

# QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## EQUITY BOARD

### MINUTES

Equity Board met in the Council Room, U214, Level 2, U Block, Gardens Point Campus, at 2:00 pm on Thursday, 17 November 2005.

#### **Present**

Dr C Dickenson (Chair); Dr B Atherton, Dr D Battistutta, Ms C Brickell, Ms R Christie, Dr D Dallemagne, Ms R Field, Dr E French, Ms S Garske, Ms M Kelly, Ms D Redfern; Mr M Hills (Secretary).

#### **Apologies**

Dr J Carr, Ms D Eden, Mr S Pincus, Dr B Senadji, Ms C Young.

#### **Absent**

Mr A Perrau.

#### **By invitation**

Ms W Cusack, Mr J Dascoli, Ms D Dobinson, Ms C Jackson, Ms J Lampert, Ms M Mackinnon, Ms G O'Brien.

#### **1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND FINAL STARRING OF AGENDA** 02/00295

Equity Board noted the above apologies.

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, welcomed members to the final meeting of 2005 and noted Ms Lampert was attending in place of Dr Carr and Mr Dascoli was attending in place of Ms Young.

Dr Dickenson called for starring of additional items on the agenda. No further items were starred. All items remaining unstarred were noted or adopted as appropriate.

No conflicts of interest were declared at the opening of the meeting.

#### **2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of Equity Board's meeting of 1 September 2005 were confirmed.

#### **3. PRESENTATION**

There was no presentation.

#### **4. REPORTS**

##### **4.1 Chair**

The Chair, Dr Dickenson, briefed members on recent developments across the University.

#### **Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation update**

05/00160

Dr Dickenson informed members that there had been little development to date and it was likely that any decision on VSU would be postponed until 2006. Until the legislation was introduced, the University would retain its compulsory Student Guild fee.

It was envisaged there would be a student backlash over the requirement to pay their Guild fee in 2006. The University was seeking to address these concerns. It was noted that a student could opt to be a conscientious objector and their fee would be incorporated into the University's Student Endowment Fund.

#### **Business and Service Improvement (BSI) Program**

05/00120

Dr Dickenson informed members that development of the BSI Program was driven by the University's Planning and Resources Committee directive to reduce the burgeoning costs of administration of the University, including the number of professional staff. It was noted the University had some of the largest administration costs of any Australian university. The program would seek to streamline all facets of student activities and processes whilst maintaining quality of services.

In 2005 the program had completed the following reviews: integration of physical and virtual client contact points, aspects of student administration in the University, and University marketing activities. Reviews for 2006 included aspects of the University's financial administration, direct client IT services, and human resource management.

### **Student Management System (SMS)**

05/00414

Dr Dickenson informed members that the tender for the new SMS would close at the end of November with testing of the new system taking up the first half of 2006.

#### **4.1.1 Business arising from minutes - Post-meeting action sheet for Equity Board 1 September 2005 meeting**

##### **PMA Item 4.2.1 - Low-SES Student Equity Committee**

99/00921

Action: Liaise with Registrar on circulating a memo to course coordinators in relation to ways to reduce costs to students.

Action Officers: Equity Coordinator.

**Outcome:** The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, informed the Board that this action was in progress.

##### **PMA Item 4.2.2 - Disability Services Committee**

95/00786

Action: Liaise with DVC(TILS) in relation to the status of the Web Accessibility Officer position, currently vacant, and report back to Equity Board.

Action Officers: Chair, TILS Equity Committee.

**Outcome:** Mr Dascoli informed the Board that this position was yet to be filled. However, Mr Dascoli indicated that the office of the DVC (TILS) was now involved. Several members of the Board raised concern over the unfilled position.

#### **4.2 Equity Board Sub-Committees**

##### **4.2.1 Low-SES Student Equity Committee**

99/00921

The Chair, Low-SES Student Equity Committee, Dr Dallemagne, informed the Board that several issues were discussed at its meeting on 8 November 2005 which included the following:

- There was currently no Low-SES officer stationed at the Caboolture campus. Discussion was underway with the campus' low income contact officer to address this issue.
- The Committee felt the University's overall marketing strategy and thrust, while commercially sound and effective, could further be enhanced by promoting the 'softer' side of the University, such as its many equity initiatives and schemes. The Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, informed the Board there were a series of new marketing initiatives in progress and undertook to provide a presentation on these initiatives at the first meeting of the Board in 2006.
- The issue of 3 OPs concessions was unresolved. The Committee felt it would be beneficial for these students to be the recipients of donated computers and to be provided with text book vouchers. It was suggested that cross-faculty collaboration should be investigated as a possible resolution.

##### **4.2.1.1 Minutes of meeting – 16 August 2005**

99/00921

**Resolved** to note the minutes of the Low-SES Student Equity Committee's 16 August 2005 meeting.

##### **4.2.2 Disability Services Committee**

95/00786

The Chair, Disability Services Committee, Ms Field, informed the Board that the Committee met on 7 November 2005. The meeting focused on looking into the context of training of professional and academic staff to effectively deal with students and clients with a psychiatric disability. The Committee commended the Equity Office in the organisation of a University-wide seminar on this issue.

Ms Field informed the Board that she was stepping down as Chair of the Disability Services Committee. The Chair, Equity Board, Dr Dickenson, thanked Ms Field for her stewardship of the Committee.

### 4.2.3 Cultural Diversity Committee 96/00803

The Chair, Cultural Diversity Committee, Dr Battistutta, informed the Board that 2005 witnessed a consolidation of the Committee's membership. Dr Battistutta felt that the Committee's restructured membership was now ready for 2006 and beyond.

#### 4.2.3.1 Minutes of meeting – 25 October 2005 96/00803

**Resolved** to note the minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee's 25 October 2005 meeting.

#### 4.2.3.2 Minutes of meeting – 25 August 2005 96/00803

**Resolved** to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Cultural Diversity Committee's 25 August 2005 meeting.

### 4.3 Divisions / Faculties

#### 4.3.1 Division of Research and Commercialisation / Division of International and Development 04/00530

Equity Board was briefed by the Chair, Division of Research and Commercialisation/Division of International and Development Equity Committee, Ms Garske, on recent equity initiatives across the two divisions which included strong attendance at a cultural diversity seminar and strong equity training programs across the two divisions. The Committee was also investigating ways of better incorporating equity principles into the staff PPr process. A closer working relationship between the Development Office and the Equity Section was also suggested as a further way to embed equity principles across the divisions.

Ms Garske noted that the effectiveness of the Committee was hindered by the transient nature of its membership. It was important to resolve this issue in the interest in maintaining consistency and focus.

Ms Garske informed the Board that her term as Chair of the Committee concluded at the end of the year. The Chair, Equity Board, Dr Dickenson, thanked Ms Garske for her stewardship of the Committee.

#### 4.3.2 Faculty of Health 02/00337

Equity Board was briefed by the Chair, Faculty of Health Equity Committee, Dr Battistutta, on recent activities of the Committee which included the following:

- 2005 witnessed the Committee building upon past equity initiatives, especially towards support and financial assistance of international and domestic students.
- There would be a roll over of equity support staff in 2006.
- The Career Mentoring scheme for female academic staff continued to be successful. However, it was noted that the recent addition of research assistants to the scheme had proved unsuccessful and that they had been moved back into the research fold.
- The exploration of a textbook loan scheme had been protracted but was now complete. It was decided to decentralise the scheme and it had proved to be successful to date.
- The Committee's aims for 2006 included the continuation of the development of financial assistance initiatives, career mentoring, international student support and the incorporation of Indigenous employment and employment initiatives.

The Chair, Equity Board, Dr Dickenson, thanked Dr Battistutta for her report.

#### 4.3.3 Faculty of Law 04/00530

Equity Board was briefed by the Chair, Faculty of Law Equity Committee, Ms Field, who tabled a report on recent activities of the Committee.

In addition to the tabled report, Ms Field informed the Board that her term as Chair concluded at the end of the year. Ms Field indicated that it was a challenge to fill the vacancy as the position might be viewed as not

rewarding enough for the effort and time invested into this position. The Board noted that this was a concern that should be addressed in the coming year.

The Chair, Equity Board, Dr Dickenson, thanked Ms Field for her stewardship of the Committee.

## 5. SUBMISSIONS

### 5.1 Draft Guidelines and Reporting Framework for annual report 00/00710

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, proposing the Board endorse the draft guidelines and reporting framework for further development. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, requested Ms Kelly speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly outlined the circumstances leading to the development of this document and further indicated that this document was also to be utilised as an annual reporting tool to the Vice-Chancellor. Ms Kelly invited members provide their feedback on the draft framework back to her within two weeks of this meeting.

**Resolved** to endorse for further development the draft Guidelines and Reporting Framework at attachment 1 of the submission.

### 5.2 Gender Equity at QUT – annual report on female staff statistics 2004 and 2005 (preliminary) 99/01130

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to a preliminary report on female staff statistics for 2004 and 2005. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly informed members that the University's People and Culture Plan had set an objective of 50 per cent of the senior staff group to be female. The representation of senior female staff, as at 31 March 2005, was 32.5 per cent with professional staff at 39.3 per cent and academic staff at 29.2 per cent. Ms Kelly indicated that there was still some way to go to reach the 50 per cent target.

The Board noted that the report was positive overall but there were a few areas of concern such as the high rates of attrition of professional senior female staff, significant differences in recruitment success rates of internal professional female staff over academic staff, low numbers of research completions, and gender imbalance on many University-level committees.

Ms Kelly acknowledged that the statistics for the supervision of research students by female staff at the principal and associate supervisor level were of major concern to the University. Ms Kelly informed the Board that this issue was being investigated by the University and undertook to report back to the Board on any outcomes.

**Resolved** to note the report on female staff statistics for 2004 and 2005 (preliminary) at attachment 1 of the submission.

### 5.3 Annual QUT Student Equity Report – 2005 02/00267

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to the Annual QUT Student Equity Report for 2005. The Chair, Dr Dickenson invited Ms Kelly to speak to the submission.

Ms Kelly outlined the report and stressed that the data for this report was for students who had left QUT for any number of reasons. The data did not include students moving across courses or commencing students.

Ms Kelly drew members' attention to the attrition statistics at Table 1. Ms Kelly suggested that the data on the table could be used as a point of reference for student equity progress across each faculty and division. However, Ms Kelly cautioned reading too much into the data as the small sample population in a few areas could significantly alter the results. Ms Kelly undertook to investigate if a similar table could be developed for commencing students.

Dr Dickenson noted that the University's target for overall attrition rate was 10 per cent. The rate was currently at 12.8 per cent.

**Resolved** to note the Annual QUT Student Equity Report – 2005, in particular the attrition statistics, at attachment 1 of the submission.

**5.4 Prayer rooms for Muslim Students and Staff: Gardens Point campus**

02/00149

Equity Board considered a submission from the Equity Coordinator, Ms Kelly, in relation to the provision of prayer rooms at Gardens Point Campus for Muslim students and staff. The Chair, Dr Dickenson, invited the Senior Equity Officer, Ms Dobinson, to speak to the submission.

Ms Dobinson provided the background and added that the University was also bound by legislation to provide these facilities. Ms Dobinson stressed that this was an urgent issue that needed to be resolved as soon as possible.

Dr Dickenson acknowledged the urgency of the issue but added that the lack of free space on the campus was the real issue. It was suggested that it might be possible to enter into collaboration with the Brisbane City Council in providing prayer room facilities within the central business district. Dr Dickenson undertook to discuss the issue of physical space with the Executive Director, Finance and Resource Planning and the Vice-Chancellor. It was further agreed that Ms Dobinson would establish a consultation group which would include the relevant stakeholders, including the Registrar.

**Resolved:**

- (i) to endorse the report on the provision of Prayer Room facilities to Muslim students and staff at QUT; and
- (ii) to forward the report to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration.

**5.5 Revised Terms of Reference – Cultural Diversity Committee**

96/00803

**Resolved** to endorse for the Vice-Chancellor's approval the revised terms of reference for the Cultural Diversity Committee as detailed in attachment 1 of the submission.

**6. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

The following items were noted for information.

**6.1 Equity Board 2005 Priorities**

**6.2 2006 QUT Committee Meeting Schedule**

**7. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**8. NEXT MEETING**

This was the final meeting of 2005. The first meeting of 2006 was scheduled for 9 March 2006.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 4:10 pm.

Confirmed

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Chair

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Date