

MEDIA RELEASE

Student engagement is key to staying competitive

29 October 2012: Demand-driven funding arrangements in Australia's higher education sector have given more weight to student decisions and behaviours, making student engagement a vital part of institutions' competitiveness, a conference in Melbourne will tomorrow hear.

The LH Martin Institute and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) are hosting a two-day conference on higher education student engagement. Speaking ahead of the conference, Associate Professor Hamish Coates, ACER Higher Education Research Director and LH Martin Institute Program Director, said new regulatory and competitive contexts emerging in Australia and around the world are creating an urgent need to be efficient, to grow and to improve.

"We're in a higher education growth phase that is essential to social and economic growth, and environmental sustainability," Associate Professor Coates said.

"A major key to enduring prosperity lies in taking better leadership of student engagement."

Associate Professor Coates will be joined by higher education experts and stakeholders at the conference, where they will discuss challenges around student engagement and share strategic insights to further improve the quality of Australian higher education.

Speakers and their topics include:

- Ian Hawke, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 'Regulation, risk and learning'
- Jeannie Rea, National Tertiary Education Union, 'Enhancing learning productivity: implications for staff'
- David de Carvalho, Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), 'National perspectives on student engagement'

Representatives from 12 Australian higher education institutions will also speak at the conference. In addition, on Wednesday the presidents of the National Union of Students and the Council of International Students Australia will deliver a presentation on the way that students are taking the lead within the new demand-driven system.

The conference, on the theme *Enhancing retention and outcomes in a competitive environment*, takes place at the Sebel & Citigate Albert Park, Melbourne, on Tuesday 30 and Wednesday 31 October 2012.

Further information, including the full conference program and list of speakers, is available from <http://www.acer.edu.au/student-engagement>

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