

The University of Melbourne

Cultural Strategic Plan 2007-2009

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

In 2006 University Council adopted a *Cultural Policy Statement*, which affirmed a set of guiding principles for the University as an agent in cultural life and the custodian and manager of one of the largest cultural resources in Australia. The following Strategic Plan now elaborates the strategies the University will use to configure its cultural resources to best serve the whole community.

In establishing the Plan, it is recognized that cultural expression itself is, and should be, beyond institutional control, but that clearly articulated institutional values, principles and strategies can significantly influence development, understanding and benefits of cultural programs.

1.2 The Context

The University's Strategic Plan *Growing Esteem* recognises that the University aspires to be a public-spirited institution highly regarded for making distinctive contributions to society in research, teaching and knowledge transfer. The study, practice, publication and performance of cultural works is at the heart of the University's activities and will play a key role in determining whether the University's aspirations are met.

Knowledge transfer involves conceiving the University as in a two-way exchange of knowledge and skills with the wider community, to the mutual benefit of both. The challenge for the University is to become more accessible to non-academic communities and potential partners. Such parties bring other resources and expertise, along with their own agendas, but when it works well, Knowledge Transfer results in academic forms of knowledge and expertise finding new applications, purposes and platforms beyond the typical reach of scholarship.

The University's portfolio of cultural resources plays a significant role in Knowledge Transfer. Exhibitions by University collections, galleries and museums; performances by the Melbourne Theatre Company and University performers, dancers and musicians; publications, lectures or short courses on cultural subjects by the University; the substantial output of Melbourne University Publishing; campus festivals, prizes, and awards; and the commissioning of new works of art and music all supplement the more formal types of disciplinary discourse taught in the University. These activities enrich the "Melbourne Experience" for students, and engage communities in collective experiences, providing opportunities for reflection and conversation on the never-ending questions of how we make our lives meaningful, our work valuable and our values workable.

The University is therefore an owner, patron, and agent in cultural life, as well as being an educational institution with a significant role in the training and showcasing of professional writers, visual and performing artists, filmmakers and designers, arts teachers, curators and administrators, and the education of their audiences.

1.3 The Collections and Programs

As well as teaching collections and digital or virtual resources, the University currently has 31 cultural collections, many units offering over 50 cultural programs, and various applied research or outreach projects. Each is the responsibility of a single University division or entity, with a designated officer appointed as Manager. The collections are coordinated by the Cultural Collections Committee, advised by the Manager, Cultural Collections. The programs are ultimately the responsibility of the Deans of the relevant faculties.

2. Principles

The Principles agreed in the *Cultural Policy Statement* affirm the University commitment to:

- 1 Conserving, documenting, and coherently developing the University's cultural collections and programs
- 2 Facilitating access to them for staff, students and the public
- 3 Advocating research on them within and without the University
- 4 Supporting educational understanding of them for students and the public
- 5 Maximizing support for them from external partners and public participation
- 6 Co-coordinating plans and programs to optimize benefit for the whole University
- 7 Celebrating and promoting the University as a distinctive cultural centre

3. Objectives

To further these principles, we envisage 8 objectives for the coming 3 years.

1. Developing the cultural significance of the physical campus
2. Enhancing public awareness of the University as a significant cultural centre
3. Engaging wider audiences in University cultural programs
4. Stimulating cultural research, learning and practice
5. Improving cultural infrastructure
6. Building IT management and dissemination for cultural collections
7. Leading civic cultural advocacy
8. Enlarging resource support for cultural programs

Objective 1: Developing the cultural significance of the physical campus

To engender among its staff and students a sense of our cultural heritage, values and ideals, and an understanding of what the University has to offer, it is important the University campus buildings and public spaces communicate visually as a place of cultural practice and history.

Strategies

To develop the cultural significance of the campus, we would:

- Dialogue with the Master Planning process to ensure there is a cultural vision of campus art, architecture and grounds
- Work with Property and Construction to incorporate art, sculpture, arboreal design and symbols of the university's heritage into the public campus spaces;
- Integrate art and cultural display elements into all university capital projects
- Seek to establish, in the Old Law Library, a visitors centre of changing displays of the university's intellectual history and achievements
- Encourage departments and faculties to incorporate cultural objects and programs in their own spaces
- Encourage Council to budget for on-going art acquisition, creative commissions, and cultural residencies

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 2: Enhancing public awareness of the University as a significant cultural centre

The real depth and richness of the University's cultural resources is scarcely appreciated by the public: few would know it is one of the largest cultural institutions in Australia.

Strategies

To focus on enhancing public awareness of the University as a cultural centre of significance, we would:

- Develop integrated marketing tactics to increase the university's cultural profile
- Publish a centrally-coordinated cultural program for each year
- Review and optimize opportunities for regular targeted communications about university cultural programs
- Increase the availability of published material, merchandise, and multimedia resources for university cultural collections and programs
- Encourage and increase use of university cultural resources in external loans, travelling exhibitions, and joint ventures with external galleries and presenters, both in Australia and internationally
- Seek targeted university involvement in major external cultural events in Melbourne
- Endorse university-wide hosting of at least one key international cultural conference or symposium each year
- Support teaching and learning from the cultural collections and assist key cultural staff to participate in debate and dialogue in leading external forums promoting university's resources

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

- Attendance figures at university cultural events has lifted by 25%.
- Media coverage of university cultural programs has improved
- The number of requests for loans and external exhibitions of university cultural objects has increased

Objective 3: Engaging wider audiences in University cultural programs

Because of its primary mission of research and teaching, but also because of the limits of its resources, the University's cultural collections and programs have only been selectively available to the public.

Strategies

To engage a larger and more diverse audience, we would:

- Conceive and present periodic campus-wide events, e.g., a Festival of Ideas, One Day University, or Cultural Treasures Trail, to showcase the university's intellectual innovation and cultural resources
- Stimulate cultural tourism on campus, through campus tours and rationalization of currently-available cultural maps and guides to the campus
- Review accessibility mechanisms for university cultural collections, e.g., evening and weekend opening hours, clearer parking arrangements, pathways from and coordination with public transport routes
- Develop regular cultural program use of the Alan Gilbert Building exhibition and lecture space, with its café, and convenient tram access, and a possible information point/cultural merchandise shop
- Address in key programs means of increasing the diversity of community interface for audiences such as schools, the disadvantaged, and the elderly
- Encourage membership programs for key cultural collections
- Facilitate sharing between programs best practice in university cultural promotion, presentation, and events management

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 4: Stimulating cultural research, learning and practice

The University is committed to having its collections illuminated by research and teaching, for the benefit of students and the community. Moreover, creative courses at the University are internationally successful in producing new and innovative work in contemporary art, critical writing, theatre making, films and musical composition, and other forms of work that cross these fields.

Strategies

To stimulate research, learning and teaching and the practice of culture, we would:

- Support existing programs to showcase work by creative students
- Encourage outreach by creative staff and students to schools and community
- Establish chairs in museology, archives, librarianship
- Postgraduate scholarships in cultural specialities, such as museology, archival research, and curatorial skills
- Conduct a key conference on cultural collections
- Initiate a student society for cultural programs, with visitors and events
- Maintain a lecture program for cultural topics

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 5: Improving cultural infrastructure

As a leading custodian and manager of cultural resources, the University is committed to the propositions that its cultural inventory should be documented and preserved at benchmark standards.

Strategies

To improve infrastructure for our cultural collections, we would:

- Commission or update evaluations to assess the conservation and cataloguing requirements of the university's cultural collections
- Determine priorities and implement appropriate measures to catalogue, preserve and protect collection requirements
- Survey the campus and surrounding community facilities to investigate how to increase venues available and suitable for cultural programs
- Review available campus venues and facilities for their most effective and efficient use
- Explore partnerships with arts and cultural organizations, businesses and funding bodies to increase the effective use of resources available
- Identify the cultural collections on campus most easily accessible by the public and review signage and map directions

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 6: Building IT management and dissemination for cultural collections

With the increasing importance of the web and IT systems in collection management and dissemination, the University is aware its treasures can increasingly be made sense of and accessible through IT.

Strategies

To build better management and dissemination for the collections, we would:

- Commission digitization and access through IT portals progressively for the key collections
- Improving data control and cataloguing, including appropriate management technology for deaccessioning, barcoding, etc
- Improve use of IT to communicate with and deliver programs to the campus community and visitors

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 7: Leading civic cultural advocacy

A further way the University's profile as a cultural centre will increase is through its participation in advocacy for cultural matters in the wider community.

Strategies

To enhance University participation in leading cultural advocacy, we would:

- Champion civic arts and cultural development outside the university
- Assist cultural organisations outside to network and access resources and information
- Link internal units to community networks and encourage cooperation
- Stimulate conferences and discussions

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

Objective 8: Enlarging resource support for cultural programs

A serious impediment to implementing all these strategies is the limited access the cultural programs currently have to resources, both internal and external.

Strategies

To enlarge the resource support available for cultural programs, we would:

- Review current resource allocation and sponsorship policy to increased operating funds available for cultural collections
- Increase net revenue from services and sales activities in all cultural programs and collections
- Continue to seek private support to develop and maintain collections and enhance program delivery
- Coordinate with key cultural providers in a partnership to ensure cultural activities are sustainable and new investment is attracted

We will know we are on track if, by 2009:

4. Sponsorship and Resource Allocation Priorities

The University's programs encompass many dimensions of interaction between academia and wider society. As an agent in cultural life, the University seeks selective partnerships as a sponsor or patron where benefits are compelling. There are frequently requests to the University for sponsorship, for access to venues, or the allocation of funds to partnerships from individuals and organisations, both from within and without. In deploying institutional resources, the University must be cogniscent of its strategic priorities, and that it can serve communities best by selective engagements which support these.

Sources of Assistance

To avoid multiple applications being considered and conflicting decisions being made by different levels of the University, requests for assistance are considered as follows:

For individual staff and student projects

For individual students and staff seeking sponsorship or assistance, the principal source of support is the Faculty, to whom a request should be directed first. Approaches from students and staff received in the Office of the Vice Chancellor will be referred to Faculties. Deans are best placed to determine whether a particular project will support its objectives for students and staff, and the appropriate level at which assistance should be provided. In general, individual projects must relate to an applicant's academic work at the University to receive assistance

For departmental and external community projects

For departments and for external community organizations developing projects where there is no logical departmental partner, the Vice Chancellor maintains a Cultural and Community Relations Advisory Group, which considers applications, administers a budget and provides advice about what assistance is available. Approaches may therefore be directed to the Secretary, CCRAAG, or to the Chair of CCRAAG, the Pro Vice Chancellor (University Relations), who can provide advice on these matters.

For University sponsorship of external events and projects

For external organizations seeking the University's engagement as a sponsor, (other than a discipline-specific event, which may be sponsored by a Faculty), the Office of the Vice Chancellor will determine whether funds will be allocated through the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Innovation and Development). In such cases, a written sponsorship agreement will usually be negotiated before funds are allocated, setting out the marketing acknowledgement and other benefits the University would receive. The Vice Principal (Marketing and Communication) has proforma sponsorship agreements for this purpose.

Criteria for allocation of funds

In allocation of resources for sponsorships, both Faculties and the Office of the Vice Chancellor give priority to programs and projects:

- where the University has a distinctive contribution to make
- where the University's research and other activities are of the highest standard
- when the benefits for the University are compelling
- which are configured around those disciplinary and societal issues in which the institution can make a difference
- which combine the efforts of staff, students and external partners.

Note that the University's Act and Statutes prevent it from making donations to religious or political causes or organizations.

In assessing applications for central assistance the Office of the Vice Chancellor will look for evidence of the compatibility of the proposed project with one or more of the goals in its Strategic Plan, including whether the project will –

1. promote wide and significant University interaction and involvement in the national and international intellectual and community life by –
 - enhancing participation of staff and students in national and international public discourse and debates about intellectual issues
 - assisting University teams or individuals attend major international academic competitions or sporting events
 - assisting faculties and departments to mount public lectures, conferences and other events of wide community significance
2. elevate public awareness of University programs among local and national communities by –
 - supporting University promotional publications which enhance the public's experience of the University's cultural life and assets through visits, tours and other means
 - seeking media promotion or marketing of the University's unique resources and events

- assisting the production of long-term publications and projects which enhance the University's standing as a major intellectual institution
3. enrich campus life as part of the 'Melbourne Experience' by –
- supporting student projects of campus-wide interest
 - promoting interface with and support for the University as an institution in the local Parkville-Carlton community and communities local to other University campuses

5. Review and Evaluation

From 2006, the University has resolved to review its programs on a three-year cycle. The Pro Vice Chancellor (University Relations) will be responsible for determining the timetable and conduct of these reviews, which will be reported to the University Relations Committee of Council.

Issued by
Pro Vice Chancellor
University Relations May 2007