

By Elaina Loveland

Curricular Change Down Under— The Melbourne Model

An interview with Peter McPhee,
provost of the University of Melbourne

PETER MCPHEE is the University of Melbourne's provost, with particular responsibilities for managing and monitoring changes in the policies and practices that affect the academic life of the university as a whole, including the delivery of curricula and the provision of high quality, consistent student support services.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

A supplement on higher education in Australia and New Zealand accompanies this issue of International Educator.

McPhee holds a bachelor's, a master's and a doctoral degree from University of Melbourne. He taught at La Trobe University from 1975–79 and the Victoria University of Wellington 1980–86 before returning to the University of Melbourne, where he has held a Personal Chair in history since 1993. He has published widely on the history of modern France. His most recent book is *Living the French Revolution 1789-1799* (London & New York, 2006).

McPhee was deputy dean and acting dean of the School of Graduate Studies in 1994–96, then head of the Department of History in 1996–99. He was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1997. In the same year he became an inaugural 'Universitas 21' Teaching Fellow. In 2003 he was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. He was an officer of the Academic Board 1999–2003 and its president in 2002–03. He was awarded a Centenary Medal for services to education in 2003. He took up the position of deputy vice-chancellor (academic) in October 2003. In 2006 McPhee chaired the Curriculum Commission, which was responsible for drafting the university's 10-year plan for transition to the new undergraduate and graduate programs under the Melbourne Model. McPhee was appointed provost in September 2007.

IE: What are the key changes you've seen in the last decade or so that show how internationalization has impacted higher education in Australia?

MCPHEE: We've seen a few major changes in the last decade in Australia that deal directly with internationalization. The first is the greater number of international students on Australian campuses, which is exciting in terms of the possibilities for enriching the curriculum and the overall student experience. It highlights, too, the important challenge of supporting a diverse student body. At the University of Melbourne, the student body is made up of more than 11,000 students from 117 countries (this is about 25 percent of the student body). Just over 10 years ago, in 1995, the university's international student population was only 1,733. Melbourne now has one of the largest number of international students of any single campus in the world.

Another momentous change that has occurred is that there are more opportunities for our students to live and work overseas. Meeting the challenges of a globalized world means preparing our students to live and work overseas. Often, the decision to study overseas is the first step in creating a global perspective leading to a global career. This trend has implications for our students. We can expect that many of them will have the opportunity to live and work in diverse cultural settings. The challenge is to equip our students with professional and social competencies which will enable them to excel in the societies they will help lead. The University of Melbourne strives to integrate an intercultural, global perspective embedded in our academic programs, in support services,



Peter McPhee

and in the broader student experience, which we feel should be integral to the character of any university of international standing.

Finally, there are now increased options for international students. Students have an increasingly broad range of choice when it comes to selecting an institution of higher learning. Barriers to international education have been reduced, and in some cases eliminated, and institutions around the world are making significant investments in higher education to attract top students. The Melbourne Model (described below in detail) is the University of Melbourne's commitment to advancing and differentiating the student experience. In addition, the university has invested in a significantly expanded scholarship program which provides opportunities and support for students from all over the world recognizing academic achievement as well as acknowledging a special responsibility to provide access to higher education to students who might otherwise be excluded.

IE: How is the Bologna Process impacting higher education in Australia?

MCPHEE: The Bologna Process has resulted in more opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between Australian staff and students and their European counterparts. For example, comparable degrees provide added incentive for students interested in mobility programs. In addition, the Bologna Process has also successfully highlighted global trends in higher education and required Australia, as a country, to assess the implications. The University of Melbourne has been involved with others in the development of a common format Graduation Statement, closely modeled on the successful diploma supplement.

IE: The University of Melbourne implemented the “Melbourne Model” in February 2008. How is this new curriculum model reflecting the globalization of higher education in Australia?

MCPHEE: The structure of the Melbourne Model draws on the 3+2+3 or three-cycle structure identified with the Bologna Process, the objectives of North American undergraduate education, and related developments in Asia. The university aspires to offer internationally transferable qualifications and in many ways its curriculum reflects these broad trends in the globalization of higher education.

The Melbourne Model, however, is also placed within the context of Australian higher education policy and history. In particular, our New Generation undergraduate degrees seek to provide both depth and breadth and clear pathways into graduate programs and research higher degrees through honor's and master's. This is not a rigid framework. The core of the model is graduate entry to professional programs, but timeframes are adapted where necessary by particular professional requirements. Graduate programs vary from two years for architecture and education to four years for medicine. The model is aligned with, rather than, reproducing international structures.

IE: What are the key components of the “Melbourne Model”?

MCPHEE: The Melbourne Model is based on a core undergraduate degree or 'New Generation' degree, leading to one of three post-degree options: a career, a graduate professional degree, or a research higher degree.

New Generation undergraduate students are encouraged to specialize in a specific discipline (depth) as well as gain knowledge across disciplines (breadth). Students are required to select 'breadth subjects' from outside their core study areas. The 'breadth' subjects of the new degrees build multiple competencies in students by engaging them in cross-disciplinary learning and teaching, equip-

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ping students with distinctive graduate attributes, including competencies in intercultural communication.

The six ‘new generation’ degrees are: the bachelor of arts; bachelor of science; bachelor of commerce; bachelor of environments; bachelor of music; and bachelor of biomedicine.

Graduate programs and professional entry programs in education, law, architecture, engineering, land and environment, and a host of other areas provide exciting opportunities: to extend and explore a specialist area; to gain accreditation to a professional body; to further refine and enhance transferable skills.

All students will benefit from the introduction of the Melbourne Model. Excellent teaching, international research activity, innovative learning spaces equipped with facilities which have the capacity for students to share virtual classroom experiences with international peers, are all designed to make learning at Melbourne a global educational experience, aimed at academic excellence and personal achievement.

IE: What does the “Melbourne Model” hope to accomplish? How will it help prepare students to be “global citizens” after graduation?

MCPHEE: The Melbourne Model aims to produce graduates who are suited to the challenges of changing workplaces in the twenty-first century and equip them with a range of abilities to enable them to engage with local and global communities. One of its principal objectives is to produce active global citizens, ‘with broad global under-

standings, with a high regard for human rights, equity and ethics.’

This is achieved by encouraging and supporting our students to undertake part of their degree overseas through exchange and study abroad programs, to engage with the wider community through volunteer programs, and in jointly-badged degree programs. The university’s global mobility program and Melbourne International, responsible for managing our international engagement, play a vital role in facilitating student exchange arrangements and in advancing the university’s internationalization strategy. The university has a range of agreements for academic cooperation and exchange with international partners which underpin these activities.

We have also implemented measures to internationalize the New Generation degrees. Academic and professional staff are encouraged to take into account students’ diverse backgrounds in the design and delivery of all academic programs. A range of resources are available to assist staff in developing curriculum, teaching and assessment processes, which incorporate culturally sensitive learning and teaching practices for local and international students.

Finally, and at the core of the university’s student support services, our newly opened student centers—a one-stop shop for academic advising, administrative support, and engaging in extracurricular activities—cater to the needs of a diverse student body.

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