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## Editorial

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## Editorial

Jane Skalicky

Welcome to Volume Nine of the *Journal of Peer Learning*. This issue includes five peer-reviewed articles from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. These five articles capture the relevance of peer learning across different learning environments in higher education, and in particular highlight the outcomes of peer learning for diverse student groups.

The first article by Abegglen, Burns, and Sinfield from the London Metropolitan University describes a peer learning program to help non-traditional, first year students transition into university and navigate their first year of academic life. Peer mentoring is embedded within a year-long, first year module as a group learning experience that aims to celebrate the strengths of the non-traditional students. Trained, second year student mentors encourage, support, and collaborate with first year students to create and produce an activity about learning spaces that culminates in a Multimodal Exhibition at the university. The authors consider the peer learning program within a Communities of Practice model of learning and present student evaluations and feedback about their experiences of the program and collaboration with student peers.

Geerlings, Cole, Batt, and Martin-Lynch from Murdoch University in Western Australia review gender-related issues in the context of higher education, drawing on recent literature relating to gender and self-regulated learning and engagement, gender mix and student performance, and the student-PASS leader relationship. The authors present a discussion based on a recent evaluation of the PASS program at their university that raised a number of issues as to the influence of gender in peer-facilitated learning. The program evaluation is reported and preliminary results considered in terms of gender role stereotypes, gender mix, interpersonal relationships, and professional development and gender awareness training for PASS Leaders.

Larkin and Dwyer critically analyse the relationship between peer mentoring programs and first-year student attrition and share findings of a peer-to-peer intensive mentoring program targeting non-school leaver students at the Queensland University of Technology. The authors report mentor and mentee evaluation feedback about the program and their personal experiences at two time points during the semester. The results are considered in relation to the mentoring relationship experience, the perceived benefits to mentees and mentors of participation in the program, and the overall mentoring process. Although the evaluation results were overwhelmingly positive, the authors also consider some difficulties that arose out of the mentoring process, as identified by participants, and ways in which the program could be improved.

The fourth article in this volume is a theoretical examination of how the principles of social justice and learning-centred strategies can be integrated to inform the peer mentoring process. Rawlinson and Willimott describe a

first-year student peer mentoring program at The University of Auckland that is housed within Creagh, Nelson, and Clarke's (2013) framework of social justice, which embraces the principles on self-determination, rights, access, equity, and inclusiveness. "Learning centredness" strategies are employed in the context of social justice to guide the peer mentoring process and, in particular, the ways in which student mentors engage with mentees. The authors give examples of how social justice principles and learning centredness strategies are incorporated into peer mentoring and discuss ways to promote mentors' use of learning-centred strategies with their students.

In the final article in this volume, Supple, Best, and Pearce from Victoria University in Australia extend peer mentoring to a multilingual context to understand how language can be used to create meaningful learning experiences. The authors present a small qualitative study that examined the language choices of PASS Leaders, who spoke either Mandarin Chinese or Vietnamese as their first language, in engaging with international students with the same first languages during formal PASS sessions. The authors interviewed PASS Leaders to explore the processes adopted by the Leaders in negotiating and making decisions around which language they used (first language or English) with the PASS students and to identify how the processes and decisions used by PASS Leaders align with core PASS principles. The authors discuss the results under three main themes: language and social interaction, purpose (how different languages are used for different purposes), and the facilitation of learning communities. In addition, the authors consider how PASS practitioners can learn from these insights into the processes used by PASS Leaders to understand the depth of reasoning underlying language choice.

As in previous editions of the journal, I would like to thank all of our reviewers and the Editorial team who continue to work tirelessly to support authors in progressing research in this field.

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### REFERENCES

Creagh, T. A., Nelson, K. J., & Clarke, J. A. (2013, July). *A social justice framework for safeguarding student learning engagement*. Paper presented at the 16th International First Year in Higher Education Conference, Wellington, New Zealand. Abstract retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/60838/>