marking rubrics were instilled with 'growth-minded' language emphasising the value of progress made in learning as distinct from the focus on achievement.

2.3 Strengths of model and areas for further consideration

The inclusion of program-level support provided through the Counselling lecture series, and new curricula and pedagogical elements (that address socio-emotional learning and strengthen the development of important attributes like academic self-efficacy and resilience) is still in the pilot stage in *OnTrack*. Initial student survey feedback suggests that it has been beneficial for students and staff alike, but further research is currently underway to formally evaluate the outcomes.

However, the key strength of this model is its multifaceted approach. This is one that is proactive in its reach and well-integrated with institutional support, thus fostering familiarity with services that specialise in student wellbeing on an individual basis. Ultimately, this model is one that provides sustained benefit to all *OnTrack* students.

Enabling program 3: *Newstep*, *Open Foundation*, and *Yapug* at The University of Newcastle (UON), New South Wales

3.1 Program description

The UON has one of the largest and oldest enabling programs in Australia and takes in some 2960 students per year on campuses located in Newcastle and Ourimbah on the Central Coast of New South Wales (University of Newcastle, 2015). The UON offers three enabling programs: *Newstep* for students under twenty years of age; *Open Foundation* for students over twenty; and *Yapug* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The aim of these programs is to support student transition into a university degree. Students enrolled in the program are drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds: 36% of students identify as being from low SES backgrounds, 62% are the first in family to attend university, and 6% identify as having a disability (University of Newcastle, 2015). *Newstep* has a core generic literacy and communication unit, whereas the *Open Foundation* course is discipline-specific, with the aim of providing a link to disciplinary knowledge in undergraduate studies. The courses are offered on-campus and via distance.

3.2 Model of student wellbeing support

At the UON counselling service, data is collected during the first counselling session a student attends, in order to identify the reason why students seek counselling support. In 2015, the data indicated that students' presenting issues were usually for psychological, mental health and situational events. However, a comparison of the 2013 and 2015 results found that the counsellors are seeing more complex students than in previous years. The UON data also identified that students' academic success is closely linked to their mental health and wellbeing.

The vast majority of clients indicated that their presenting concerns were having an impact upon their wellbeing with 10% assessed as experiencing an acute or severe impact, 40% as experiencing a serious impact, 44% as moderate and only 6% as experiencing nil or minimal impact.

3.2.1 Development of a Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan

In response to the increasing student need, the UON developed a Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan in consultation with students, staff and other relevant stakeholders. This plan sought to develop sensitive responses to students experiencing increased stress, distress or mental health challenges.

3.2.2 Co-located model of care

In 2010, a dedicated counsellor role was established in the University's enabling programs. This initiative was due to enabling staff recognising that their students face a variety of personal and social barriers to education and that students and staff would benefit from a co-located model of counselling support. Before this model was established, the UON provided counselling services centrally; however, these services were not well attended by the enabling student population (Hodges et al., 2013). The aim of embedding a counsellor in the enabling programs was to improve accessibility.

3.2.3 Centrally-located staff providing support to the UON enabling programs

In 2013, at the Ourimbah campus, the role of the Student Support Advisor (SSA) was added to the counselling team to support staff, students and the faculty. The SSA is a professionally trained mental health nurse who is able to assess students' mental health and consult with staff about any at-risk students. This role provides an additional level of support as students are seen in a timely manner, their needs can be assessed and appropriate internal and external referrals can be made.

3.3 Strengths of model and areas for further consideration

The embedded counsellor and SSA roles have increased the ability for counselling and support staff to work collaboratively with academic staff to achieve the best outcomes for students in the enabling programs. This provides opportunities for the counselling team to provide in-class workshops on topics such as: dealing with exam anxiety and how to develop mindfulness skills. The roles have also provided the availability of immediate consultation for high-risk students.

Enabling program 4: *Tertiary Preparation Pathway (TPP)* at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), Queensland

4.1 Program description

TPP is USC's bridging course. As such, the program ethos focuses on orientating students to their tertiary learning environment from both academic and USC community perspectives.

TPP enrolled its initial 68 students at the Sippy Downs campus in 2006, second semester. It has now expanded to another five regional campuses at Hervey Bay, Gympie, Caboolture, Noosa and North Lakes; enrolling 1353 students in the first and second semesters of 2016. *TPP* is a fee-free program that currently provides students with a choice of eleven courses ranging from transferable academic skills, digital literacies, critical thinking, people skills and statistics; to discipline specific courses such as business, sciences and maths. Full-time and part-time study options are available, and completion results in a ranking for entry to an undergraduate program of study. *TPP* courses are structured to reflect USC's undergraduate courses, providing lectures, tutorials and laboratory workshops. Teaching instruction is face-to-face, with the support of blended learning strategies, such as e-lectures, recorded lectures, electronic learning materials and resources available for students via the LMS. Courses run for thirteen weeks in semesters one and two, and a six-week intensive session over the summer season.

The Sippy Downs campus encompasses the largest body of *TPP* students; with the 2016 statistics revealing that the majority of this cohort of students being enrolled full time (61%), are predominantly domestic (98%), female (61%) and first in the family (51%). Although there are some slight variations between the other smaller campuses, these statistics are representative of the *TPP* cohorts at all USC campuses. Across all enrolled *TPP* students at USC in 2016, 10.88% of students identified as having a disability, and 41.22% of those students requested disability support. The culture of the program aims to ensure staff are able to meet the needs of the diverse learners, including supporting student wellbeing.

4.2 Model of student wellbeing support

USC's Student Wellbeing service encompasses counselling, disability services, tenancy and welfare, financial support, health promotion and broader access and equity programs. Student Wellbeing counselling service provides a free confidential counselling service to all enrolled students. The service is voluntary and students generally self-refer. Students with a disability can register with Disability Services who provide individualised learning plans, adaptive equipment, and technology assistance and run various support groups. USC Student Wellbeing also has a strong focus on health promotion with a regular program of activities across the campuses throughout the year.

The relationship between *TPP* and Student Wellbeing evolved based on the growing need for specialised student support. The diversity of students within *TPP* often leads to identification of students, either through self-disclosure or behavioural indicators, with complex and at times, significant mental health issues. As there is a strong focus on student wellbeing within *TPP*, staff access support and consultation with Student Wellbeing staff when required. Over time, the need for open communication and support between *TPP* and Student Wellbeing services has become apparent and resulted in a number of projects including: participation in the 'NAEEA SIG on Mental Health', professional development (creating supportive learning environments), staff debriefs, and the development of specialised presentations for students in *TPP* (such as: presentation anxiety,

managing stress, accessing support options). These responses are often a result of identified trends and issues by *TPP* staff or students.

4.3 Strengths of model and areas for further consideration

The strength of the current model rests in the balance between student self-efficacy and confidentiality whilst providing both targeted and generalised support to students and staff alike. As the counselling service provides a separate space for students to seek support outside of their relationships with academic staff, students are able to maintain confidentiality and anonymity if desired. Alternatively, staff who identify students in need of support, and staff who require support around responding to challenging students, can also utilise Student Wellbeing personnel for consultations and case management. The provision of separation between academic and therapeutic roles also ensures students receive therapeutic support from specialised services and serves to protect staff from burnout. Furthermore, the need for boundaries in the student/teaching relationship is reinforced, reflecting the expectations of undergraduate programs.

This flexible, responsive and proactive support model provides specific skills and resources that have been identified through the current student cohort, such as challenges for mature-age students and presentation anxiety. Interactions between wellbeing staff and students, through guest lectures and provisions of materials, establishes early in students' study journey, the support services available at USC. This aims to provide a model of support access that is sustainable throughout the entirety of students' academic journey, and not exclusively linked to *TPP* staff, ensuring students are connected to the broader USC experience and community.

This model of student support and wellbeing currently relies on the strength of the individual relationships between *TPP* and Student Wellbeing staff, rather than an embedding in the curriculum. This may make the longevity of the program vulnerable to staff changes, creating possible fluctuations in attention devoted to the continued relationship and ultimately, student support. Given the diversity and needs of the cohort, further consideration of formalising embedding wellbeing strategies into the curriculum would provide a comprehensive and proactive approach to student wellbeing, independent of the reliance on staff relationships and interest. There is also opportunity to identify and support broader pedagogical practices that foster inclusive classrooms, and further focus on professional development and peer support that allows for the sharing and development of resources and strategies.

Common themes arising between the four support models

This paper has explored four enabling programs that share an agenda of supporting student wellbeing. Central to this agenda, in all of the programs, is a 'culture of care' and the attendant 'culture of self-development and growth'. However, the mechanisms through which care and growth are articulated and embedded vary between the programs. The difference is primarily one of stratification.

Where MU embeds mindset material at the level of curricula, a guest-lecture series by counselling staff and tutor training in the area of mindfulness, UTAS incorporates similar material in two of its core units and accompanies this with a model of pastoral care provided by the Campus Coordinator and meetings held with the counselling team to explore mutually beneficial ways of better understanding and benefiting students. Similarly, USC and UON enabling educators collaborate with counselling staff to best support their students' wellbeing. USC and UON also incorporate guest lectures by counsellors in the curriculum. UON's strategy has been to primarily foster partnership with counselling to buffer and support the enabling cohort and the broader UON student body, resulting in a counsellor on each campus dedicated to the enabling students and thus also providing a context for building relationships and literacies between counselling and teaching staff. What emerges from these contrasts is that each university has a specific site of strength, MU's being one of integration, UTAS having a holistic student-centred approach, USC being multi-layered with targeted and general support, and UON focusing on a resource provision model. It is also apparent from such comparison that each university has an under-resourced dimension to their support model that could benefit from further development.

As teaching practitioners in the enabling space, we are acutely aware of the value of and need for multiple strategies, aligned resources and support mechanisms, if we are to succeed in 'enabling' our students. Fortunately, as a consequence, we have the privilege of learning from each other, building on our strengths, diversifying our approaches, and, most importantly, developing and nourishing the 'whole' student such that their social and intellectual potential can be realised.

Future research directions

Further research on student wellbeing in enabling programs is required. Given the quantitative data on mental health complexities among students in enabling programs is, on the whole, lacking, an initial scoping study will be performed. This paper has highlighted models of supporting student wellbeing in enabling programs at four universities in Australia. Our future research will be on a larger scale and more comprehensive. For instance, there is scope to identify student-wellbeing support models across Australia in enabling programs. It is expected that numerous examples of best practice are yet to be uncovered, and both student and staff voices will be important to understanding what works.

It is the 'NAEEA SIG on Mental Health' members' longer-term aim to develop some 'best practice' guiding principles for supporting the wellbeing of non-traditional students transitioning to university. At this preliminary stage, two initial principles that are core to the enabling programs in the four universities are the importance of 'a culture of care' and 'a culture of self-development and growth'. In-depth research will allow for exploration of these provisional principles and the development of further principles.

Support for the wellbeing and flourishing of enabling students begins in the enabling space. However, for the continued success of such initiatives, it is important that the 'culture of care' and the 'culture of self-development and growth' continue into the undergraduate sphere. Therefore, the best practice models for supporting student wellbeing need to be envisioned and mapped such that they can be integrated into the learning journey that exists beyond enabling programs. Hence, future research in this area is intended to have benefits beyond the enabling education context.

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