

Session 4

THE EMERGENCE OF THE “BLENDED PROFESSIONAL” WITHIN THE “ACADEMIC HEARTLAND”

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Twenty years ago there were very clear boundaries between what was determined as administration and academic roles within universities. The majority of literature on these roles to date has been fixated on an ‘us and them’ divide between academic and general staff, an ‘upstairs/downstairs mentality’ or a perception of administrators as the ‘invisible workers’ (McInnis, 1998, Gornall, 1999, Sekeres, 2004). Drawing on research by Dr Celia Whitchurch on the rise of a ‘blended professional’ in higher education and accompanied by a small mapping exercise of senior Faculty administrators within the University of Wollongong, NSW, there is evidence to suggest that ‘blended professionals’ have emerged within the ‘academic heartlands’ and these new professionals are at the forefront of new forms of management and leadership within higher education. This paper suggests there is evidence that this relationship is being reconfigured through the way universities and their faculties are responding to change. The implications for management and leadership are examined using Heifetz’s framework for ‘adaptive work’ and Fullan and Scott’s Leadership Capability Framework. A new context is identified in which these new professionals operate and through their now optimised contribution to the university they identify as a valuable asset essential for the institution’s efficiency.

Presenters Biography:

Mary Street has close to 20 years of administration and professional experience within the tertiary education sector. Mary has a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Education and English Studies and also a Master of Business Administration from the University of Wollongong. In her roles as Faculty Officer/Manager, Mary has developed and implemented many changes including many operational process improvements and various initiatives to enhance staff skills in order to achieve faculty and organisational goals. As a senior administrator, Mary is constantly seeking ways to foster a dynamic work environment, promote high quality administration and promote continuous improvement. She has recently taken a secondment as Operations Manager, with Careers Central at the University of Wollongong and will complete her Masters of Tertiary Education Management with the L H Martin Institute in Melbourne later this year.