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Conferences Canadian Learning Commons Conference

2012-05-08

Negotiating Meaning, Negotiating Place: Peer Mentoring and Student Participation in the Learning Commons

Kirkwood, Keith

Kirkwood, K. “Negotiating Meaning, Negotiating Place: Peer Mentoring and Student Participation in the Learning Commons”. Presented at the 6th Canadian Learning Commons Conference, May 7-9. 2012, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

http://hdl.handle.net/1880/49088

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6th Canadian Learning Commons Conference
University of Calgary
7-9 May 2012

Negotiating meaning, negotiating place

Peer mentoring and student participation in the Learning Commons

Keith Kirkwood
School of Language and Learning

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Presentation outline

- Victoria University, Melbourne Australia
- The Learning Commons
- Principles and pedagogy
- A tour of peer learning places in the Learning Commons and introductions to our mentors
- Future directions

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Victoria University, Melbourne Australia -- not that Canadian one ;)

- Multi-campus – 11 campuses
- Multi-sector university (higher ed, vocational ed, further ed)
- VU students are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), with:
  - a high proportion from low socio-economic status (SES),
  - part-time students,
  - first in the family university students,
  - mature-age students (60% over 25), and
  - students who work for more than 15 hours/week.

"The challenge for VU is to embrace its diversity and aim to maximise access and success for all its students."

Kent & McLennan, 2007

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Victoria University's Learning Commons 2007-present

Collaborative service model established for the delivery of a range of student learning needs, consisting of a LC partnership between:

- Library
- IT Services
- Career services
- Office of PG Research
- Learning Support Services
- Student Leadership

Peer mentoring components in the partnership:

- Student assistants (after-hours)
- Students-as-staff
- Peer-career advisers
- Research Ambassadors
- Student Rovers, Writing Mentors

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Founding principles for the VU Learning Commons

Learning oriented
- Facilitates active, independent and collaborative learning

Learner centred
- Focuses on student needs, preferences and work patterns

University wide
- Part of university-wide development of learner autonomy

Flexible
- Responsive to the changing needs of learners for resources and support

Collaborative
- Based on collaboration between different learning support areas in the university.

Community building
- Provides a hub for physical and virtual interaction for staff and students.

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VU Learning Commons pedagogy

Putting learning into the learning commons.

> "In a learner-centred environment, attention is paid to the experience, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs that learners bring to the university."
>
> (Gabb 2005 p. 1)

*Learning is **made visible** through learner-centred pedagogies.*

- Collaborative learning
- Active and autonomous learning
- Peer learning

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Student Rovers desk

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Student Rovers

"Providing opportunities for student employment on campus together with a more 'approachable' level of service as the human face of the Learning Commons."

Kiel, R., & Gallagher, A. (2011)

Rovers:

- Assist with basic student queries related to using and locating core facilities, information resources, software and hardware;
- Help students to clarify and articulate basic issues related to their learning strategies.

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Student Rovers

Framing rovers as junior staff in a service delivery hierarchy is not the only way in which the rovers' role can be construed. An alternative way of conceptualising rovers is to frame them as students; as student mentors who have demonstrated their practical understanding of academic institutions and practices by their good academic results. Understood in this way, rovers are students paid to be students, not students paid to be staff; ***they are 'students as students' rather than 'students as staff '.***

(McCormack, Pancini & Tout, 2010, p. 46)

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Student Rovers

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Student Rovers

A Student Rover's comment at the end of a shift:

"*At the end of that day shift when I was in the train what I … realised was that at that moment not only professional help took place but a social network between a Rover and a student, a social network between a student and the learning commons, and finally, in a broader sense a network between a learner and VICTORIA UNIVERSITY took place in a positive way.*"

(Kiel & Gallagher, 2011)

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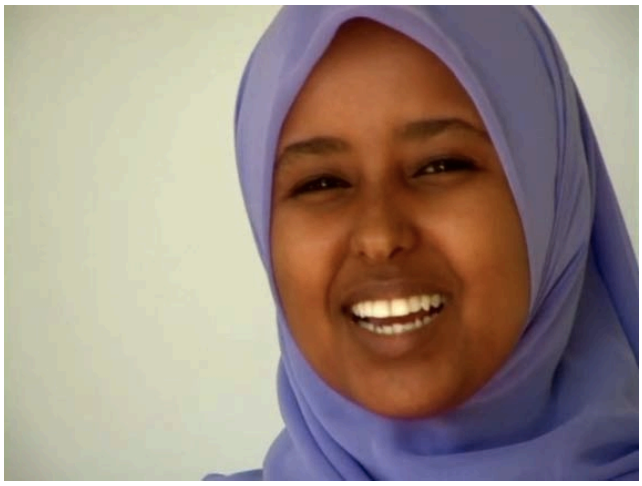

Rovers video: http://youtu.be/JnUxGvFsud0

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Research Ambassadors area

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Research Ambassador program

The Research Ambassador program is a joint initiative from the Office for Postgraduate Research (OPR), the Office for Research (OfR) and the University Library

Research Ambassadors at Victoria University provide peer-to-peer research support to both research students and staff in a range of areas including:

- quantitative and qualitative research design and data analysis
- document formatting
- EndNote
- NVivo
- data and file management
- library research databases and other areas

In addition to face-to-face support, the Research Ambassadors created a Facebook page and Skype and Twitter accounts as methods of broadening their reach for communicating with clients.

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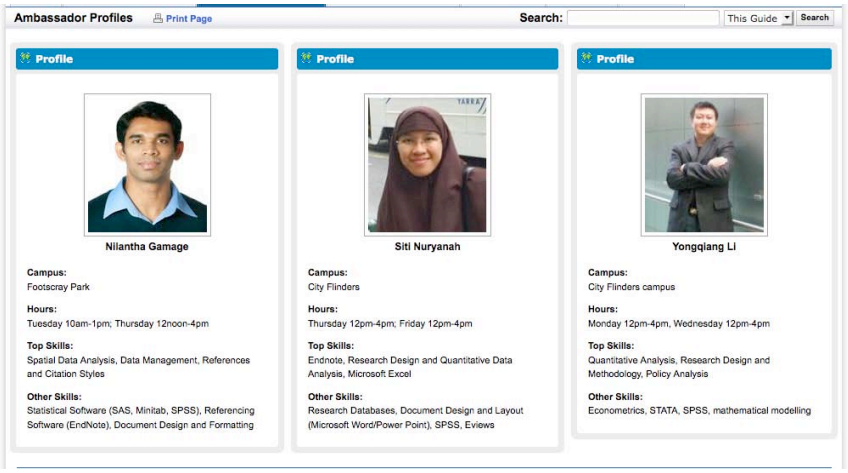
Research Ambassadors



http://guides.library.vu.edu.au/seekRA

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Research Ambassador

"Being a RA enables me to expose myself to the other disciplines colleagues are working on, which broadens my vision and enables me to approach my own research assignment from multiple angles. I wish I could spare more time learning from other RAs, as a process toward my professional development."

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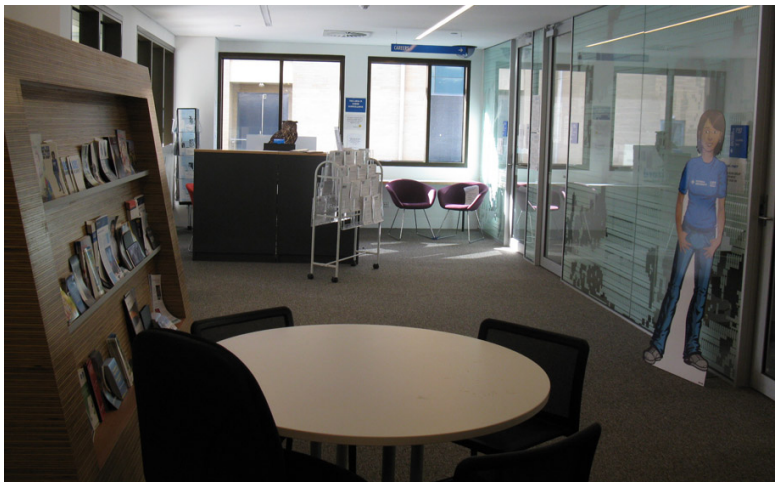
Peer Career Advisors (PCA) area at Footscray Park campus



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PCA video: http://youtu.be/M_t9mx4P2HA

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STUDENT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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http://www.facebook.com/victoria.jobs

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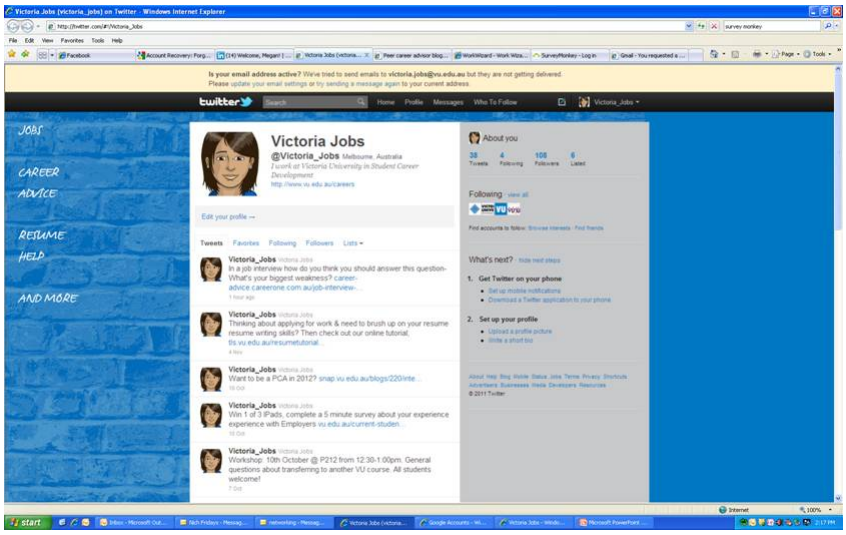

https://twitter.com/#!/Victoria_Jobs

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http://www.snap.vu.edu.au/blogs/

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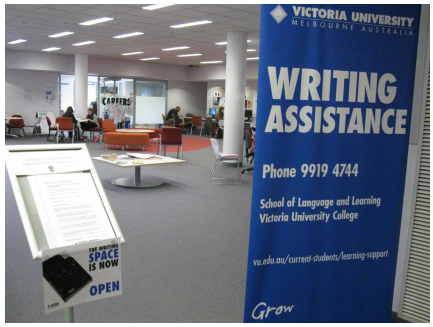
http://guides.library.vu.edu.au/writing_space

Writing Space entrances at two campuses



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Writing Space – Footscray Park campus

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Writing Space consultation

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Writing mentor video: http://youtu.be/qlB2z_vDus8

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Where to from here?

- Increased development of the mentoring learning community as the Learning Commons positions itself at the centre.
- Increased cross-referrals of the mentoring programs.
- Increased resource development by the mentoring groups.
- Increased student governance in the Learning Commons and student participation in curriculum renewal.
- Senior mentor roles provide increased leadership in T&L opportunities

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