



E-BULLETIN

FORUM FOR ACCESS AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

This is the **July 2009** eBulletin from FACE (the Forum for Access and Continuing Education), offered to practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and others with an interest in access, widening participation and lifelong learning. The eBulletin is sent to colleagues in the sector, members and non-members alike. If you would prefer not to receive it, please contact Jim at James.Tate@uwe.ac.uk and your details will be removed from the circulation list.

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Three personal views on the 2009 conference from international colleagues

This year's conference "Towards a New Agenda for Lifelong Learning: Access, Diversity and Participation" at Staffordshire University proved to be an especially popular one with delegates. It also had a strongly international flavour in roundtables, paper sessions, and in contributions from the floor. In this month's eBulletin we have invited three colleagues who attended this year's conference, one from Australia, one from South Africa, and one from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific, to share their personal reflections on FACE 2009.

Australia

Dr Mark Bowden, School of Applied Economics, Victoria University [Mark Bowden Homepage](#)

As someone new to the field of research in continuing education, diversity and widening participation I wanted to come to the FACE conference to talk to the experts (and in particular the practitioners) and to learn a thing or two. It's a long way to come but I was fairly confident it would be worth the trip. I certainly was not let down and I have a much broader perspective on the area and a few new ideas for research down the track.

What I did not expect was that the issues being faced in the UK are so similar to those faced in Australia (at least as far as I understand them). The best case in point being, the development of a pathways program into university, and the problems associated with widening participation in the more traditional universities. I am sure that both Australia and the UK can benefit from the sharing of experiences in this area. I know that 'pathways' is a significant part of the Victoria University programs and it is really important to get this right otherwise it is the student that suffers most.

The other thing that struck me at the conference was the strong camaraderie arising from a shared passion of opening up university participation. This alone must surely mean that FACE, and the movement more generally, will contribute to what is a worthwhile cause.

South Africa

Piers Carey, HoD, Department of Visual Communication Design City Campus, Durban University of Technology PO Box 953 Durban 400 KZN, South Africa

My colleague Rowan Gatfield and I arrived at the FACE conference not really knowing what to expect, and suspecting we would feel somewhat out of place. We come from a Graphic Design department in South Africa, and so are both geographically and academically rather separated from the themes of both the conference and FACE itself. Or so we believed.

Of course South African universities and colleges have perforce been dealing with the whole issue of access and widening participation over the last twenty years, as education has been extended to the majority of the population. In both the UK and South Africa it's been a question of attempting to extend tertiary education to the majority, but in Britain perhaps this was initially perceived as being primarily a class issue and secondarily about "minorities", while in South Africa the issue has been inevitably framed primarily in terms of race. The conference, however, made clear the extent to which, at least as far as the UK is concerned, these simplifications had been abandoned in favour of much more nuanced, progressive, and complex analyses.

The anxiety over the threats facing both the WP sector and Tertiary education in general was noticeable, but because of their work, FACErs remain in a position that South Africans can only envy. The amount of solid progress made in widening participation in recent years means that there is a substantial and worthwhile body of research, practice and experience to defend and build on, to the benefit of current and future students. Colleagues can take pride in this achievement.

We had a wonderful time. One significant thing for both Rowan and myself, was the friendly and open welcome we received. It was great. We met fascinating colleagues with whom we hope to remain in touch, and if we can finance it, we'll be back. In the meantime, FACE members are welcome to contact me at any time.

The Marshall Islands

Ted Stepp, Instructor of Developmental English, College of the Marshall Islands, Majuro, and FACE Member

FACE 2009 at Staffordshire University was my fourth opportunity to network with FACE colleagues and to reflect from afar on the challenges our students at the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), in distant Micronesia, face. The topics addressed by the keynote speakers and paper presenters at the conference reminded me once again that the hindrances to access to, and success in, higher education are often quite similar around the world. Three sessions in particular triggered my critical thinking regarding our educational communities back home: the keynote speech on students and workers with disabilities, the paper on support for 14 to 19 year olds preparing to enter higher education, and the paper on successful first-year experience/mentoring programs at two universities in the UK.

The keynote speech by Barbara Waters, Chief Executive, SKILL, on access by persons with disabilities to higher education, as well as jobs, immediately raised questions in my mind about how effectively we at CMI serve our students with various disabilities, to include difficulties with sight, hearing, and movement, as well as sometimes less obvious mental or emotional challenges. Ms. Waters' knowledgeable grasp of the realities of disabled persons' lives, and her passionate encouragement of educators to find more and more effective ways to foster access and success for these persons, was inspiring. Not only did her message persistently challenge me to consider the current status of CMI's physical campus as well as our materials and methodologies, but I also wondered how many people in our small-island nation may not have entered CMI, or even primary or secondary schools, because of disabilities that might be more fruitfully addressed.

A related paper billed as "A pedagogic support programme to facilitate self-managed learning within the curriculum for the 14 to 19 age groups supporting transition to HE" was critically relevant to our work at CMI. Approximately 95 percent of entering students at the college require from one to three semesters of developmental study and student life support before they are realistically ready to tackle credit-level work towards an associate degree. This fact raises critical questions about how the college might more effectively assist teachers and administrators of the island schools to better prepare their students for higher education. Mike Goodwin and Alec Forsyth of the University of Wolverhampton and the H A Forsyth Consultancy, provided rich food-for-thought in their paper in this regard.

Victoria Cook, of the University of Central Lancashire, UK, complemented by Guy Collins of Staffordshire University, presented papers on a topic dear to my own heart: programs to address the particular needs of under-prepared students in their first year of university study. Ms. Cook's clear, practical presentation of UCLan's "Flying Start" process, proving to be significantly helpful to first year students, mirrors in many ways CMI's First Year Experience for new students. I was encouraged by the similarities and grateful for additional creative ideas in this critical area of student service. Guy Collins' description of the student mentor experience was especially enriched by his inclusion of two current student mentors serving as "ambassadors" to new students at Staffordshire University, the host of FACE 2009. Not only did the student ambassadors share insights into their involvement with new students, but they also demonstrated their skills and enthusiasm as support staff for the conference. I was duly and very positively impressed. Again, CMI's efforts to recruit, train, and utilize student ambassadors was strongly affirmed, in my mind, by this paper presentation.

Indeed, as large as the world seems to be at times, and as distant as the Marshall Islands in the Western Pacific are from the UK, the global realities of the 21st century are clear when educators, administrators, researchers, and students gather. It seems that very often the challenges in one place reflect the challenges in nearly all places. I am grateful for the professional and personal relationships I have developed with the members of FACE, and I very much look forward to FACE 2010.

Many thanks to Mark, Piers and Ted for their fascinating perspectives on conference!

(Piers, you have invented a new term "FACErs" which I predict will catch on)

And when it comes to taking a long look back at a very successful conference, we couldn't overlook the hero of the hour

Phew! A view of the 2009 conference from the conference organiser

Reflections on organising FACE conference 2009

What on earth was I thinking of?

"Yes, John we want to host the FACE Conference in 2009 Staffordshire University has an excellent widening participation record the Institute of Access Studies, the Journal of Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, a visionary Vice Chancellor it would be good for the University and good for FACE."

I woke up in a cold sweat it was just a horrible dream or was it?

Writing this one week after the event and the day before holidaying in Grange Over Sands (which was once described by Victoria Wood as a bit like Morcombe but without the reputation for raciness - which should give you an idea of my state of mind) it's easy to look back and think "Why, oh, why, did I volunteer?!"

Okay, it's a lot of hard work, stress and organisation, but is it worth it? Yes.

Oh, its easy to get annoyed at little things like there being no bedding in halls on Tuesday night, no tea or coffee-making facilities, no water in rooms or at breaks on the hottest days of the year so far (I am employing irony here) but then there are things like a host of excellent keynotes, good and diverse papers and workshops, good food, music and wine, the excellent Wedgwood dinner, but most of all good people. Obviously there was Tom and Emma who worked incredibly hard in a very professional way before, during and after the conference. Incidentally, they are quite nice and helpful people anyway, and actually quite liked the delegates.

However, for me a conference really is the delegates. I thought the delegates at this year's conference made it a very special event. Right from the outset delegates were engaged, challenging and questioning, whether in the excellent keynotes or in the paper sessions this engagement continued in networking sessions and late on into the evening.

What I will take away from FACE 2009 is a sense that FACE delegates are not only nice people and like to party, but are also passionate and committed to the access and participation agendas. This enthusiasm for the mission is contagious and I will take away with me a larger measure of optimism for the future knowing that FACE delegates are on the case (as opposed to having drunk it.)

So in future, if John's dulcet tones implore me to organise another FACE conference I will reflect fleetingly and positively on the 2009 experience before regretfully declining

Pete Jones



Congratulations to the heroic Pete and the ever-capable Emma and Tom

(the masthead photo shows members of the team of Student Ambassadors)

Conference powerpoint presentations now online

Did you miss a workshop that you really wanted to see because there were two really good workshops on at the same time and you couldn't be in two places at once? Here's a chance to catch up a little on what you missed. All the currently available powerpoint presentations from FACE 2009 have been put on the website at www.f-a-c-e.org.uk/conference2009.html

You will also find the abstracts of the papers presented and a number of photographs from conference on the same page.

Follow -Up to "Education by Design"

The project team for this South African / English partnership who presented such an excellent paper session at FACE conference would be delighted to learn from colleagues with experience in WBL and employability. If you feel you may have a contribution to make, please contact Tony Hudson A.Hudson@uel.ac.uk

Creative Industries - Creative Solutions

Finding creative ways to enhance learner's employability is a challenge that will be familiar to colleagues across a range of sectors and settings. What employers want, we are told, are learners who can hit the ground running rather than fall at the first hurdle. Whilst many learners work part-time and some full-time, to support their studies, they are unlikely to be working in the sector or organisation where they hope to work after leaving education. Whilst they may gain valuable experience about the world of work, as well as some transferable skills, they are unlikely to be "oven ready" graduates.

The challenge of getting work experience for final year students in graphic design led colleagues at Durban University of Technology to consider the possibility of setting up a work integrated studio at their City Campus in downtown Durban. Through a successful partnership bid to the British Council, led by Continuum at the University of East London, these plans are now becoming a reality.

A studio is being set up in a loft space or attic (think artists' atelier) and, indeed, atelier method in terms of instruction, with a view to taking briefs in early 2010. The studio will be directed by a member of academic staff with recent industry experience, supported by a manager with a postgraduate level qualification. In the first year of operation the studio will offer work integrated learning (WIL) to between four to eight BTEch (final year undergraduates) students. Initially the studio will market its services internally, within the institution, following which it will start to market to the wider business community in the Durban metropolitan area.

Tony Hudson
Continuum

What else is in the News?

For the latest UK Education headlines and stories **go to the FACE News Feeds page** where you'll find the online news feeds of several of the sources listed below gathered together on one page for easy access.

The Guardian <http://education.guardian.co.uk>

The Independent <http://news.independent.co.uk/education>

The BBC http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/default.stm

The Times http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education

The Times Higher Education <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk>

DCSF News Centre <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/newslist.cgi>

DIUS News Distribution Service <http://nds.coi.gov.uk/environment/dius/>

LSC News <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/News>

If you wish to respond to anything in this eBulletin or contribute to the August 2009 issue, please email Jim at James.Tate@uwe.ac.uk