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## Fellowship Final Report

### The key to the door? Teaching awards in Australian higher education

Mark Israel



THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
*Achieve International Excellence*

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Australian Learning and Teaching Council  
PO Box 2375  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Australia

Street address:  
Level 14, 300 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Australia

Telephone: 02 8667 8500  
Facsimile: 02 8667 8515  
Web: <[www.altc.edu.au](http://www.altc.edu.au)>

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*If awardees can view the award as a key, they might be more tempted to try to unlock a series of doors with it.*



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During the course of this Fellowship, I asked award winners what advice they would offer to future awardees and their institutions. *Advice to Award Winners* is based on an article created as part of this project and co-authored with Iain Hay (Australian Prime Minister's award winner, 1996, Flinders University) and Lisa Emerson (New Zealand Prime Minister's Supreme award winner, 2008, Massey University), published in *Campus Review* (Israel et al. 2010). We have also written *Advice for Institutions* which is yet to be published outside this report.

I received a Prime Minister's award in 2004, and would like to thank those students and colleagues who made it such an enjoyable experience.

*Mark Israel*

*The University of Western Australia, August 2011*



## Advice for Award Winners

**Celebrate**, enjoy the fuss and the sensation of success for a few days. Thank your colleagues and students for supporting your nomination, and then brace yourself for pressure. Everyone now expects you to be a stellar performer. However, great teaching is not reducible to stand-up comedy and the gift of the gab. Great teachers inspire learning, link research and teaching, and respect and support students and it is worth thinking about what you might do to further those aims.

**Be prepared for disappointment.** Other academics may not know about your award, may not care or may be envious. Remarkably, some may think less of you as a result of the award, perhaps suggesting that recognising, rewarding and celebrating teaching is a misguided pursuit. Whatever the reasons, their silence or, even worse, their barbed comments can be hurtful. Steel yourself for these possibilities, rise above any pettiness, and don't let the negativity of others undermine your achievements. And be aware that there are people out there who really do value your work, appreciate your effort, and want you to share your talents with them.

You may need to allow yourself some time to get used to having a higher profile. A teaching award may shoot you out of your comfort zone and offer new possibilities. It's fine to feel off balance, and even a little anxious, for a while: but we would encourage you to **grab your opportunities** with both hands.

**Manage upwards.** Your supervisor, executive dean and vice-chancellor might be excited by your success but may not have thought strategically about what you might do next. Help them identify what would and what would not be good for you, your faculty and your institution. For example, what presentations do they want you to do, to whom, and why? Are there any leadership roles in the faculty, university or more broadly

that you might be able to take on? Which requests are your supervisors happy for you to refuse?

Beware becoming your institution's 'show teacher', trotted out on special occasions to demonstrate the 'institution's commitment to teaching excellence'. Repeated focus on the work and achievements of an individual or small group of people may be counter-productive. Just imagine the annoyance and frustration of long-serving and highly effective colleagues. They may not have received awards and perhaps quite justifiably feel that their sterling work is being overlooked and undervalued. And in such cases you may well find that it is you who is the focus of those frustrations, not the institution.

**Rattle some door knobs.** No-one really knows what a teaching award allows you to do. Identify some of the things that interest you and try using the award as the opening. Look beyond your traditional hunting grounds – outside your discipline, institution and geographical location. Think of some of the ways skills you have demonstrated so clearly in teaching might be transferred to other fields. Sometimes, when you look for an opening, you'll get a polite no. Sometimes, you'll be ignored. Sometimes, you'll be met with tail-wagging, face-licking enthusiasm. Try to look for activities that might support any longer-term ambitions you have for service, management and research as well as teaching.

**Plan your next promotion application** with the teaching award as one of the jewels in your crown. Your organisation will have stated, all over its strategic plans, that teaching excellence (or similar) is one of its core objectives. Encourage promotion committees to prove it.

**Prepare to defend your research track record.** One of us was warned that a teaching award represented the end of his



career as he would either be seen as a non-researcher or would inevitably head in that direction. In the simple everyday categorisations many people make of one another's academic roles and activities, it is possible that you'll be seen as a teacher first and foremost. So, take care to manage your academic identity to create the impression you want or need. If it is important to you, protect your research interests and find ways to keep going. Consider whether new areas of research may open up for you around the teaching-research nexus. Make the teaching award work for you, not against you, in all areas of your professional life.

**Encourage and support your colleagues.**

What are the chances that you really are the best teacher in your institution? Offer to review applications for your institution – you will probably be asked to do so anyway. Nothing takes pressure off you faster than having colleagues in your discipline or institution emulating your success. Build networks with other award winning teachers, both within and beyond your own organisation, and consider what you can do to extend best practice, support the wider teaching community, and develop teaching-research groups.

**Learn to say no, with grace.** You might find yourself approached incessantly – and with little regard for your other commitments – to review applications, participate in learning and teaching focus groups, lead professional development sessions... Manage your workload, or ask your supervisor to help you with this. Not every offer is a good offer. There are some things you will be asked to do that no-one else would agree to. There may be good reasons for their lack of interest. If you might agree to invitations under particular conditions, state them. Ask yourself what's in it for you, and for your institution. Consider whether there's any particular reason why you are the right person for this, and if there isn't, perhaps say no or deflect the request to colleagues who might be looking for such an opportunity. You're a busy person.

**Enjoy.** Hold the award lightly, don't take yourself too seriously, let your professional life open up, grab opportunities, speak to new issues, challenge institutional poor practice, take risks, see where serendipity leads you – celebrate others' successes, toast the award winners who come after you, be a mentor, and above all have some fun. You've earned it.



## Advice for Institutions

The first thing should be easy. **Celebrate.** If your institution includes something like ‘quality teaching’ as a core value or objective in its strategic documents, then a national teaching award is an opportunity to reinforce both your commitment to this value and your institution’s achievements. Celebrate visibly and, where appropriate, involve students in the celebration. By marking the occasion within the institution, you communicate to your staff and students that you do indeed value teaching excellence. By recognising the event in external publicity, you again confirm the value your institution places on teaching – and, in a world where institutional performance is ending up on display in league tables, this is something employers, prospective students and their parents, want to hear.

**Debrief your awardees.** Get to know, and find ways to develop, these high-value employees. Don’t make it easy for other institutions to test their loyalties by trying to poach them. Awardees have reported that they find it difficult both to handle a higher profile than they’re used to and to make the most of any opportunities offered by the award. Offer practical support to maximise the impact of the award. And point out opportunities for leadership development, if this is something that would interest the awardee. Encourage award winners to be creative and imaginative about what they’d like to achieve – and then see how you can support them towards their goals as well as those of your institution.

At the same time, you may be able to **discern directions and opportunities** the award winner hadn’t thought about. But don’t jump in too fast. First, you need to work out how the particular strengths of the award winner might suit them to particular paths and tasks. Then you can tailor opportunities for development.

**Be sensitive about what you ask your award winner to do** in the interests of the organisation. Don’t assume every award winning teacher is an extrovert who loves nothing more than to entertain graduation ceremonies or whole-of-institution teaching symposiums. Some will have won awards because they are reflective, thoughtful teachers who work quietly to nurture others’ abilities. Yet others may be prickly characters with scholarly depths. To ask these introverts to take on an extrovert’s role would be clearly unfair – and also a poor strategic move since, if they don’t shine in that situation, people will start asking questions about what teaching awards mean.

**Don’t bleed award winners dry.** You’ll probably want to use your awardee to raise the profile of teaching and learning. But if a teaching award means that their workload doubles overnight, most winners are going to burn out. By all means, ask your award winners to engage with others in ways that will work for them – for example, supporting others who are working on teaching portfolios, and by promoting and encouraging good teaching in a range of ways. But balance this out with buy-out, strategic professional development or some other means at your disposal.

**Don’t pigeonhole your award winner into a teaching-only profile.** Many winners of national teaching awards are committed and talented researchers, who are in no hurry to give up their research portfolio. Not surprisingly, many great teachers are well-rounded scholars. Some are fearful that being given a high profile as a teacher means they will lose the time and opportunity to focus on research – and that could be detrimental to their career, if not their professional identity. It’s important to develop individualised plans for each award winner – and this may include research development and opportunities.





**Build networks.** If you're lucky enough to have more than one award winner, consider creating a group of winners to raise the profile of teaching and learning in your institution. Groups of award winning staff might advise your senior executive on issues relating to teaching, establish teaching and learning mentoring circles, and provide a framework of peer support for potential award nominees and for the general enhancement of teaching quality.

If winning national teaching awards is important to you, it should be **part of your institution's strategic thinking**. Embed systems to identify potential award winners and to mentor people through the awards process. Your institution's current award winners can be enormously helpful. But you also need heads of departments to be building the potential for teaching awards into performance reviews and evaluations through identifying a teaching award as one aspect of career planning. You need your teaching development unit to work proactively. Don't leave it to individuals – build up an infrastructure for the award winners of the future.

**Value all your nominees.** Nominees for national awards have invested considerable effort in promoting the activities of your institution. For some, lack of success can be crushing. They need to know that it is a

significant achievement to be nominated by your institution. Celebrate their work, offer feedback on their nomination and advice on the next steps in their career. Where appropriate, support them if they wish to reapply. Many eventual recipients are not successful first time round and you need to manage expectations and disappointments sensitively.

Make sure your institution's internal **reward structures align** with your institution's teaching and learning strategy. If an award winner is feted by the university – and then applies unsuccessfully for promotion – they won't be the only ones who think they can see where the institution's values really lie. If you promote teaching award winners, then you very visibly discount the myth that teaching 'doesn't really count'. The impact can be expected to be an increased commitment to, and valuing of, teaching among staff.

**Help award winners make a contribution to the sector.** While at your institution, look for ways of enabling them to engage with other institutions and national policy formation in a way that reflects your distinctive mission. Long after award winners may have moved on to bigger things, your institution's values may continue to shape the way that they think and act and influence important educational policies and practices.



## Advice for DEEWR

**Recognise and reward excellence in teaching.** Awards and award ceremonies are one way for the sector to celebrate and reward excellence. Awards are not the only way, are not the most important way, and they are not sufficient in themselves. However, awards are an established and accepted part of the sector's calendar. Manage the awards professionally, using people with an understanding of the higher education sector and good relationships with academics.

**Build the legitimacy of the awards.** In the early years of the awards, rumours circulated that the judging process might be biased. The current processes have ensured awardees have credibility among prospective nominees. Manage the awards in a transparent and accountable manner. Use easily understood criteria. Draw on a pool of assessors and an award panel who are trusted by academics. Invite awardees to fill roles as judges and offer them a place on the Australian Awards for University Teaching Committee.

**Use awardees as assessors.** Most awardees are happy to be asked to assess applications for citations, awards, grants or fellowships. But not relentlessly. They are likely to be busy people and may prefer coordinated requests and some variety. Offer them a choice about which schemes they might be asked to assess and when, and explain how tasks will be allocated. Ask awardees what else they would like to do to support your programs.

Look to **add value through the awards.** The awards should not be seen in isolation, but as part of an integrated strategy for nurturing teaching excellence, encouraging academics to invest their time and energy in teaching before, and long after, they apply for an award. While some academics may choose to redirect their attention towards research after they win an award, this should not be the perverse result of a sector determining

there is nothing more an awardee might achieve in teaching. Help establish possible pathways for awardees to grants and fellowships, and to leadership roles within their institutions.

Initiate and resource a **network of award winners.** Award winners have said they want to work together, sharing experiences and ideas. They could form a community of practice that promotes and supports further development of higher education teaching and learning policy and practice. However, this has not happened in any formal way in Australia. Offer awardees an opportunity to meet as a cohort and to hear from previous awardees, possibly at the time of the awards ceremony. Maintain a database of the expertise and contact details of members of the network and made these details available to prospective collaborating partners. Link the network of award winners to the existing networks of ALTC Fellows and Discipline Scholars.

Enhance the capacity of **awardees to direct their own activities.** The network needs to extend its role beyond just networking. Ensure the network is given the structure, space and resources to determine and pursue its own priorities.

**Plug awardees and their networks into existing structures.** The network established by awardees will have its strengths and weaknesses. It should be seen as complementing rather than competing with other groups at local and national levels. Help awardees to work within or with groups of associate deans, deans, senior management, groups of universities, and with HERDSA.

**Build international links.** Australian academics learn from and contribute to international debates in education. They: exchange staff and students; internationalise curricula; attend conferences; work as teachers, examiners and reviewers outside



Australia; collaborate in scholarly activities, and draw inspiration from colleagues outside Australia. As individuals, many act as global citizens. Australian universities have built campuses or run programs offshore, and are part of international networks. The international peer networks that sustain our work should be fostered at all levels, extending well beyond the senior executive. Help a network of award winners to establish collaborative relationships with their international equivalents, including the Ako Aotearoa Academy, the 3M Fellows in Canada and the Association of National Teaching Fellows in the United Kingdom.

**Engage with the awardees' home institutions.** Many universities have aligned their internal processes with those of the

AAUT. They are geared up to win awards. However, not every institution has thought strategically about how it might work with and reinvest in award winning teachers to develop their skills and careers. Encourage universities to help award winners make a contribution to their institution, discipline and the sector as a whole.

**Engage with the disciplines.** Awardees can help focus attention on teaching and learning matters within their disciplines, initiating or contributing to education workshops at discipline conferences and working with the appropriate council of deans. Continue to fund disciplines to work with awardees, and ensure that knowledge of how to access this funding is disseminated across the sector.



## Executive Summary

Within Australia, the national Awards for Teaching Excellence have largely been conceived as an end or a high point, a way of recognising and rewarding good teaching without placing any expectations upon the winners. While recipients may be and indeed have been asked to do any manner of things, they are not required to do so as a condition of the award. Consequently, in the main, neither the administering authority, nor an awardee's home discipline or university have turned their attention to what happens next. Some awardees are quite content with this. However, many awardees might prefer to see receipt of the award as a point when the pace and direction of their career changed. They want to use the award to open up new opportunities and have more of an impact on the nature of education in Australia. If that is the case, it may matter that as a sector we have invested considerable effort in ensuring that excellent teachers *get* an award but have paid little attention to what they may *get out* of an award.

This research was funded by an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Teaching Fellowship. It has used three different methods for investigating the Australian teaching awards and their impact on awardees and their institutions:

- review of AAUT and ALTC documentation held by the Australian government and the ALTC;
- semi-structured face-to-face or telephone interviews between late 2009 and early 2011 with 30 award winners. Additional interviews were conducted with people involved in establishing policy relating to teaching and learning at institutional level, or engaged in the awards process at national level;
- online survey of recipients of 119 ALTC national teaching awards (2005-10). Ninety-three awardees replied, a response rate of over 65 per cent overall and almost 75 per cent for the first named recipients.

### *Chapter One: Teaching Awards*

National awards are well entrenched within the higher education sector. The Australian government has invested in the program as part of a long-term effort to recognise teaching excellence and focus universities' attention on the quality of their teaching. Most universities have oriented their internal processes to encourage and support applications, and there are signs that some discipline-based associations are following suit. The assumption across the sector at the level of institutions appears to be that it is worth competing for the awards, though the motivation for doing so may reflect both a commitment to driving teaching excellence as well as a desire for a marketing edge.

### *Chapter Two: Celebrating Awards*

Public acknowledgment of successes has come easily to some universities. After all, a national teaching award is an opportunity to reinforce both an institution's commitment to teaching excellence as well as its achievements in teaching. As a result, awardees may find that colleagues are enthusiastic, that departments, schools and faculties celebrate and that the activities of awardees are repeatedly endorsed by senior staff at public events. Institutions can encourage staff to take delight in colleagues' achievements and project this to the wider community. By marking the occasion within the institution, members of senior management communicate to staff and students that they value teaching excellence. By



recognising the event in external publicity, they again confirm the value their institution places on teaching – and, in a world where institutional performance is ending up on display in league tables, this is something employers, prospective students and their parents want to hear. Some universities have been doing this for years. Sadly, others who are perfectly adept at celebrating research success appear more diffident when it comes to teaching. The same seems to be true for professional associations. This lack of enthusiasm can take the shine off success when it comes to celebration but also when it comes to developing the subsequent careers of awardees.

### *Chapter Three: Career Development*

Many awardees identified a wish to develop their career to the point where they could influence teaching and learning in their current institution and thereby help their colleagues improve teaching. Many recipients found the awards had given them opportunities to do just this, and that opportunities occurred at a range of levels, ranging from the departmental to the international. Some recipients were content to wait for requests to be made of them, others were highly proactive and actively sought new openings.

Many of these activities required awardees to reflect further on their approaches to teaching so that they might be able to explain in public what they did and why. The awards also provided recipients with validation, credibility, visibility and increased career satisfaction. However, the opportunities the awards brought were not structured nor necessarily well timed, and awardees sometimes found it hard to cope with the quantity and nature of the subsequent workload. Few institutions helped awardees plan their future strategically so that the teaching award might work for and not against awardees in all areas of their professional lives and I make suggestions about the support institutions might offer recipients in *Advice for Institutions*.

### *Chapter Four: Leadership Roles*

Many recipients assumed what they identified as leadership roles after their award. The award was sometimes received at the point when academics wanted to achieve influence on a greater scale or be engaged in a larger space – be it shifting from department to faculty, faculty to university, or university to national level. In particular, an award helped some people enter and then move up a developmental pathway through the positions of program director, associate dean at school and faculty levels, and university-level committees. Others were able to take a greater role in ALTC-funded projects or apply for ALTC Fellowships.

Approximately half of awardees sought leadership roles. Perhaps the same number reported that they had indeed taken on such roles following the award, either formally or informally. This included a significant proportion of people who had played some role at university level. In some cases, promotion and both the opportunity to take on a leadership position and the skills to do so were facilitated by receipt of the award.

Unfortunately, two quite small groups of people were left angry or cynical. Some awardees did not receive a promotion and believed that this reflected badly on their institution. Other recipients did receive promotion but were abused by their colleagues as a result. Institutions need to tackle the myth that teaching ‘doesn’t really count’, legitimate a pathway to promotion and leadership through education at the level of policy and protect those who progress through this route, building networks to support the career development of those who might become involved in educational leadership.



## Chapter Five: Building Networks of Award Winners

As the number of award winners has risen, several universities have made the decision to forge recipients into a group in order to raise the profile of teaching and learning. Groups of award winning staff have advised senior executives on issues relating to teaching. They have established teaching and learning mentoring circles, and have provided a framework of peer support for potential award applicants and for the general enhancement of teaching quality. However, the groups that have been created have not been without their problems. Isolated from both the formal structures that run teaching and learning and from senior management, they have been troubled by charges of lack of direction, elitism and illegitimacy. These consequences may be the result of poor planning or execution and, while groupings are always likely to go through periods when they are more or less active, it is quite possible that they need not be flawed in these ways.

Although some universities have chosen to create groups of award winners, the organisations responsible for the national awards have not. This sets Australia apart from countries against which we often compare our practices. In Canada and New Zealand, for example, independently resourced networks have enhanced the national debate and contributed to educational practices. Future custodians of the national teaching awards in Australia could follow suit at the national level. They could link Australian awardees with colleagues in networks outside Australia and work with those networks to encourage similar structures to evolve in countries that, like Australia, now have national awards but no national network.

### Conclusion

It is possible that teaching awards might foster the emergence of educational leaders either by acting as an incentive for academics before they apply for such an award or by giving recipients of such an award greater authority and opportunities to influence teaching.

The award may well represent an end point for or, perhaps, a high point in an academic career. It acknowledges and celebrates the awardees' contribution to teaching and learning and places no obligation on them. Teachers may be close to retirement or content to continue in the same role long after they have received their award. There is nothing wrong with this. Indeed, it would be perverse if awards ripped away from their interaction with students the very best of our teachers.

However, there is a difference between not wishing to place an obligation on an awardee and failing to offer him or her opportunities to flourish. Were the awards to constitute recognition and no more, this would be a wasted chance. Instead, there may be a possibility that awards might constitute a turning-point, enabling some of the best teachers in Australia to have a greater impact both on the students for whom they already have a direct responsibility and more broadly through their institution, discipline or across the sector. Recipients could be strategic assets, playing a key role in developing teaching and learning initiatives and championing change in learning and teaching policies and practices. Indeed, national award winners have been used inside their institutions, across Australia and beyond as status symbols, teaching assessors, drivers for change and motivational speakers. They have been used to develop policy, write grant applications, and mentor colleagues. However, few institutions have worked strategically to tailor opportunities to meet the desires and strengths of the individual awardee or the considered needs of the institution. I urge institutions and DEEWR to assist awardees in making a contribution to the



sector, by finding out more about the strengths and weaknesses, hopes and ambitions of awardees, offering practical support to maximise the impact of the award, and helping to discern directions that an award winner has not considered.

It is crucial that a significant proportion of our future educational leaders move through their careers with a commitment to and an understanding of teaching and learning. For this to happen, some institutions will need to revise their approach to promotion so that policies for recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching are adhered to in practice and are seen to do so.

In presentations about this research, I have introduced a metaphor of 'the key'. Some awardees reported that they were content to wait for opportunities to come to them. Others were more proactive. If awardees can view the award as a key, they might be more tempted to try to unlock a series of doors with it. What awardees find behind some doors might be unattractive. Some doors might remain closed. However, a few might open, and allow an awardee to learn from and contribute to new educational communities. Some awardees might find themselves progressing within their own discipline or institution. Others might find themselves extending into areas well beyond their home discipline, institution or geographical location. With these hopes in mind, I invite awardees to enjoy what the award brings, let their professional life open up, grab opportunities, speak to new issues, challenge institutional poor practice, take risks, and see where serendipity leads them.



## Introduction

It's not an end in itself – it's... part of the journey ... (Ian Cameron, Prime Minister's award winner, 2003, The University of Queensland)

It's prestigious... but it's an end point I think... (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

Since a national reorganisation of tertiary education in 1989, there has been a massive growth in both domestic and international student markets. However, this has not been accompanied by an equivalent expansion in the number of full-time academic staff. The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (2008) pointed to the need for increased investment and major structural change if the higher education sector was to be able to meet the requirements of the nation. One part of the problem lies in the inability of the sector to attract and retain high quality academic staff. As a result, higher education is dependent on an ageing workforce, where 40 per cent of staff is over 50 years old, as well as increasing casualisation (Hugo 2008). While more academics are moving to Australia than leaving it and academic pay rates are good by international standards (Rumbley et al. 2008), increasing numbers of Australian academics are finding work abroad and discovering that it can be difficult to return. These matters pose stiff challenges for senior staff in Australian institutions. Unfortunately, a recent comparative analysis of 18 countries and their academics found Australian staff were among the least complimentary of their institutional leaders and managers (Coates et al. 2009).

Another part of the problem is the perception among many academics that teaching is less important or is deemed by their institutions to be less important than research (Nagy et al. 2011). Although universities obtain more of their revenue from teaching than from research, career progression is more often skewed towards research performance. Guest (2009) identified the obvious consequences: "Given that research performance is measured and extrinsically rewarded more systematically than teaching performance, effort and performance is biased toward research". The advent of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative and the abolition of both the Teaching and Learning Performance Fund and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) are likely to tip the balance further in favour of the belief that 'research rules'.

It is within this context that awards for teaching need to be understood. In contrast to the declining level of public funding per student provided to the sector, the Australian government has chosen to support award programs that celebrate teaching excellence. The sector now offers a diverse range of awards. They exist for a multiplicity of purposes and operate at a national level as well as at most institutions and in many fields of study.

Within Australia, the national awards have largely been conceived as a way of recognising and rewarding good teaching without placing any expectations upon the winners. While awardees may be and indeed have been asked to do any manner of things, they are not required to do so as a condition of the award. Consequently, in the main, neither the administering authority, nor an awardee's home discipline or university have turned their attention to what happens next. Some awardees are quite content with this. They may be close to retirement or be perfectly happy with continuing as they were. Alternatively, they might want to shift away from teaching and learning and focus, perhaps only for a while, on some other part of their academic work. However, more might be expected of awardees. Indeed, many awardees might prefer to see receipt of the award as a point when the pace





and direction of their career changed. They might want to use the award to open up new opportunities and have more of an impact on the nature of education in Australia. If that is the case, it may matter that as a sector we have invested considerable effort in ensuring that excellent teachers *get* an award but have paid little attention to what they may *get out of* an award, and that we see awards as an end point or a high point rather than a potential turning point in people's careers.

This research was funded by an ALTC Teaching Fellowship. Its aim is to consider the extent to which national teaching awards and awardees might be an underused resource. In the face of the considerable demands that are being placed on our university leadership to respond to the educational needs of Australian society and the impending 'demographic crunch' as the current generation of leaders retires, this report considers if it might be possible to take advantage of national teaching awards to help develop a new generation of leaders with a strong understanding of and a deep commitment to learning and teaching.

In this project, I have used three different methods for investigating the Australian teaching awards and their impact on awardees and their institutions. First, I undertook a review of Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) and ALTC documentation held by the Australian government and the ALTC. This included records of committee meetings, memos, internal reports and reports submitted to the ALTC. The ALTC does not hold the archives of predecessor committees and, following the winding up of the ALTC, the Australian government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) may find value in maintaining these archives in one place to allow future investigations into the policies and practices that have underpinned national teaching and learning initiatives.

Second, I conducted 42 semi-structured face-to-face – and, on the few occasions where that was impossible, telephone interviews – in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Hong Kong between late 2009 and early 2011. I interviewed 31 academics who had won awards. The purpose of the sample was to ensure broad demographic, geographical, sectoral and disciplinary coverage. I also spoke with people who have played key roles as administrators and policy makers within the AAUT and ALTC, or been involved in establishing institutional policy relating to teaching and learning. Between the awardees and the policy-makers (and there was some overlap between these groups), the sample included people who had been involved in the awards processes at 14 different Australian institutions (see Table 1). These institutions were responsible for just over 70 per cent of the 119 national award winners between 2005 and 2010.

Type of university	Sample Number
Group of Eight (Go8)	5
Innovative Research Universities (IRU)	3
Australian Technology Network (ATN)	3
Other Metropolitan	2
Rural and Regional	2

**Table 1: Typology of institutions within sample.**

Note: Universities have been designated to groups they belonged to in 2011. One institution has been placed in two separate categories.



While it may be customary to offer interviewees in higher education anonymity, I refrained from doing so for two reasons. First, the Australian higher education sector is not large and many of the people that I interviewed are well known across the sector and are used to discussing their work and institutions. Anonymity could only be assured by making significant changes to both their comments and patterns of speech. Second, every interviewee agreed to speak on the record on the condition that he or she be allowed some editorial control over his or her interview transcript. Each interview was transcribed and made available to interviewees. Interviewees agreed that most of the data could be ascribed to them by name. However, they were also asked to indicate sensitive material that they wished to see stripped of identifiers, and all interviewees were allowed to see any of their quotes that were to appear in this publication.

Finally, I sent invitations in May 2011 to the first named recipients of 119 ALTC national teaching awards (2005-10), asking them to participate in an online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. In some cases, a single award was presented to two or more people who had worked together and, in these cases, questionnaires were sent to all recipients, making a total of 139 potential respondents. Ninety-three awardees replied, a response rate of over 65 per cent. However, this proportion was far higher among the first named recipients (almost 75 per cent). Respondents were not required to provide an answer to every question in the survey. Given the high overall response rate and the varying (albeit high) response rate to each question, numbers throughout are expressed as absolute numbers of respondents rather than as a percentage.

In this report, I outline the nature and reach of the national awards for teaching excellence. I consider how institutions have chosen to celebrate the successes of their colleagues and the disappointment felt by awardees when their universities have neglected to acknowledge them. I explore the hopes and ambitions of awardees, as well as the opportunities they have been offered. I consider the ways in which they have prepared for leadership roles. In the final chapter, I review the prospects for creating networks of award winners locally, nationally and internationally.



## Chapter One: Teaching Awards

There is, of course, an international literature on teaching awards. Much of this has sought to identify what makes a good teacher. However, the Australian literature on national teaching awards has been described as underdeveloped (Carusetta 2001). Publications have focused on the nature of schemes (Ballantyne et al. 2003; Centre for the Study of Higher Education 2005), extending earlier work on which features might be found in strong (Kreber 2000; MacDonald 1998) and weak schemes (McNaught and Anwyl 1992, 1993; Menges 1996).

Many of the criticisms made of awards by Australian academics are long-standing. McNaught and Anwyl (1992) surveyed 37 higher education institutions in Australia. Thirty-three responded. Their study is interesting because it pre-dates the introduction of the national awards. Some institutions noted that staff saw institutional awards as 'cosmetic gestures' which sidestepped the real issue of inadequate resources and worsening staff/student ratios. Others apparently resisted attempts to label them as good teachers, seeing it as undermining their status as high quality researchers. McNaught and Anwyl also identified some union resistance to the "carrot and stick" mentality of awards and appraisal' (p.14).

With the exception of Ballantyne et al. (2003), little attention has been paid to how the schemes might contribute to the development of the careers of academics who might be able to enhance the capacity of the higher education sector to respond to the changing environment.

### *The National Scheme*

The Australian government has invested considerable resources in the national awards which were run in 2011 by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and are due to be handed over to DEEWR for the 2012 award round. The awards formed part of the ALTC's drive to "foster and acknowledge excellent teaching in higher education". These awards have been placed in the custody of a succession of organisations and have evolved over time in an effort to promote long-term change and recognise the different institutional priorities and missions that exist within the higher education sector.

The Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) were first established in 1996 and administered by the Australian government Department of Education before being placed with the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) upon its establishment in 2000. While the Canadian ('3M National Teaching Fellows' begun in 1986) and United States ('Professor of the Year' begun in 1981) national higher education awards processes predate Australia's, the Australian program was among the first to be run by government. As such, it seems to have provided a model for schemes subsequently developed in several other English-speaking countries. The awards followed the recommendations of a 1995 Review of the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (Moses and Johnson 1995). As part of the Review, a study was commissioned into the recognition and reward of good teaching. The study surveyed Australian institutions and found that "coherence between a university's mission, its quality management process, and its strategies for recognising and rewarding good teaching was not always evident" (Moses and Johnson 1995, p.39). Moses and Johnson concluded that the time for change in the reward structure for good teaching was long overdue.



In 1997, in her press release that provided details of the first Australian Awards for University Teaching, Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, noted that teaching was “often seen as the poor cousin of research. We believe it should be given the prominence and prestige that it deserves. The Australian Awards for University Teaching will reward and recognise Australia’s most outstanding academics – the ones who inspire and bring out the best in their students – and encourage others to follow their example”. The claims that the awards might increase the status of teaching were subsequently repeated and elaborated. One year later, on the day of the annual award ceremony, Dr David Kemp, federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, told the House of Representatives that he had “no doubt whatever that the recognition that these university teachers get from these awards will promote quality, encourage talent to enter the teaching profession and encourage excellence” (Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, The House of Representatives, November 23, 1998, p.381 (David Kemp, federal Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs)). Senator Ian MacDonald had already claimed “These Awards recognise and reward excellence in teaching, in the way that the grants administered by the Australian Research Council recognise and reward the many outstanding researchers in our universities” (Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, The Senate, March 12, 1998, p.900 (Ian MacDonald)).

In 1999, Senator Ellison informed the Senate that the Howard government had “provided the Australian awards for university teaching, to help give greater status to university teaching” (Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, The Senate, October 14, 1999, p.9745 (Chris Ellison)). Indeed, subsequent federal ministers argued that the national awards had achieved this goal. Brendan Nelson’s speaking notes at the 2004 awards ceremony (30 November) claimed “The public recognition and generous cash awards associated with the Australian Awards for University Teaching have helped raise the status of university teaching”.

By 2005, seven individual Australian awards were available, down from an intended 14 in 1997. In each category, two or three finalists were invited to a ceremony in Canberra, with the winner being announced at the high profile event and presented with a trophy and \$25,000 by the federal Minister responsible for Higher Education. Winners of each category were eligible for the Prime Minister’s Award of ‘Australian University Teacher of the Year’ with an additional A\$50,000 to be used for teaching-related activities. The Prime Minister’s Award was intended for someone with an exceptional record of advancing student learning, educational leadership and scholarly contribution to learning and teaching. The ceremony has attracted senior staff from universities as well as federal ministers holding educational portfolios. The 2009 ceremony, for example, was attended by more than 200 people including the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Government Service Delivery.

In 2005, an external review of the awards was conducted by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Melbourne. The review concluded that there had been an uneven distribution of awards across institutions and disciplines. The reviewers were concerned the nomination process was “labour-intensive and might favour the better resourced universities” (p.8). Indeed, an internal review of institutional participation by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) found some universities had been far more successful than others in winning or coming close to winning awards. Between 1997



and 2004, while 30-35 institutions participated in the awards in any one year, 15 institutions were responsible for 133 winners and finalists while 13 institutions never had a winner.

In 2005, the awards were taken over from the AUTC by the new, Australian government-funded, Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and run as the 'Carrick Awards for Australian University Teaching'. Following a change in federal government, in 2008 the Institute became the ALTC and the awards returned to their original name (AAUT). By then, the program had grown to include individual and program awards, citations, and lifetime achievement awards.

The first of these, the *Awards for Teaching Excellence*, was based on a nominee's eight page response to five selection criteria: approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn; development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field; approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning; respect and support for the development of students as individuals, and scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching. These represent a slightly awkward fusion of 10 earlier criteria. Nominations could be submitted for one of five discipline clusters, Indigenous Education, Early Career or a priority area determined by the Awards Committee. In 2011, this priority area was identified as teaching large classes.

Up to 24 individuals receive an award each year. In 2011, the ALTC received 103 nominations from 30 institutions and made 22 awards. Recipients were drawn from 13 institutions. The ALTC has also provided funding for a small number of winners to give invited presentations at discipline-based, learning and teaching conferences and workshops.

Nominations for awards were considered by assessors, who provided advice on the relative quality of the nominations to the Australian Awards for University Teaching Committee (AAUTC). The Committee consisted of: two members of the ALTC Board; a nominee of the Commonwealth Minister; two nominees from Universities Australia; a representative of the Indigenous community, and, for some purposes, two current university students. The AAUTC was also responsible for ALTC Citations and program-based awards.

*Program Awards* have been established in recognition that good teachers do not work in isolation and that the quality of the student experience and the nature of learning requires the existence of appropriate support programs. Ten awards were made in 2011. Awards are available to programs and services in seven categories: widening participation; educational partnerships and collaborations with other organisations; the first-year experience; flexible learning and teaching; innovation in curricula; learning and teaching; postgraduate education, and services supporting student learning. They were assessed on the basis of four selection criteria: distinctiveness, coherence and clarity of purpose; influence on student learning and student engagement; breadth of impact, and concern for equity and diversity.

Worth A\$10,000 each, *Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning* were first introduced in 2006. They were intended to be available to both academic and professional staff and were to recognise individuals and teams who have had a significant influence on student learning in a specific area. Nominees were assessed on the basis of a four page written statement addressing one or two of five selection criteria. The citations have attracted nominations from and provide recognition for academic and professional staff at almost all those public and private universities and higher education providers in Australia that are eligible. In 2011, 318 nominations were received. Up to 210 citations were



available, and 210 nominees were successful, drawn from each of the 42 institutions that applied. Citations have been awarded to recipients at ceremonies held in the five largest cities and can recognise highly specific interventions. While the Awards for Teaching Excellence have sometimes been criticised as creating ‘superstars’ through a focus on conspicuous performance and self-promotion, citations have been applauded as recognising “quiet achievers” (Lee Dow 2008, pp.28-29).

An evaluation of the ALTC for the federal government conducted by the former Vice-Chancellor of The University of Melbourne, Kwong Lee Dow AM, in 2008 concluded that:

These numbers of awards, and the value of each award, seem to this reviewer to be ‘about right’ in the Australian context – sufficient each year to enable the build up over time of a small but clear cadre of people whose teaching is nationally acknowledged, across most fields of study, and covering the range of teaching and learning activities broadly defined. Not so few as to allow a view that this is nothing more than a lottery, and not too large as to debase a ‘national’ currency. (p.44)

### *Sectoral Reach*

In 2005, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) (2005) was asked to devise an expanded national awards process. CSHE suggested that its proposed scheme would extend the AAUT’s success in offering recognition and rewards to a wider diversity of practices and “raise the priority given to good teaching” (p.1). In doing so, the awards could support “the efforts of universities to... encourage a culture of teaching excellence” (p.2).

Future custodians of the awards still have some work to do to achieve this aim. A small group of institutions have consistently either failed to nominate for or win national teaching awards. In 2006, nine eligible institutions did not nominate for either teaching or program awards. Although difficult to generalise, these institutions tended to be newer and smaller than the rest of the sector. Several institutions continued to report to the ALTC that staff had resisted engagement in citations and awards programs because they were seen as self-aggrandising or anti-collegial. Perhaps most worrying was the periodic failure of Australia’s top-ranked research universities (the ‘Group of Eight’) to submit successful applications. In 2006, an unusually poor year for The University of Queensland, these eight institutions gained 12 awards, but five of these awards went to just one member of the Group of Eight, The Australian National University, seven were for programs and, of the 34 nominations submitted by Queensland, Western Australia, Melbourne, Monash and Sydney, only one application for a teaching award was successful.

Partly in response to uneven sectoral engagement, in 2007 the ALTC established its Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI) “to provide funding to build and/or consolidate the capacity of institutions to engage constructively with the programs of the ALTC” (ALTC, undated). Forty-two institutions received \$9.42m between them – \$220,000 each, over three years – to develop specific activities and infrastructure to help the ALTC raise the profile of learning and teaching. As a result of various activities, many institutions reported far greater alignment between their internal grants and awards and ALTC grants and awards (Nagy et al. 2011, p.1).

### *Institutional Awards*

Most public and private universities have established their own award systems at faculty and whole-of-institution level. The first to do so, The University of Queensland, has had Awards for Excellence in Teaching since 1988 for academic staff who have made a ‘broad



and deep contribution to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching' at the university. By 1991, 24 other institutions had followed suit (McNaught and Anwyl 1993). The University of Queensland awards are now worth A\$10,000 to each recipient. In 2002, the university added awards for programs and, in 2006, citations. This format influenced the growth of the national awards and, where they subsequently differed, the university has tried to align internal guidelines with those of national awards where possible or appropriate. The university now also has awards for research higher degree supervision. Recipients in each of these categories are honoured each year at a ceremony during the university's Teaching and Learning Week. These institutional awards are complemented by various faculty- and school-based awards, including some aimed at casual tutors.

In 2009, the ALTC asked institutions to report on their internal award schemes. Of 38 responses, 36 institutions reported having internal awards and one was in the process of developing its scheme. Through the PEI, the ALTC was not only keen to encourage the development of matching administrative processes, it also wanted to develop synergies between institutional and ALTC goals. In their applications, institutions proposed – among other things – that funds be used to raise awareness and motivation of ALTC schemes, build peer networks and communities of practice, and identify potential nominees. Universities were to develop capacity and experience among applicants by offering supporting resources, opportunities for mentoring and advice for applicants, as well as overhauling the selection criteria and procedures for internal awards. In some cases, procedures that had grown up within each faculty were to be standardised throughout the university, in other cases clearer pathways were to be created from faculty to university to national awards. Some universities intended inviting previous winners to talk to their staff, others spoke of initiating or extending the celebration of colleagues' successes. A few discussed the possibility of leveraging outcomes from awards. As a result, it was not surprising that, like The University of Queensland, almost all institutions reported in 2009 that their internal teaching award schemes had been influenced by those run nationally with language such as 'aligning with' or 'mirroring' national processes being used in institutional reports to the ALTC. The drivers for these changes were mixed. One director of a university centre for teaching and learning acknowledged that

... everyone is in the game and you have to play the game – so we have internal awards and external awards and I think we have them for a variety of reasons from the most honourable to the least honourable ... The most honourable is because we sincerely want to reward good teaching and learning and we want to build the importance and the kudos and the profile of teaching and learning in the university – on the other end of the scale we want to be winning awards and to be seen to be winning awards and to use that in our marketing material as every university does ...

An interim report of a project investigating the sustainability of the PEI (Nagy et al. 2011) found many institutions had used the awards to establish communities of practice. In some cases, these communities comprised of recipients of national teaching awards. National award winners were used to mentor and advise future nominees, sharing their knowledge of the evidence required to sustain successful applications. Awardees contributed to a range of staff development activities and were also used to model good practice with institutions asking awardees either to allow colleagues to observe their classes, or to provide feedback on their colleagues' teaching.



## *Discipline-based Awards*

In addition, several professional associations have created awards for teaching excellence. Given the prominence of the national award scheme, it is perhaps a little surprising that many discipline-based awards have been established comparatively recently. Often, these awards have eligibility and selection criteria that differ slightly to those of the national awards. For example, The Australasian Law Teachers Association (ALTA) has run an Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Law since 2008. The award is open to applicants from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific. Sponsored by one of the large publishers for the discipline, the overall winner is given A\$4000, while the winner of the Early Career Academic category receives A\$1000. Another international publisher funds tertiary teaching awards in association with professional associations in accountancy/finance, chemistry, education, management, marketing, nursing and psychology. The awards are typically worth A\$2000-3000, sometimes cover both Australia and New Zealand (reflecting the geographical reach of many professional associations) and are aimed at encouraging and recognising innovative teaching.

The challenge for associations will be to limit duplication of effort by their Australian members (whose numbers tend to dwarf those from other countries in the region) by aligning their awards with national requirements without either disadvantaging any non-Australian regional members or losing the point of having a separate program of awards. So, the Australasian Engineering Education Awards provide one prize for teaching excellence, three for programs that enhance excellence in learning, and five citations. Broadly, they follow the ALTC awards – and acknowledge that they do so – but one citation is reserved for a ‘new’ academic and a program award is dedicated to ‘outreach services’.

Since 2009, the ALTC’s Learning and Teaching Academic Standards project has been funded by DEEWR to facilitate and coordinate the definition of academic standards by various disciplines. Over that time, the project’s Discipline Scholars have made a significant effort to engage with professional associations. However, it is less obvious that professional associations have taken much interest in either the national teaching awards or in awardees from their disciplines. Encouraging professional associations to celebrate teaching and take advantage of awardees is an obvious project for future organisers of the national teaching awards. The growth of discipline-specific awards and the recent activities around threshold learning outcomes offer two points of contact through which this might occur.

National awards are now well entrenched within the higher education sector, forming part of the university calendar. The federal government has invested considerable money in the program as part of a long-term effort to recognise teaching excellence and focus universities’ attention on the quality of their teaching. Most universities have oriented their internal processes to encourage and support applications and there are signs that some discipline-based associations are following suit. The assumption at the level of institutions appears to be that it is worth competing for the awards, though the motivation for doing so may reflect both a commitment to driving teaching excellence and a desire for a marketing edge. The interplay between these two might be expected to influence how institutions regard their awardees, and the extent to which they might be prepared to invest in their academics after they win an award.





## Chapter Two: Celebrating Awards

Nagy et al. (2011) reported that some institutions were publicly acknowledging their awardees through celebratory events. These might be arranged either specifically in relation to internal or external awards and learning and teaching grants, or might form part of significant university events such as graduation. Beverley Oliver (Director of Teaching and Learning, Curtin University) saw university-based ceremonies as offering awardees “a moment in the sun because of the good work they’ve done in teaching”.

Both awardees and institutions can take advantage of awards to recognise the achievement of an individual awardee and to celebrate the institution’s commitment to teaching and learning more generally. Yet, as Ballantyne et al. (2003) discovered, not everyone has.

### *Public Acknowledgement*

Awardees were sometimes overwhelmed by the level of enthusiasm that greeted them on their return from the ceremony.

I got a hundred emails from people within the School and students and so on – tremendously excited and that was just fantastic. (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

...literally hundreds of emails from staff and then a big wave from students once the information came out in a more public forum and... the best stuff really was the student emails ... and some of them from years back ... it’s just lovely. (Keithia Wilson, Prime Minister’s award winner, 2007, Griffith University)

... when I came back you could leave no more messages on my ‘phone. There were notes under my door. It was really overwhelming, it was really great ... (Nadja Alexander, 1997, award winner, ex-The University of Queensland)

Stephen Houghton (award winner, 2009, The University of Western Australia) recalled that his colleagues “were elated”. Several universities publicly acknowledged the success of their academics. Awardees reported receiving letters from their vice-chancellors and pro vice-chancellors, deans and heads of schools, and from the ALTC liaison offices in their institutions. There were many other formal and informal markers of recognition. The Vice-Chancellor at The University of Queensland telephoned all shortlisted candidates to congratulate them and ensure that they would go to the award ceremony in Canberra. The University of Western Australia holds a ceremony to celebrate excellence in teaching during the institution’s Teaching and Learning Month where the achievements of ALTC nominees and winners as well as institutional teaching award winners can be celebrated. Many interviewees pointed out that there is a thin line between success and failure in national teaching awards and that it was therefore important to honour all nominees: “You’ve been recognised by your university as being a nominee for a national award. You didn’t get it, but we still think you’re fabulous” (Sally Sandover, award winner, 2000, and Academic Coordinator, UWA ALTC Support Office). The University of Western Australia’s nominees and winners are celebrated a second time at the end of the year with a special reception with the Vice-Chancellor.

The awards allowed senior champions of teaching and learning to demonstrate their commitment to education and counter the perception that their institution valued research to



the exclusion of everything. For Nadja Alexander (award winner, 1997, ex-The University of Queensland), one of the most significant endorsements came when the Vice-Chancellor and his team attended her workshop on experiential learning:

One of the really nice things I did was a workshop for the VC and his team using some adventure-based techniques which piqued lots of interest ... [It] wasn't just the formal or public acknowledgement of the award; it was the fact that they came and 'played'.



**Figure 1: UWA school teaching and learning honours board**

Awardees reported that senior management greeted awardees by first name when they saw them on campus. Schools and departments also celebrated their awardees at morning tea, through newsletters or, in one case, by placing their names on the wall.

Some of the more spontaneous gestures were remembered with deep affection. After their success in the inaugural national awards in 1997, Tom Stannage and Brian Stone returned to find a congratulatory banner had been placed outside

the main library of The University of Western Australia. One of the colleagues responsible had concluded:

... we thought it an excellent way of (a) letting students and colleagues know of Tom's and Brian's outstanding success, and (b) ... showing the students who had nominated them as outstanding teachers [for internal awards] that their views had made an impact.

### *Projecting Success through the Media*

A few institutions have been proactive and public in signalling their success in the national awards. The University of Queensland, for example, has produced media releases almost every year since the awards began. The media releases have announced the institution's



**Figure 2: UQ wins two awards at national teaching awards: Director, UQ Graduate School and Dean of Postgraduate Students Professor Alan Lawson (left) and Dr Goos. University of Queensland Website, 24 November 2004, the day of the awards ceremony**  
<[www.uq.edu.au/news/index.html?article=6338](http://www.uq.edu.au/news/index.html?article=6338)>

most recent achievement and showcased its individual and program winners:

The University of Queensland had a record number of four finalists in what is seen as the higher education equivalent of the Oscars. (The University of Queensland 1998)

University of Queensland Professor Ian Cameron has won the 2003 *Prime Minister's Australian Award* ... He is the second consecutive UQ academic to claim the prestigious Prime Minister's national award. Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay said the dominance of The University of Queensland staff – winning 11 awards in six years – showed UQ to be the national leader in high quality education, with far more finalists and winners than any other Australian university. (The University of Queensland 2003)

The University of Queensland has today been recognised once again as the nation's top teaching institution, winning a staggering one third of the 2005 Australian Awards for University Teaching. (The University of Queensland 2005)



Raising no objection to the process or the result (Figure 2), one awardee described the “slick” work of the university’s “publicity machine”:

... the moment when you’re shaking hands one of those photographers in front of you is a UQ photographer ... and [the photographs] go on the front page of the next issue of UQ News ... and within half an hour the news is on the UQ website ... and they put out press releases ... (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

Finally, the university uses the media releases to link success in teaching awards to the quality of education that might be received at that institution. Often citing senior management to support claims, these media releases project the university’s pride in its achievements, reinforcing messages delivered through the university’s Learning and Teaching Week, internal teaching awards, and announcements of success in ALTC Citations:

Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay said the success of University of Queensland staff showed that UQ continued to be a national leader in high quality education. (The University of Queensland 1999)

This result is testament to UQ’s award-winning teaching and learning staff whose tireless work continues to top the nation ... UQ’s teachers ... continue to position the University at the forefront of academic distinction, providing UQ graduates with the skills and training to further their careers. (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Deborah Terry, quoted in University of Queensland 2008)

These awards highlight the relevancy of UQ teaching to a modern world where our students will eventually need to forge careers and make their contributions. (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), Deborah Terry, quoted in University of Queensland 2009)

The university has also used its success in the national teaching awards as part of its strategy to attract students, referring explicitly to the awards in its recruitment campaigns (Figure 3).

Other universities have also launched media campaigns around their awardees. Queensland University of Technology pursued a similar strategy to its neighbour:

... when the awards come out each year QUT takes out a full-page advertisement in the local newspaper ... it is a public statement that we have top quality teaching going on ... (Vianne McLean, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality), Queensland University of Technology)



## UQ – Australia's Best Lecturers

*"The University of Queensland can claim to have the best lecturers in the country after securing the lion's share of a \$50 million teaching excellence fund."* The Australian, Page One, Wed. Nov. 30, 2005

At this week's 2005 Australian Awards for University Teaching ceremony at Parliament House in Canberra, UQ won more awards than any other university – 4 of the 12 awarded. 35 Universities competed.

This commitment to teaching resulted in UQ being awarded \$10.424 million in Federal funding. This funding was awarded on the basis of student employment outcomes, student satisfaction, student attrition and student progress. Congratulations to our winners.

### Teaching Awards

**Physical Sciences and Related Studies**  
Dr Michael Bulmer.



Dr Crosthwaite, Dr Slaughter, Dr Bulmer and Dr Rodger with UQ's Vice-Chancellor Professor John Hay, AC, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Michael Keniger.

### Institutional Awards

**Teaching Large, First Year Classes**  
Team Leader – Dr Virginia Slaughter.  
An Integrated Approach to Teaching Large First Year Psychology Courses.

**Enhancement of the Quality of Teaching and Learning**  
Team Leader – Associate Professor Caroline Crosthwaite.  
Project Centred Curriculum in Chemical Engineering.

**Approaches to Improving/Enhancing Assessment**  
Team Leader – Dr Sylvia Rodger. Supporting Clinical Learning: A New Approach to Assessment of Student Fieldwork.



ST LUCIA IPSWICH GATTON

Figure 3: The University of Queensland advert in Courier Mail, 3 Dec 2005.

Flinders University ran a campaign based on its run of successes in the mid-2000s (Figure 4). It established a website <<http://www.flinders.edu.au/bta/>> containing short interviews with awardees and bought advertising space as part of its 'inspiring achievement' campaign that, among other things, pointed to its achievement in winning two Prime Minister's awards in three years: "it was *positioning* and *point of difference* and all those cliché words ... these are reputational issues that matter ..." (Anne Edwards, former Vice-Chancellor, Flinders University).



Figure 4: Flinders University marketing campaign.

In contrast, one recipient of a Prime Minister's Award at a Group of Eight university reported that while his university took pride in and has been very happy to acknowledge his success, the university appeared to have shown little initiative in publicising the achievement. It placed a story on its website that congratulated the awardee but rather modestly took no credit as an institution for the success, and simply passed on media enquiries as and when they came in.

Even those institutions that have sought to be more aggressive in marketing, have not always succeeded. It is difficult to be certain that a series of advertisements about teaching awards might translate into student applications for places. Nevertheless, many universities have struggled to achieve media coverage in their own market and have found it difficult to identify how to project their successes through advertising. One recent recipient was frustrated by the inability of his university's public relations department to respond to the success of his institution in the national awards:

We had to nudge them ... Their first attempt, I took one look at it and said 'that's rubbish!' – so did the other winners ... and we said, 'you paid for that?' ... in the end it worked out okay but it shows a lack of understanding from the administrative areas. (award winner, ATN university)

Although culturally-specific, the United States Professors of the Year Awards Program (2010) *Media Handbook* offered American institutions advice that their Australian counterparts might find interesting.

### *Preparing for Disappointment*

The need for celebration is particularly important in an environment where many awardees had to contend with parts of their institutions that were markedly unimpressed by the national awards. Interviewees identified several sources for this distrust – the perceived unimportance of teaching in comparison to research, the assumed difficulty of making judgments about teaching as opposed to research excellence, and the disdain felt towards people who apply for teaching awards:

... a lot of academics are very hesitant about talking about their good practices because they fear they may be seen as bragging or blowing their own trumpet – 'shameless self-promotion' as one person at [name of institution] called it. (Jan Orrell, award winner (AAUT Institutional award), 2001, ex-Flinders University, and former Director of Carrick Institute)

... it was sort of a bit of tall poppy syndrome: 'he's really not that great a teacher, why should he be telling me what to do' sort of thing ... From a management point of view these people were fantastic, wonderful, terrific but then [there was] no support for them to go out and promulgate their practice. (Karen Van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Griffith University)

There seems to be a cringe in my institution. I had to request the opportunity to speak to colleagues at university level about my teaching innovations. In other words, no one came to me and asked for my expertise. Similarly in my Faculty, tall poppies are cut down so no one talked about the award or asked me to play a leadership role. (Survey respondent)

Be appreciative, grateful and humbled but don't expect the world to change if you win an award because if you work in an institution anything like mine it won't change at all. (Survey respondent)



As a result, Israel, Hay and Emerson (2010) warned awardees that:

Other academics may not know about your award, may not care or may be envious. Remarkably, some may think less of you as a result of the award, perhaps suggesting that recognising, rewarding and celebrating teaching is a misguided pursuit. Whatever the reasons, their silence or, even worse, their barbed comments can be hurtful. Steel yourself for these possibilities, rise above any pettiness, and don't let the negativity of others undermine your achievements. And be aware that there are people out there who really do value your work, appreciate your effort, and want you to share your talents with them. (Israel et al. 2010)

While interviewees sometimes suggested that the problem might be particularly acute in their part of the sector, whichever that might be, such comments were repeated by senior leadership or academics in each of the major university groupings – the Group of Eight, Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRUA), and the Australian Technological Network (ATN):

... there are many people who would not go for an ALTC gong because they feel it would lower their status in their university and that is a total indictment of our universities ... (Adrian Lee, former Pro Vice-Chancellor, The University of New South Wales)

[I was] very sensitive to the fact that a lot of other people thought this was completely misplaced energy and that you should put all the effort into research, so I had to try and find a way of saying 'this shows that this does matter and this shows that you can do it well *and* do research', but it was a very tricky thing to try and do. (Anne Edwards, former Vice-Chancellor, Flinders University)

Or, it might reflect lack of attention by senior management. One awardee had felt overlooked by her university's representatives at the awards ceremony in Canberra:

... other award winners were all known to the senior people of their institutions. The senior people of their institutions thought it was really important to be there – there were photo opportunities – they organised newspaper articles in their state or territory or city. None of that happened here I don't think – no-one senior from this institution knew my name from memory, certainly couldn't recognise me on sight, didn't show any interest in sitting together at dinner or anything like that. (award winner, IRUA university)

Two awardees responded by deliberately keeping a 'low profile' in an attempt to avoid antagonising colleagues. One survey respondent reported starkly "Winning the award was part of my personal downfall. Jealous people made sure my employment was severed" (Survey respondent).

Of course, views of the awards might vary through any one organisation. For example, several awardees who had felt recognised by senior management noted far less enthusiasm at school or corridor level:

... probably I have to draw the line there. It gets a little grey in terms of the pure level of enthusiasm and affirmation that I received at the school level. (award winner, Group of Eight university)

... on the heartbreak scale of things I think it is really interesting to have that recognition at a national level but still to have to come back to a job where you work in a school where you cannot persuade key other staff of the things you hold absolutely central – and they don't view that prize as making you even a little bit more credible ... maybe it even makes you less credible – makes you a bit of a 'brown noser'. (award winner, IRUA university)



One awardee from a university that had been very successful in winning national teaching awards felt his university had reached the point where it was no longer particularly excited by the latest person to come off its conveyor belt of successful nominees. Elsewhere, those who felt success had been clearly acknowledged had to cope with rapid decline in interest: “after the month or so of hoopla, most folk have forgotten because it’s yesterday’s news” (Simon Lewis, award winner, 2009, Curtin University), “one day we’re announcing teaching award success, the next day we announce ARC success ... it’s yesterday’s story” (Karen Van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Griffith University).

Few awardees felt their discipline nationally had any interest in the awards. Put bluntly, “teaching awards are fundamentally not something disciplines are interested in” (award winner, Curtin University). In particular, professional associations seemed completely disengaged. In one year, two members of the same discipline had received an award:

I would have thought it would have been a great opportunity to run the flag up the pole... and say look [members of our discipline] are great at teaching – nothing! ... not even in the national newsletter, nothing. And I find that very disappointing. (award winner, ATN university)

Again, some awardees chose to avoid raising their head too far in case they received an adverse reaction within their association:

You wouldn’t even want your discipline to know too much because they just think you’re getting up yourself. If you think Australia has tall poppy syndrome, [my discipline] is like at the top of the choppers. So, you wouldn’t want to draw attention to yourself. (award winner, IRUA university)

Far more could be done by disciplines and professional associations to acknowledge and draw strength from the national awards. This might be achieved with the help of institutions. For example, while John Minns did not expect his professional associations to make use of his success in winning the Prime Minister’s Award in 2010, the Latin American Ambassadors held a lunch for him in Canberra and he took advantage of a dinner that The Australian National University hosted in his honour to showcase the work of his Latin American Studies research centre and raise its profile with his university community. Given a free hand at drawing up an invitation list, he invited Latin American diplomats and senior figures from corporations with interests in the region.

Alternatively, the disciplines themselves might be encouraged to celebrate their successes. As I have already discussed, some disciplines in Australia have created their own teaching awards that shadow the criteria used by the national awards. In the United Kingdom, the Engineering Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy runs a national award scheme. The award scheme has been running for five years and is sponsored by industry. Shortlisted finalists work with members of the Centre to develop case studies (Engineering Subject Centre 2010) and the Centre has used a Celebrating Excellence in Engineering Education event to “celebrate and champion excellence” and showcase the work of the award finalists in the lead up to a Gala Dinner and presentation of awards. The event looks quite similar in concept to the now discontinued annual National Teaching Forum in Australia, albeit at the level of just one discipline.



Public acknowledgment of successes has come easily to some universities. After all, a national teaching award is an opportunity to reinforce both an institution's commitment to teaching excellence as well as its achievements in teaching. As a result, awardees may find that students and colleagues are enthusiastic, that departments, schools and faculties celebrate and that the activities of awardees are repeatedly endorsed by senior staff at public events. Institutions can encourage staff to take delight in colleagues' achievements and project this to the wider community. By marking the occasion within the institution, members of senior management communicate to staff and students that they value teaching excellence. By recognising the event in external publicity, they again confirm the value their institution places on teaching – and, in a world where institutional performance is ending up on display in league tables, this is something employers, prospective students and their parents, want to hear.

Some universities have been doing this for years. Sadly, others who are perfectly adept at celebrating research success appear more diffident in the realm of teaching. The same appears to be true for professional associations. This can take the shine off success when it comes to celebration but also when it comes to developing the subsequent careers of awardees.





## Chapter Three: Career Development

The most extensive empirically-based review of the national awards was completed for the AUTC by Roy Ballantyne and his colleagues. Ballantyne et al. (2003) spoke with staff and students at four universities. They also sent questionnaires to the first 40 recipients of AAUT (1997-2001) awards, asking them about the award itself – the impact that the award had had on them, their use of prize money, the selection process and changes that might be made to improve the impact of the program.

Ballantyne et al. (2003) found the scheme had, among other things, given participants “personal validation and encouragement” (p.15), contributed to winners’ “reputation and credibility” (p.16), caused teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, and acted as an “incentive for others to improve their teaching” (p.18). As such, the reviewers concluded that the awards had played an important part in increasing the level of recognition afforded good teaching. This represented a “cultural shift” in attitudes in the Australian university sector in the 1980s and early 1990s (p.15).

On the other hand, Ballantyne et al. (2003) recognised that some recipients had found their award to be a burden, reporting that they had faced scepticism, envy and resentment from colleagues in their home disciplines and institutions. Awardees had found it hard to meet the expectations of their students and there was also evidence that the sector had been tempted to use award winners on an ad hoc basis as cheap labour. In some cases, this had compromised recipients’ ability to maintain their research careers. All these themes continued to emerge in my research.

### Confidence

Many academics spoke about how receiving an award gave them a strong sense of validation. Keithia Wilson (Prime Minister’s award winner, 2007, Griffith University) saw the award as “an external validation of each innovative thing that’s... out of the box”. For Sally Sandover (award winner, 2000, The University of Western Australia), it both “validated a career choice and it validated a passion” and “gave me a little bit of subliminal confidence”. This was particularly important for those academics who had been operating ‘against the grain’ or ‘at the frontier’ in their discipline, school or institution.

I felt validated ... I sort of think I shouldn’t have needed that, but apparently I did... there were things I had been doing in the classroom I kept secret because I was afraid of what other staff would say ... but ... other people obviously thought it was pretty good ... and it meant that there were some things that I was more prepared to try or just be more relaxed about...

...and I’ve been more prepared to think: why should I accept, or remain silent in the face of, things that I think are inappropriate, incorrect, contrary to research evidence, contrary to good teaching practice or contrary to my ethics as a teacher ... (award winner, IRUA University)

Allied to validation, was an increased sense of self-belief that awardees had something legitimate to contribute in education, a field in which they may have had little or no formal training: “it gives one that confidence to ... try to generate new approaches ...” (Salvatore Di Mauro, award winner, 2006, Griffith University). Greater self-belief might lead to attempts to gain: promotion on the strength of teaching; internal or external funding to support



teaching, or leadership roles. For Simon Lewis, (award winner, 2009, Curtin University) “it may have given me extra confidence to push for things that I want done in this sphere”.

### *Desire*

National teaching award winners were asked to identify – from a pre-existing list – what they wanted to happen after they received their award. Some resisted the assumption that they wanted to change what they were doing,

I received the award for doing what I love to do – and didn’t want to use it as a springboard to other activities that I value less. (Survey respondent)

...my aim is to stay in the role I am which is basically a teaching researcher role... I’m not planning to use it as a major springboard into anything, but I would genuinely like to share my views on the teaching, research and practice nexus with my colleagues around the country. (Stephen Barkoczy, Prime Minister’s award winner, 2008, Monash University)

Members of senior management were also concerned to avoid a situation where awardees were “torn out of the classroom, never to communicate with students again” (Jane Long, Pro Vice-Chancellor, The University of Western Australia). On the other hand, institutions wanted to generate a culture that encouraged commitment to teaching and learning:

...if you have an institution ... which sees all of this as exciting, worthwhile, valuable and important, then I think you create an expectation that the individuals who do win these awards... would be interested in looking for ways in which they could more broadly contribute ... (Anne Edwards, former Vice-Chancellor, Flinders University)

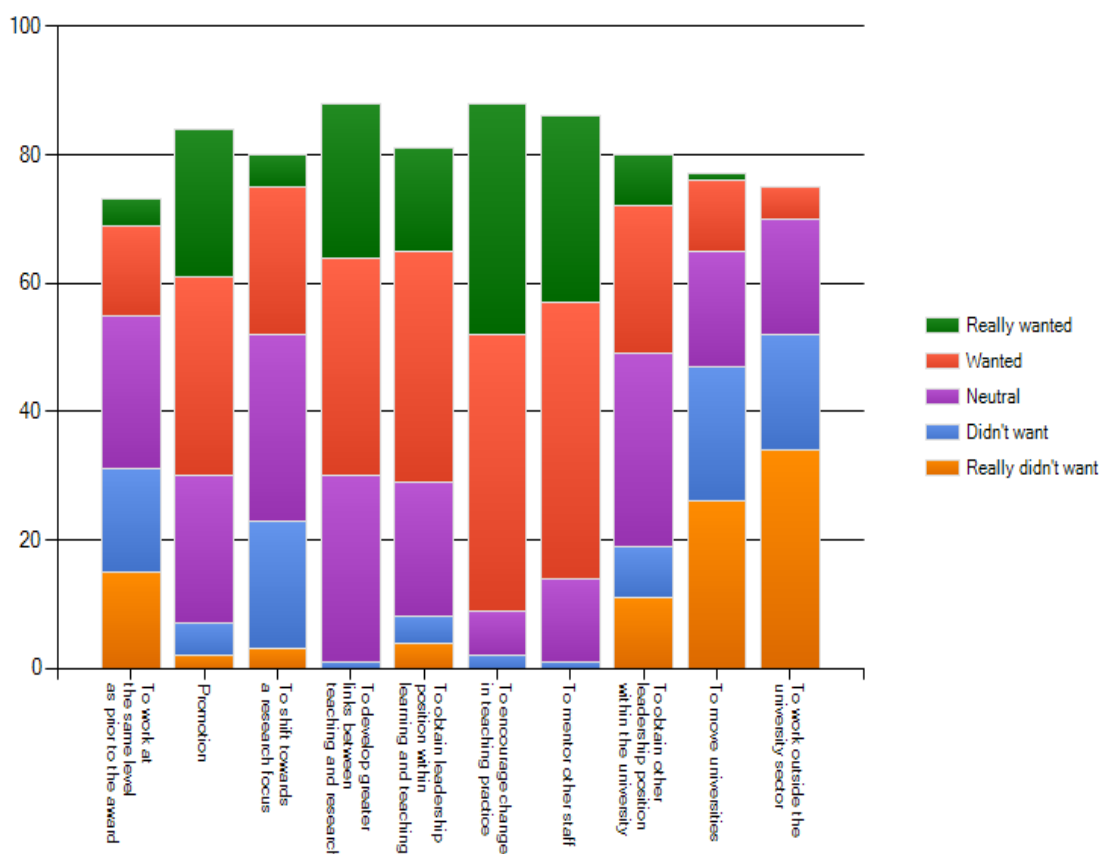
More than half of the 93 respondents who answered these questions (between 73 and 88 answered any one part of this question) indicated that they wanted or really wanted: promotion (54 respondents); to develop links between teaching and research (58); to obtain a leadership position within teaching and learning (52); to encourage change in teaching practice (79); or to mentor other staff (71). Conversely, few wanted or really wanted to work at the same level as prior to the award (28); to shift towards a research focus (28); to obtain a non-teaching and learning related leadership position in their university (31); to move universities (12); or to work outside the university sector (5).

The overall picture is not unexpected – many awardees wished to develop their career to the point where they could influence teaching and learning in their current institution and thereby help their colleagues improve teaching:

... we’ve groomed them, we’ve acknowledged them, they’ve been acknowledged nationally and now they want something more from the institution. They want to be involved in decision-making. (Karen Van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Griffith University)



**Once you received the ALTC national teaching award, what are the things that you wanted to happen in your career? [You can tick more than one row]**



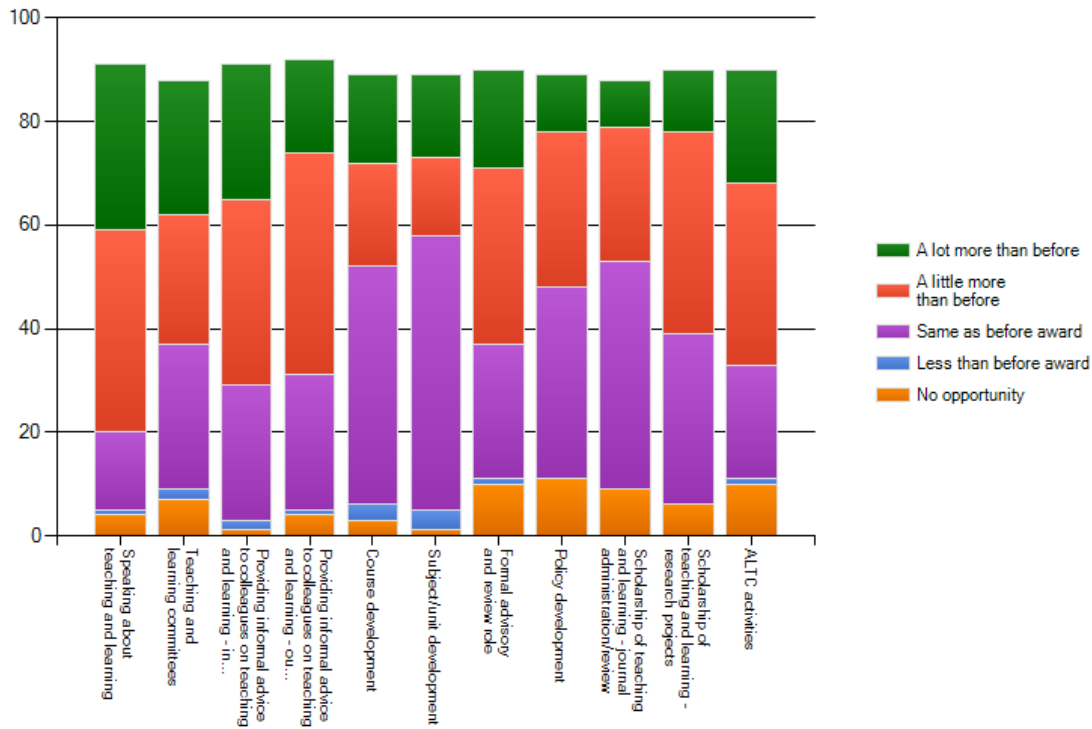
### Opportunity

Awards provided recipients with opportunities to undertake more or wider-ranging educational work. Over half of the 93 survey respondents reported having had greater opportunity after they won their award to: speak about teaching and learning (71); join teaching and learning committees (51); provide informal advice to colleagues inside (62) and outside (61) their own discipline on teaching and learning matters; play formal advisory and review roles (53); engage in research in teaching and learning (51), or take part in ALTC activities (57).

These new opportunities occurred at school, faculty, institutional, national and international levels. For example, at the institutional level, 27 respondents had accepted invitations to speak about teaching and learning, 38 were on university teaching and learning committees, 22 played a formal advisory or review role, and 25 were involved in policy development. At a national level, 42 had worked on ALTC activities, many presumably as award and citation assessors, 19 on scholarship of teaching and learning research projects. Eighteen respondents had spoken about teaching and learning at an international level and 15 had engaged in review work or administration for international scholarship of teaching and learning journals.



**Since winning the ALTC national teaching award, have you had new opportunities to make a more effective contribution to the following areas of teaching and learning?**



The ALTC award has encouraged me to go for promotion and to speak about my learning and teaching at international level. I did not attend a conference overseas and present on my work until I received the award. (Survey respondent)

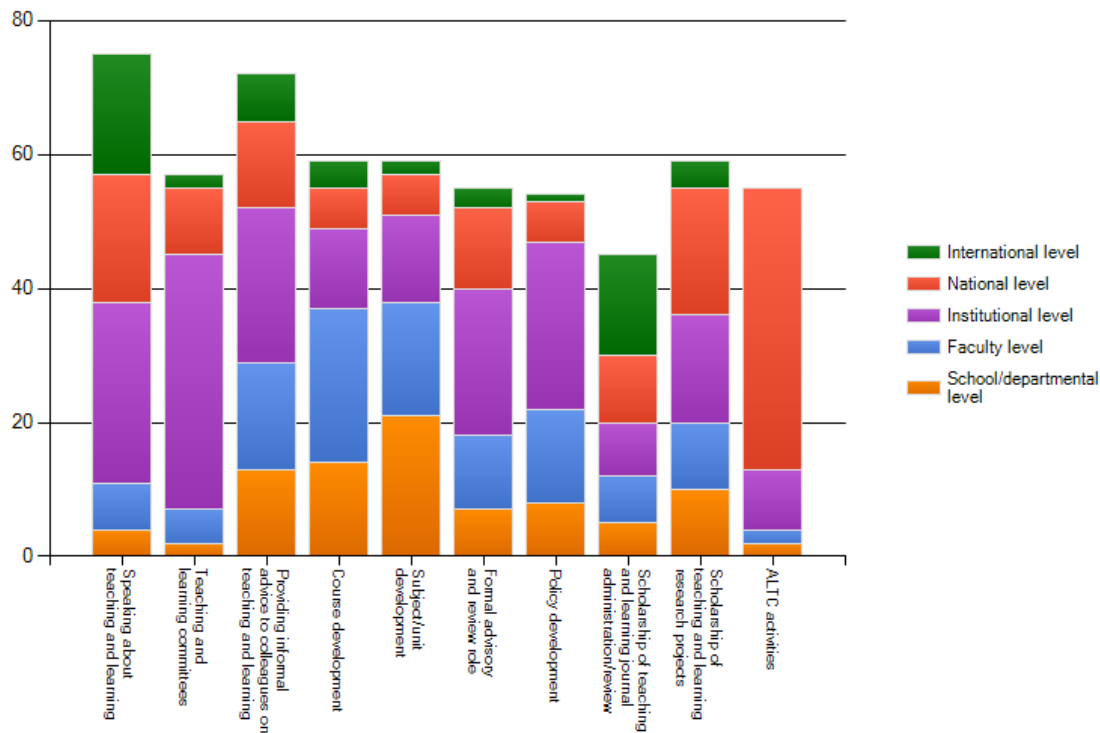
...the award has made a significant difference when it comes to opportunities/invitations to speak about teaching and learning. I have received many invitations, both within my own institution and nationally, since winning the award. I trust that the award has raised awareness about my activities and contributions to teaching and learning. (Survey respondent)

Many of these activities required awardees to reflect further on their approaches to teaching so that they might be able to explain in public what they did and why. In this way, excellent teachers might examine further links between educational theory and their educational practices. It:

...made me actually think what I'm kind of doing links up pretty closely with Paulo Freire and I hadn't thought about this much at all... (John Minns, Prime Minister's award winner, 2010, The Australian National University)



**Since winning the ALTC national teaching award, WHAT KINDS of new opportunities have you been offered to make a more effective contribution to the following areas of teaching and learning?**



When awardees were asked to identify the five most interesting invitations that they had received as a result of the award, they portrayed vastly different experiences. For some, the award made little difference to what they were already doing. Others noticed a dramatic shift in the quantity and nature of requests.

I have scarcely received a speaking invitation – it’s as if teaching does not matter to my institution and other universities. Not a single Business School in Australasia has contacted me to speak about the approach for which I have been recognised. Such a lack of interest is disappointing to say the least. I was invited to speak at a senior executive forum in my university as an award winner and [have] given a seminar to the Faculty that only eight people attended but that has been about it. (Survey respondent)

I was very active in leadership, advising/mentoring, committee work, policy development, etc before the ALTC award and nothing much changed in these roles as a result of the award in either the invitations I’ve received or in opportunities I’ve sought. (Survey respondent)

I have delivered 14 national and state invited presentations related to teaching excellence, the research-teaching nexus, improving student outcomes at university, enhancing education through engagement and evaluation and quality teaching at university. I gave a keynote presentation as a recognised senior leader and scholar in higher education at the [name of university] Teaching Fellows symposium. I have been an invited teaching scholar at three universities... where in this role I delivered university-wide presentations and workshops, mentored staff, conducted media interviews and had my sessions and one-on-one interviews filmed and made available for staff development. I was invited by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at [European university] to review their teaching excellence protocol ... delivering university-wide workshops (n=11), serving on award assessment panels and invited expert panels and providing resources ... I was an invited participant in the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching and Learning expert round table to improve



teaching ... Extensive mentoring of numerous staff to win local and national awards at universities across Australia. I have run workshops on teaching awards and quality teaching across Australia ... My teaching achievements have featured in a large number of media stories (television, print and radio) and promoted in a host of university corporate publications, marketing documents, advertising campaigns. (Survey respondent)

A wide selection of factors might explain the varying experiences: previous standing in education; academic level; discipline, and time elapsed since the award. Perhaps the most sensible conclusion that can be reached is that awards become part of the social capital available to a recipient, but that the value can only be understood in the context within which the academic is already situated. The:

... experience for each individual is really actually part of their primary experience of being a working academic with all of the complexities that go around that. So, at that time, most of what was occupying me... good or bad or indifferent, was really not around the award per se but around everything else that was happening and the award just added a particular flavour or colour to that experience. (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

Awards raised the visibility of recipients among senior managers. Alan Robson, Vice-Chancellor of The University of Western Australia, acknowledged that:

It's also important in bringing you to the attention of people who are looking for people to do other things around the university ... It puts them on the radar.

As executive dean of a faculty at Curtin University, Tom Stannage was willing to give emerging educational leaders a little more freedom to operate:

...when [awardee] said the best way for this to occur ... I would listen to him more acutely than I might from others because ... it was worth a punt.

Awardees reached similar conclusions. They understood that they were known across their institution, and could see this when greeted by senior managers or asked to take on additional roles:

Clearly the award has had a positive impact on my career and reputation. Within my university I am now known more widely and am asked to contribute to teaching and learning seminars, which I greatly enjoy ... (Survey respondent)

It made me visible outside the School of Education, *within* the university in a way that I had not been before and which I don't think anything else could have done for me ... (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

... it meant I got to know people such as the PVC Ed, and helped cement my relationship with the academic development unit to the point where I started teaching in our Grad Cert Higher Ed program, and hence to have some impact on teaching practice in the university. (Survey respondent)

Several awardees were content to wait and see what they might be asked to do. One operated "on the principle that if they want you, they'll come and ask you!". Others were not keen to be seen as "too pushy" or "speaking out of turn". Some recognised that, having been appointed to a new managerial position, they would receive more than enough additional requests.

Yet, many awardees were hungry for opportunities. Merrilyn Goos urged awardees to "say yes to everything – every invitation that you get because it could open up possibilities". She argued that the more experiences that you can gain, the more opportunities and options it allowed later:



... whenever opportunities have come along to do different things, I've almost always said 'yes', and I've learned so many different things, so that when something interesting comes along I'm always prepared for it because I've done the things that you need to do in order to take the next step. (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

Others were highly proactive and sought new opportunities, particularly those that enabled awardees to speak about education, provide informal advice, or engage in educational research projects. Past recipients advised new awardees:

Go through the database of award winners, and contact past winners in your field or which you think have something wonderful to teach you. Seek them out, talk, try. (Survey respondent)

Don't be shy! If not actively sought after by your discipline and institution, volunteer yourself to speak to other groups about education, and to be on higher education committees. You definitely have excellent contributions to make! (Survey respondent)

Become more involved in teaching and learning in your institution and beyond in a proactive way. Don't wait for people to invite you to things, as they may well not ... Be strategic about how you use the funding to develop something that will have a far-reaching trajectory for the disciplines you want to advance ... what you establish with your funding, and with the confidence and affirmation of your direction the award gives you, will sustain your discipline and your career long after the hype is over. (Survey respondent)

Share your practice and ideas in as many forums as you can. Embrace all the invitations you receive with both arms. You will not be disappointed. (Survey respondent)

Some who did not do so, regretted it. Interviewees believed that to the extent that the award might be used to generate opportunities, it had a limited life-span: "It doesn't last beyond two years so make the most of the golden glow" (Survey respondent). Nevertheless, over that brief period, it might open up new possibilities:

... it probably had a short lifespan as a door opener or lever but everything that happened after that was because of what I did having stepped through the door.

... my career could have gone in a very different direction if I hadn't in a sense myself become caught up in the idea that the award meant I could then move to the next level, but it's very hard for me looking back to discern whether it was a conscious decision. (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

Be strategic – know what you want to get from this award, and then get it ... it's an opportunity, but unless you capitalise on it that opportunity will fade over time. Think about what it's for before you apply, because if you don't know how it's going to help you once you've got it, then it's not worth the considerable time and effort to get it in the first place. (Survey respondent)

For many, the receipt of an award raised their credibility or legitimacy when they sought to achieve something within their faculty, institution or discipline. Alf Lizzio, when interviewed as part of a forum at his own institution, spoke of the awards as "useful bits of social capital that if used properly can really make a difference" (Griffith University 2009). Interviewees and survey respondents agreed:

I have more invisible credibility when I make a suggestion or offer advice. (Survey respondent)

Having an ALTC national teaching award provides 'legitimacy' for you to take on particular roles within encouraging, promoting and assisting with teaching and learning activities. (Survey respondent)



The award does, I suspect, lend my decisions greater authority. (Survey respondent)

Awards often give you 'permission' to try things. If people come to you with the basic assumption that you know what you are doing, they are willing to talk to you, to listen, and to collaborate in powerful ways. (Survey respondent)

Some recipients found that, following the award, they were also able more easily to overcome existing opposition to their proposals:

We had been experiencing massive resistance to the way in which we taught [name of program]. The Teaching Excellence Award removed this 'heat'. (Survey respondent)

In addition to the social capital that accompanied the award, many awardees used the prize money to give themselves time, administrative or research support, or to travel and build networks, sometimes to support their teaching, sometimes to enhance their research. The value was most obvious for recipients of Prime Minister's Awards. Awards for Teaching Excellence have allowed many Australian academics to build national and international networks well beyond the confines of their home institutions or disciplines. Awardees have travelled both inside and outside the country, using the money to give them the time and funding to meet like-minded teachers and scholars. Marnie Hughes-Warrington explained how the Prime Minister's Award allowed her to travel to places 'where I could see people who were interested in similar things':

I've been to 13 different universities in the last nearly a year ... and what I've loved about it ... is to be able to get out there and say, here's my understanding of it but how do you think about these things and what's it mean in your university ... (Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Prime Minister's award winner, 2008, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash University)

Once she became pro vice-chancellor, she also employed a research assistant so that she might maintain her productivity as a teacher/researcher. Lynne Hunt believed that the award money "enabled me to build my career":

I used the money to go on study programs internationally. I built up huge international networks – got my name known. From that I got invites to review and write chapters for books and so on ...

I think I'm quite managerial, quite action oriented, quite capacity building in terms of getting the context right. And I have learned those skills as a consequence of the experiences that I put myself through from winning \$75,000. (Lynne Hunt, Prime Minister's award winner, 2002, ex-Edith Cowan University)

Ian Cameron invested his winnings in a project to create a 3D immersive environment based on a petroleum refinery. His money was matched by his vice-chancellor and by industry. The project later spawned two cycles of ALTC competitive grant funding. Among other things, Tom Stannage used his money as seed funding for other people's good ideas: "you have no money at all and then you have \$75K – it's bizarre beyond your comprehension". As John Minns confirmed, "it's nice not having to apply for money to do these things".

For those academics who are interested in pursuing opportunities, Israel, Hay and Emerson (2010) offered the following advice:

No-one really knows what a teaching award allows you to do. Identify some of the things that interest you and try using the award as the opening. Look beyond your traditional hunting grounds – outside your discipline, institution and geographical location. Think of some of the ways skills you have demonstrated so clearly in teaching might be transferred to other fields.





Sometimes, when you look for an opening, you'll get a polite no. Sometimes, you'll be ignored. Sometimes, you'll be met with tail-wagging, face-licking enthusiasm. Try to look for activities that might support any longer-term ambitions you have for service, management and research as well as teaching. (Israel et al. 2010)

We also suggested that awardees work with their line and senior management to contemplate what they might do next.

Your supervisor, executive dean and Vice-Chancellor might be excited by your success but may not have thought strategically about what you might do next. Help them identify what would and what would not be good for you, your Faculty and your institution. For example, what presentations do they want you to do, to whom, and why? Are there any leadership roles in the Faculty, university or more broadly that you might be able to take on? Which requests are your supervisors happy for you to refuse? (Israel et al. 2010)

Consequently, I would encourage institutions to debrief their awardees after the ceremony with a view to tailoring opportunities to suit the particular strengths and wishes of their award winners. What is it award winners want to do over the next couple of years? How do they want to take advantage of their award?

... when you win the Award it signals that maybe you're looking ... for different opportunities within that institution – and maybe you don't know how to have those conversations with people or, because they're used to seeing you in particular ways, it's a surprising shift ... (Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Prime Minister's award winner, 2008, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash University)

While at The University of Queensland, Denise Chalmers reported she met awardees as a group, sought their views on what they wanted to achieve and explored how they might contribute to the university. Those who were interested could be invited to address new teachers, speak at teaching and learning forums, and mentor subsequent nominees for awards:

... there are ... those who really want to do something more and teaching's their passion, and they'll come to anything you want them to and do whatever you like, and they're just fabulous. The others are: 'don't bother me'. (Denise Chalmers, former Director of the Teaching and Educational Development Institute, The University of Queensland)

Adrian Lee called for senior management to support awardees' in building their career, offering them an opportunity to work with like-minded people, and trading off funding for activities that the awardee wished to pursue against commitments to contribute to staff development:

Part of the deal is we really want to nurture the awardees at this university as a community because we believe you can contribute to advance learning and teaching ... [and] we will actually work to try and give you some skills which will allow you ultimately to take leadership roles...

The need to debrief and tailor opportunities might seem obvious, yet very few interviewees reported this had actually happened. Instead, most institutions orientate their ALTC activities towards obtaining awards, fellowships or grants, not to what happens after nominees are successful:

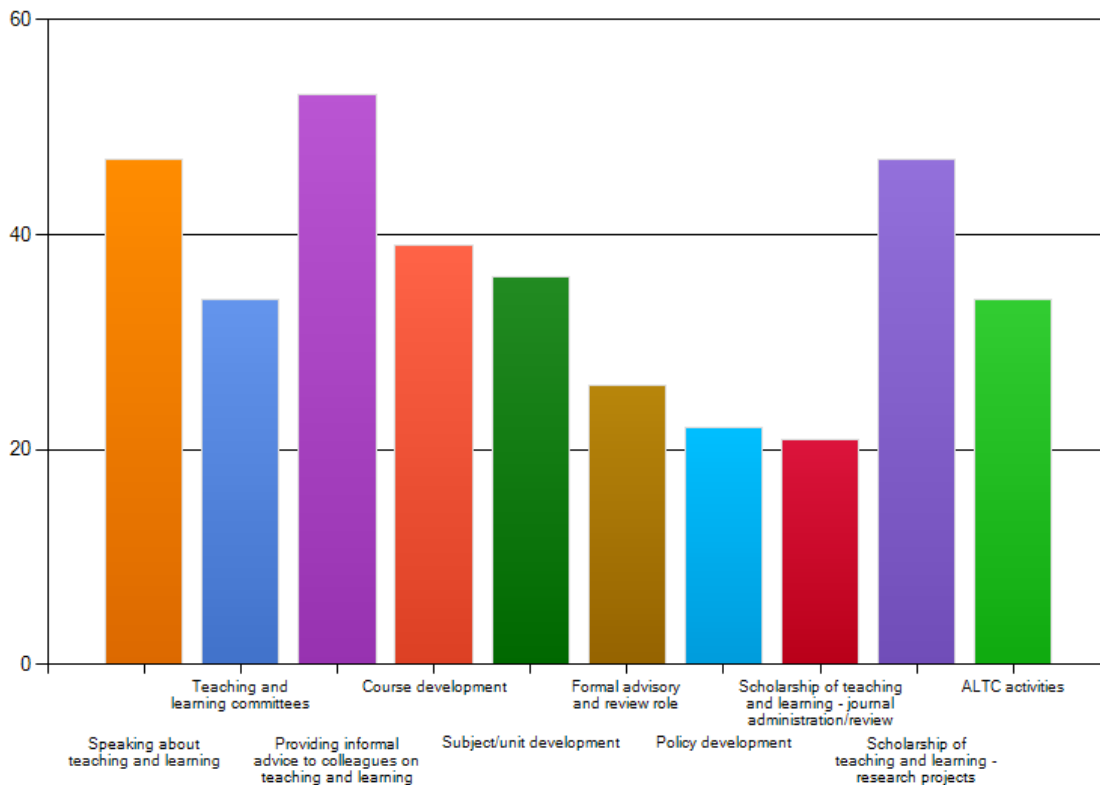
... are you just accelerating for that end point or are you accelerating them for life, and I sometimes wonder because often the structures that are built up are all pre-award structures. (Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Prime Minister's award winner, 2008, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash University)



... the university's given us our KPI [which is] win. We have no KPI about what happens to these people after they've won. (Karen Van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Griffith University)

Perhaps my university could take a more premeditated approach to making use of award winners. It seems to focus more on gaining new awards than on capitalising on existing winners. I guess that's understandable but disappointing. (Survey respondent)

**Since winning the ALTC national teaching award what opportunities have you sought?**



Of course, the picture is always a little more complex. Despite the comment above, at Griffith University, for example, awardees *are* considered for teaching and learning-related activities both inside and outside the institution: “we don’t see winning the ALTC Award as the end ... as soon as someone wins one of those we’re talking to them about a Teaching Fellowship, National Fellowships, Discipline Scholar. It’s not the end of the road” (Karen Van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Griffith University). Other awardees may find particular people inside or outside their institution will offer encouragement. Marnie Hughes-Warrington was introduced to senior female academics by the ALTC Director Communications and Engagement. She found a brief conversation with a female vice-chancellor exceptionally valuable:

... here was this person saying ‘here’s how I managed to do these things, but how do you want to manage? How are you going to negotiate the space? Where are you going to go? ... How do you see it?’.

Like many institutions, my own university, The University of Western Australia, has done little systematically to plan the future for awardees. Awardees have not been asked what they want to do next:



I was never asked that ever. I don't think any award winner has ever been asked that. I think what happens to people, to recipients, is just often serendipitous; things just evolve or unfold or opportunities present themselves. But I don't think anybody gets asked 'what does it mean to you and how are you going to use this?' (Sally Sandover, award winner, 2000, and Academic Coordinator, The University of Western Australia ALTC Support Office)

However, it would not be difficult to create such a process. Engagement with the ALTC is facilitated by the ALTC Support Office, which has been established in the Vice Chancellery reporting directly to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education). The Office is fully funded by the university, following three years' joint funding with the ALTC through the PEI. The Office is headed by a Level D academic, Sally Sandover, who was herself a winner of a national teaching award. The Office works with staff, including institutional award winners, helping them draft and refine applications for national awards. During this period, the Director develops a strong personal relationship with nominees "and as a consequence could probably identify the pathways that people have passions and expertise for" (Sally Sandover).

Once nominees receive a national award, the Office has only a limited role to play. However, the Pro Vice-Chancellor also saw value in helping awardees plan their future. She envisaged providing a system of mentoring and an opportunity to talk to senior university staff:

Possibly having a more explicit system of mentoring and discussion that involved past award winners and probably someone like me sitting down with an award winner ... and trying to get a better sense of what that person's interests and strengths may be and what their other commitments might be ...

... being privy to some of the experiences of previous award winners would be very useful indeed, and ... thinking more creatively with the person themselves about how this might be just one step in building a particular area of their academic career that may actually extend well beyond UWA ...

... take them to the edge of a comfort zone and let them peer over the edge and think, because sometimes people are happily surprised by what they see and they suddenly find certain things riveting that they never ... thought that they could either do or much less that they actually wanted to do. (Jane Long, Pro Vice-Chancellor, The University of Western Australia)

Such a debriefing might also enable new awardees to talk to their predecessors about what they might expect to happen as a result of the award.

I think it would be terrific especially in a place like this when we've got so many previous award winners and some of them have gone on and done other things like I have and some haven't. To just sit down with someone like say the DVC (Academic) or the VC would be nice if they're interested in teaching and learning and a couple of former award winners to talk in the way that we're talking now about what it was like for them. (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, and Director, Teaching and Educational Development Institute, The University of Queensland)

Another interviewee put it more forcefully:

... as a matter of course an institution should have ... a group of the current awardees who will welcome in the next lot of awardees, ... but there has to be a purpose to that. (Adrian Lee, former Pro Vice-Chancellor, The University of New South Wales)

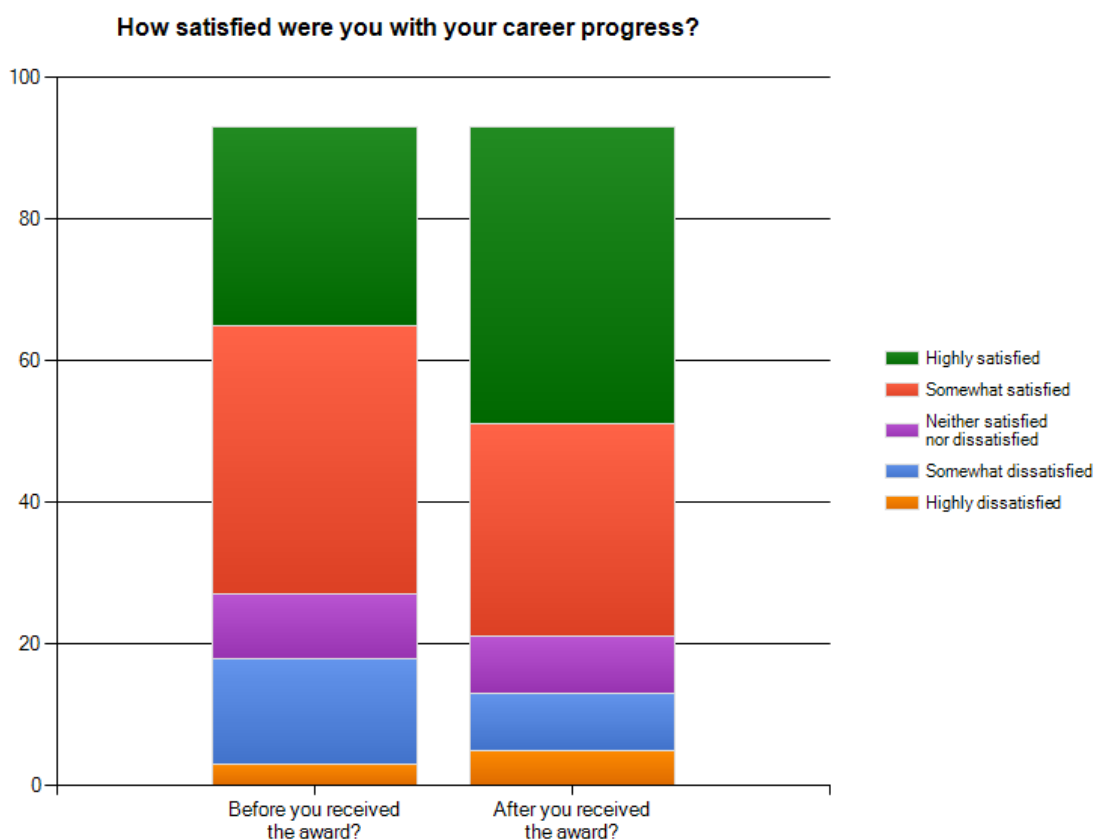


## Satisfaction

Respondents reported an increase in career satisfaction following their award. While 64 of 93 respondents expressed some degree of satisfaction with their career progress before the award, this had increased to 72 afterwards. The change was even more marked among those who indicated they were highly satisfied – from 28 to 42:

... winning the ALTC award was pivotal in my career. I was only mildly satisfied with my career advancement, but this changed after winning the award. (Survey respondent)

I am not greatly interested in promotion. I mainly seek work satisfaction. My course coordinator position, aided by the award, allows me to make a contribution at a more strategic level, which I find challenging and enjoyable. (Survey respondent)



However, the effect of the award was not uniform. Indeed, the number of respondents who were highly dissatisfied with the progress of their career actually increased from three to five. The nature of this heightened dissatisfaction was revealed in qualitative responses to the survey:

... in terms of feeling like I'm making progress in worthwhile activities (cultural change!) I've been getting increasingly depressed. (Survey respondent)

Although the award meant a lot to me it has counted for nothing at the university at which I work ... Having good teachers who have had their work recognised and validated at the national level yet being subsequently ignored or not valued does little for one's career aspirations and dreams. (Survey respondent)

... winning the award was the start of losing my career. (Survey respondent)



## Balancing Commitments

Most award winners were asked to undertake new activities. Requests might come from within their organisations at school, faculty or university level. However, they might also originate in other organisations.

The sheer number of requests in itself posed difficulties, though the increase in the number of awardees in each category seems to have reduced the pressure for all but the winner of the Prime Minister's Award. Sometimes the award can come at an extremely awkward time when award-related opportunities have to take second place behind existing responsibilities as a carer, administrative, teaching or research commitments, or plans for long-service leave.

When Ian Cameron won the Prime Minister's Award in 2003, he was in the middle of a research project based in the United Kingdom. So, "I came back for one day and went back to London and got on with what I was doing". Iain Hay was due to go on long-service leave:

... I literally stuck it [the Award] on my parents-in-law's dresser in their kitchen and then went globe-trotting for five and a half months ... By the time I got back, the opportunity to do very much about it had passed ... (Iain Hay, Prime Minister's award winner, 2006, Flinders University)

Stephen Barkoczy won the Prime Minister's Award in 2008. By the time the award was announced, workload (including teaching load and administrative load) had been finalised for the following year and he had already signed four book contracts – "you've got to do your day job before you can enjoy the glory". The award placed more pressure on 12 months that were already shaping up to be a "very challenging and full year". He was offered speaking engagements inside and outside Australia, he found that "literally I just couldn't get to all of them and had to decline a number of opportunities that I would have liked to do because of my existing commitments". One award winner found that even requests that excited her posed problems:

... sometimes the interaction is so gleeful that I can immediately think of 15 ways I could approach the task and any number of exciting things I could do and really enjoy. Pretty soon after that comes 'how can I possibly fit this in? I'm barely getting my nose up off of my desk as things stand, I haven't got to any of the research' ... (award winner, IRUA university)

The importance of an award may also be overshadowed by significant family responsibilities. A survey respondent reported:

At the time I received my citation and teaching excellence awards ... I had a young baby to care for, and then two more since... I was not looking for an increase in work hours and/or work responsibility. I am currently on maternity leave, but I hope that my awards will assist me to re-enter the work place once I am ready. This is not ideal for making the most of what the awards could bring as I expect the initial momentum of opportunities will dissipate.

Other awardees were troubled less by the timing and more by the nature of the request. This might be because: the travel or schedule was particularly onerous; it placed the awardee in the awkward position of having to work in a way that ran counter to their own views of pedagogy – "lecturing on how not to use lectures" (Lynne Hunt, Prime Minister's award winner, 2002, ex-Edith Cowan University), or took academics beyond their area of expertise or competence. Some interviewees felt considerable pressure to meet the higher expectations audiences might have of a national award winner, believing that "if you make



mistakes and fail, people will come down harder on you” (Mark Freeman, award winner, 1997, ex-University of Technology, Sydney). Iain Hay (Prime Minister’s award winner, 2006, Flinders University) was careful not to raise expectations too high:

I would never go to another organisation and say ‘Look, I won the PM’s Award for Teaching. I’d like to come and talk to you at your conference and the ALTC will pay the fare’. You’re setting up this expectation that you’re going to be this great teacher ... There are times when I can give really good ... presentations ... but not necessarily all the time ... I don’t have that sense of 100% surety ...

As a result, writing with Hay and Emerson, I advised academics that:

You might find yourself approached incessantly – and with little regard for your other commitments – to review applications, participate in learning and teaching focus groups, lead professional development sessions ... Manage your workload, or ask your supervisor to help you with this. Not every offer is a good offer. There are some things you will be asked to do that no-one else would agree to. There may be good reasons for their lack of interest. If you might agree to invitations under particular conditions, state them. Ask yourself what’s in it for you, and for your institution. Consider whether there’s any particular reason why you are the right person for this, and if there isn’t, perhaps say no or deflect the request to colleagues who might be looking for such an opportunity. You’re a busy person. (Israel et al. 2010)

As Prime Minister’s award winner, Ian Cameron received a range of requests. He had already learned to be measured about his expectations of what he might achieve. He did this by protecting his time and balancing commitments.

I’m not a natural ‘turn you down at the first moment’ person but I think you have to have a measured opinion of yourself in a sense that you don’t run yourself ragged or you’re no use to anyone at some point because you’re just all over the place and there are responsibilities to fulfil at UQ as well, and I take those seriously. I think people appreciate it when you do say ‘no’ as long as you’ve got a reasonable ‘no, but if the opportunity comes up again I’ll give it some serious thought’.

Ian Cameron might initially contemplate a range of matters but moved towards a focus on particular issues, preferring depth to breadth, and converging on about three things “over a decent period of time”.

... if you think that a goal is going to take you one month then I think Pi 3.14 is a really good factor to multiply your initial estimate [by] because that’s what it’s really going to take you. So you can use this in reverse. If you’ve got a whole lot of things you want to achieve – nine of them let’s say – really you’ll only achieve [three] ...

Even awardees who urged others to take every opportunity that came their way, did not find it possible to take their own advice. Merylyn Goos sifted through requests by asking herself whether she thought the work was interesting, and was something could be enthusiastic about and learn from. When under pressure she agreed to do the things that she and only she could do, asking herself “am I really the only person or the very best person to do this?”.

One way of saying no, with grace, was by deflecting requests to more junior colleagues, and providing them with support and encouragement to enable them to take on the work. Sadly, this could cause some embarrassment when colleagues, forewarned that they might be asked to do something, realised that they were not going to be approached.



Part of the role of institutions should be to help awardees plan which additional activities they will agree to take on. Without help, some awardees will struggle to maintain a sensible workload:

I just reacted rather than thinking through what would be good for me to do and what would I like to do. I didn't consider the question of how to best leverage the award resources and the new opportunities it brought with it to create the time and space to do something worthwhile and in furtherance of higher education teaching.

With hindsight I could have and should have managed that a whole lot better but I was completely overwhelmed and ... after a certain amount of time of just saying 'yes' to everybody, ... I was burnt out and didn't handle it very well ... (award winner, Group of Eight university)

Some awardees were concerned their success as teachers would pigeonhole them into a teaching-only profile and they would lose the time and opportunity to focus on research. They considered this could well be detrimental to their careers. Several deliberately placed greater emphasis on their research after their awards to counter the possibility this might happen:

... people were saying 'well she's a great teacher but does she write anything?' And I'd written several books and quite a few refereed articles ... and for me it was just 'drop the teacher thing' and I even tried to do that for a while ... It seemed to me that nobody bothered to look behind the skills teacher. (Nadja Alexander, award winner, 1997, ex-The University of Queensland)

Other awardees were keen to maintain their research track record in the face of numerous offers to take on additional education management roles:

When I won a national teaching award, I was asked to Chair [the Teaching and Learning] committee and ... I said 'no' because I didn't want to be pigeonholed as 'she's the teacher, we'll make her Chair of that committee' because I've always wanted to be an academic all-rounder. (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

Several awardees sought to continue to develop links between their research and teaching. In part, this reflected how they had always seen their career. In part, it was a way of limiting their workload by ensuring a higher profile for their role as an educator did not swamp their identity as an active researcher nor the time in which they could pursue their research interests and responsibilities.

However, for some academics, success in the national awards offered them an opportunity to rethink the direction of their academic career. Having invested a considerable period of their lives in teaching, some chose to reorientate their already successful careers towards research:

... after that award I thought maybe I'd draw a bit of a line under driving a teaching and learning agenda and think about securing more of my research trajectory ...

... one of the perverse outcomes of the Teaching Award was at first sight I thought what do you do after you've got the PM's Award? It's the pinnacle of acknowledgement of teaching and I thought ... maybe I should be driving and pushing in other directions ... I suppose I spent 20-odd years working hard thinking about teaching practice and I think I saw a time to restore a bit of balance with my research ... (Iain Hay, Prime Minister's award winner, 2006, Flinders University)

... from the start I've always been a researcher in science and I've already put in a solid effort in teaching – I love teaching but ... I just didn't see the immediate opportunities for



leadership in teaching. Further, teaching leadership isn't as clear or tangible as research leadership which comes about from achievement in research. (Craig Simmons, award winner, 2002, Flinders University)

In some cases, these moves were fuelled by recognition their university or discipline placed greater emphasis on research.

... it's your research time that you've got to protect ... I think that's the general ethos around this place ... there's a general feeling that the research component is taken more seriously by selection committees and I'd say that's probably true (award winner, Group of Eight university)

... things like QEII or future fellowships, research-related awards and *Nature* papers are the goal in [Group of Eight university] ..., so getting an award for teaching was almost like being further labelled as 'the one who has wasted her time teaching'. (Survey respondent)

It was difficult to fight such an emphasis in the face of the growing importance of the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative, the end of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund and the impending abolition of the ALTC. One awardee reluctantly concluded that he would now advise his colleagues to "pay lip service to your teaching, get the basics and get on with your research" (award winner, Group of Eight university). This sense that 'research rules' was seen as affecting more than just a few universities:

I think there's a real push in Go8 Universities with our research output and all – none of those obligations diminish and certainly in a Faculty like mine the higher up you are the more you're expected to produce in terms of research and contribute in terms of administration. Teaching is very important, but all the other responsibilities remain. (Stephen Barkoczy, Prime Minister's award winner, 2008, Monash University)

Awardees reported remarkably similar experiences to those identified by Ballantyne et al. (2003). The awards provided them with validation, credibility and increased career satisfaction and they wished to deploy the subsequent social capital to stimulate change in learning and teaching, often by mentoring other staff. However, the opportunities that the awards brought were not structured nor necessarily well timed, and awardees sometimes found it hard to cope with the quantity and nature of the subsequent workload. Few institutions helped awardees plan their future strategically so that the teaching award might work for and not against awardees in all areas of their professional lives.





## Chapter Four: Leadership Roles

Many recipients assumed what they identified as leadership roles after their award. Fifty-four survey respondents (compared to 29 for research) undertook these roles in their own institution in teaching and learning, 36 at university level (compared to 16 in research). The award was sometimes received at the point when academics wanted to achieve influence on a greater scale or be engaged in a larger space – be it shifting from a department to faculty, faculty to university, or university to national level.

I get the sense that what a lot of the awardees would like to do is work outside their Discipline ... [Changing] the scope of their work to be leading an institution-wide project in a related area could be a very interesting and exciting thing for them to do, and could be a good use of their expertise. (Vianne McLean, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality), Queensland University of Technology)

In particular, it helped some people enter and then move up a developmental pathway through the positions of program director, associate dean at school and faculty levels, and university-level committees, or to take a greater role in ALTC-funded projects or apply for ALTC Fellowships:

Yes, the award gives you confidence and opportunities to play in a bigger context ... The award led directly to the associate dean role and that has led me to many other roles involving leadership. (Survey respondent)

So I could go into medical education, curriculum development, staff training and do things like introduce problem-based learning on a large scale and move away from discipline-based work. (Sally Sandover, award winner, 2000, The University of Western Australia)

The award was a key in my being elected to the academic board and the university's committee on education. There I work vigorously to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and to raise our educational aspirations ... The award has helped me open doors I may never have dared try to open before. And in the hard times, I know it has helped bolster my courage and determination to stay on the path I am following and not just give it up and play the research game. (Richard Buckland, award winner, 2007, The University of New South Wales)

I direct [a Centre whose] brief is to integrate teaching, research and commercial activity in motion capture ... through it, I have developed new curricula for students across arts and science disciplines and faculties ... while my achievements don't really show up ... as strictly teaching and learning, I believe that they have their basis in teaching, and that my award has enabled me to develop research and commercial work that is highly integrated into teaching and learning ... (Survey respondent)

The teaching award marked a really significant change in my application to high-quality education from being a great individual teacher who was responsible for his own units ... and then, in that two to three year period after it, I effectively turned into a kind of an educator who wanted to build a program ... (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

For early career academics, it could constitute an “important part of that definitional shift from junior academic to grown up academic” (Euan Lindsay, award winner, 2007, Curtin University). For more senior academics, it might stimulate progress into senior management, sometimes as the result of moving institutions:

... one of the outcomes when I did eventually win the Prime Minister's Award was that my career did take a sharp right-hand turn ... into promoting teaching and learning in



universities and I became an Associate Dean in a Faculty – in two years I became a professor and Director of Learning and Teaching ... (Lynne Hunt, Prime Minister's award winner)

Over a short period of time, Tom Stannage received significant national recognition for his teaching, research and community service

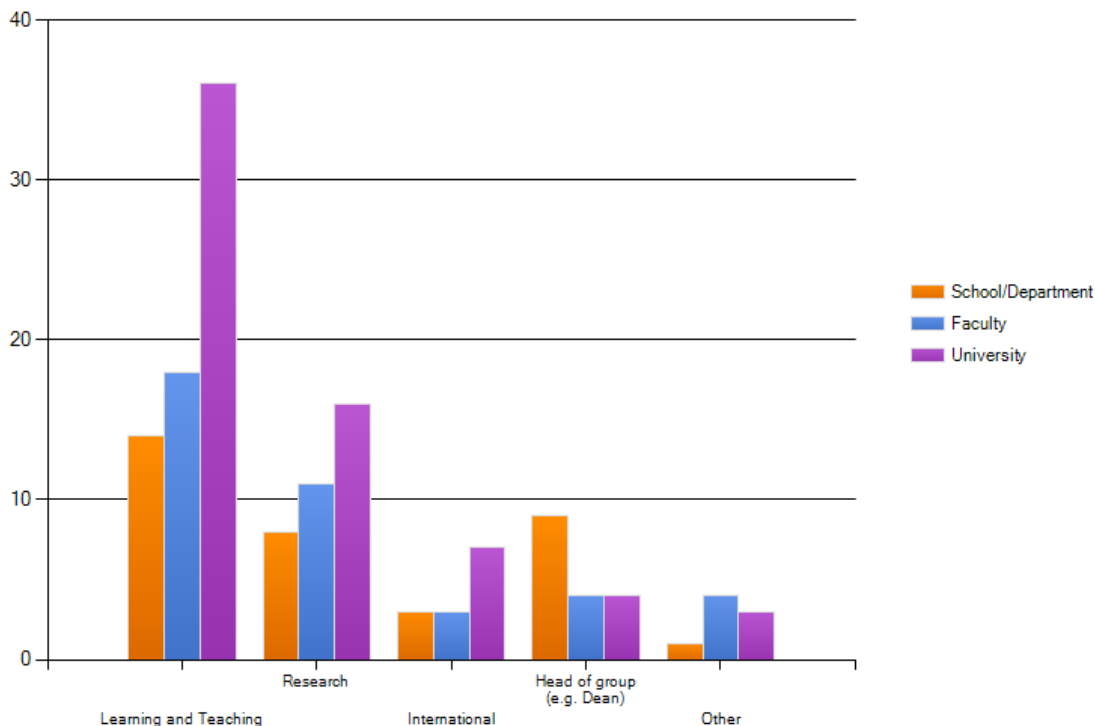
... the national reputation from the teaching award had strengthened my views that I've now got to 54 ... was I going to do what I'd always done for the next decade or were there things within me I could explore, taking my national reputation ... and make it work for me for the next decade ...

... the award was sort of a release for me about certain aspects of leadership potential that lay within me. (Tom Stannage, Prime Minister's award winner, 1997, ex-The University of Western Australia)

He decided he wanted to promote the humanities and believed he would face more of a challenge and make more of an impact by moving institutions and taking up a position as dean.

I am not reducing this to a causal relationship. The desire to operate on a larger stage might have led to the application in the first place, the award might have opened up new doors, or they may have simply happened at the same time. Nevertheless, the awards seemed to offer some reassurance to senior management that an awardee was ready for the next step as well as providing political cover for choosing those people.

**If you have been active WITHIN new leadership roles in your institution since gaining the ALTC national teaching award in what area has this been and at what level?**

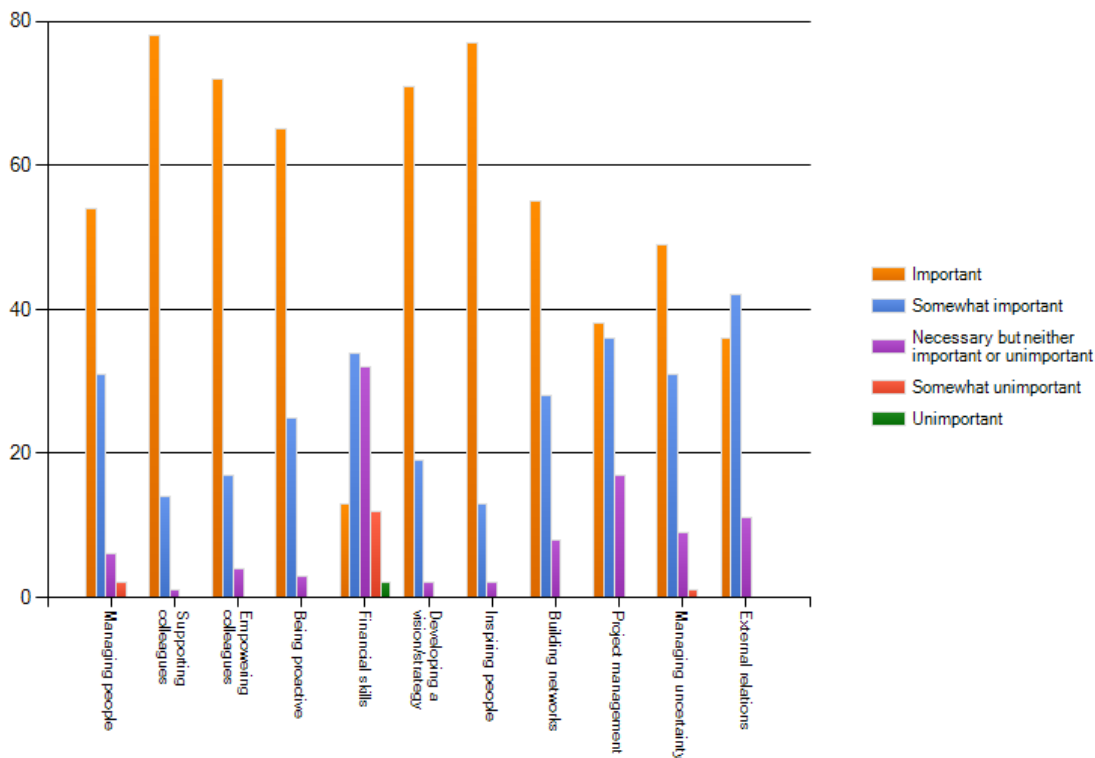


Awardees also became active in leadership roles outside their institution with 39 reporting leadership activity in teaching and learning and 22 in research. These roles were quite varied and included: editing an education journal; membership of executives and presidency of national professional associations; membership of the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) Associate Deans' Steering committee; membership of the international reference board for the Irish National Academy for Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning; and membership of the Health Workforce Australia Expert Reference Group on Clinical Supervision.

### Skill Development

Survey respondents identified a broad range of skills as necessary for educational leadership. Of 93 awardees who answered the question, more than 50 saw the ability to inspire, empower, support and manage colleagues, develop a vision, and build networks as associated with educational leadership. Respondents also referred to the need to be able to manage change, work across portfolios, manage relationships with senior management and use the soft power of “persuasion rather than formal power”.

**What particular skills or behaviours would you associate with educational leadership?**



With the exception of the Prime Minister's Award, Awards for Teaching Excellence are not given for leadership per se. Nevertheless, many awardees will have demonstrated some leadership qualities or have had formal leadership roles by the time they received their award. Awardees had varying views of the relationship between the award and the possibility they might be able to play leadership roles. Some were already in formal positions of leadership or exercising what they regarded as informal or distributive leadership roles. In those cases, some welcomed the legitimacy the award conferred while others felt it made little difference:



It helped assuage the ‘impostor syndrome’ – you don’t feel like you don’t belong as a leader once you have this kind of award. (Survey respondent)

I think that in order to win the award, I had already to have developed these skills ... (Survey respondent)

More than half of respondents referred to developing leadership skills by taking courses on their own initiative, through mentoring, trial and error, working outside their university, or modelling on others’ behaviour. In addition, 42 respondents believed they had developed skills they regarded as important to leadership as a result of career opportunities afforded by their award. Given there is little reason to believe awardees have all the skills required for leadership, this pathway to developing appropriate knowledge, skills and attributes is important:

... being an expert in your particular domain of teaching and learning does not necessarily give you the full suite of skills that you would need to be even a Head of School or a Dean – there’s a certain amount of managerial experience or nous that you’d need and being an acknowledged expert in one particular dimension is not necessarily the best basis for a senior level management role. Mind you, that’s equally true of someone who has been a fantastic researcher. (Vianne McLean, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality), Queensland University of Technology)

### Promotion

Some nominees applied for awards with promotion in mind. When asked whether, after receiving their award, they had hoped to achieve promotion, 53 of 83 survey respondents who elected to answer this question indicated that had been an ambition. Several respondents to the survey had already used or intended to use their award as part of their pitch for promotion:

To be honest, I didn’t think much about changing what I was doing. It was others who made me realise that the award was an ‘ace’ to play in a promotion application. I ... saw the award as a culmination of a long period of time as a teacher rather than the beginning of something, But then again, I am not ambitious nor have I ever been particularly strategic in developing my career. (Survey respondent)

I am preparing the case for promotion to Professor for my application this year – based on outstanding performance in teaching and service. The ALTC Awards have complemented my learning and teaching focus, and assisted in obtaining evidence for credible promotion. (Survey respondent)

Some interviewees described how they had hoped to use the awards to provide promotions committees with external verification as indisputable evidence of teaching excellence.

I was looking ahead to the criteria for promotion to Ass Pro and one of them was ‘if you had won a national teaching award’ so I [thought] ‘well let’s have a go’. (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

I got invited to submit a national teaching award [application] and I did that purely because I thought it would look good on my CV and it would help me get to where I wanted to go to and that was from Level A to B. (Angela Carbone, Prime Minister’s award winner, 1998, Monash University)

In some cases, this represented an aggressive stance to moving up the ranks quickly and efficiently in an environment where institutions were willing to promote on the basis of teaching and leadership in that area. Many universities had policies that enabled this to happen. For example, at Queensland University of Technology:



you can go all the way up to a full professor as a specialist ... it's more common in research but it has been done in teaching and learning ... It's not necessarily what people believe, but it's a reality that there are no barriers to someone going all the way to full professor ... you would have to be able to demonstrate the impact though of your leadership in teaching ... (Vianne McLean, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality), Queensland University of Technology)

It could also reflect concern that promotions processes were biased towards research. So, some institutions either did not have criteria that allowed promotion on the basis of teaching excellence or had promotions panels viewed by applicants as being unsympathetic to the possibility.

I realised that if I were to achieve promotion on the grounds of my teaching that I'd basically needed something more than good teaching evaluations. I needed tools to mitigate the risks for the research professors who wouldn't know good teaching if it got up and slapped them in the face. (award winner, ATN university)

...there's a general feeling that the research component is taken more seriously by selection committees and I'd say that's probably true. (John Minns, Prime Minister's award winner, 2010, The Australian National University)

Most awardees who applied for promotion felt the award helped their application: of the 53 who had hoped for promotion, 39 indicated they had been promoted since their award. Of 50 respondents who achieved promotion, 45 indicated the award had had some positive impact. However, of those 34 who failed to achieve promotion, 26 believed their award had had no impact. Indeed, several survey respondents considered excellence in teaching, however clearly demonstrated, would not be enough to allow them to be promoted or even regarded as working at a more than satisfactory level:

Although the award meant a lot to me it has counted for nothing at the university at which I work because people are not promoted or rewarded on the basis of good teaching. The lack of recognition for national ALTC winners at my university is appalling. Having good teachers who have had their work recognised and validated at the national level yet being subsequently ignored or not valued does little for one's career aspirations and dreams. (Survey respondent)

I still do not believe despite the good work done by many great teachers that the university sector within Australia value[s] teaching. It is clear that promotion and career progression is based on research income in traditional scientific areas [and] teaching scholarship and social sciences continue to suffer. This is very disappointing ... (Survey respondent)

... my faculty rated my performance in the year I received the ALTC national award as 'satisfactory' ... my university's heavy emphasis on research, grants, completions and publications is virtually the sole criterion. In that ALTC award year I did win some research grants, published some papers in international journals, took on new postgrad research students, etc, but that was what obtained me the 'satisfactory' rating. (Survey respondent)

At one award ceremony in Canberra, the Chair of the ALTC Board reportedly called for pro vice-chancellors to demand that awardees should be promoted. In some instances, this was exactly what happened. One recipient of the Prime Minister's Award reported his institution had immediately promoted him out-of-round without requiring formal application, though he acknowledged that, coupled with his publication history and managerial role, his track record would almost certainly have warranted promotion if he had applied within the formal round.



However, there are several difficulties for institutions if national awards are seen as too closely tied to promotion. First, over-enthusiastic endorsement by senior management may not be seen as legitimate by some academics. For example, one dean recalled that when he accelerated a promotion for an award recipient “all hell broke loose” because the awardee was not seen by some as having “done the hard yards”

I had to tread very carefully in my position about how I welcomed these achievements. Not so much to the Vice Chancellery, which was fine they were very happy ... but with my own people.

Two awardees reported that they had received automatic, temporary promotions outside the normal promotions rounds. In one case, this resulted in systematic bullying by colleagues that was still raw in the mind of the awardee over a decade later:

... they despised the fact that so much emphasis is being placed on teaching where they all have spent their lives working on research and they felt like their research wasn't valued. (award winner, Group of Eight university)

The other danger is that awardees may well resent not receiving a promotion.

I've been through the Level D application process and I was close to submitting a resignation in response to that. It was demeaning and it was a contradiction in what the university was claiming in its value of teaching and learning. (award winner, Group of Eight university)

I ... applied for promotion and I got knocked back ... despite receiving the national award ... They basically said at my promotion interview 'where's your research? No, not that scholarship of teaching research. Where's your Disciplinary research?' ... I got promoted a year later eventually – people were embarrassed I think... but I have not been prepared to take the risk to go for a promotion ... again (award winner, ATN university)

Indeed, two awardees specifically chose to apply in order to force their universities to outline a clear pathway to promotion based on teaching:

I thought that national recognition would help raise the profile of teaching and hopefully blaze a trail for more teaching-focused promotion. (award winner, ATN university)

Another had sought to “delineate a set of metrics that are suitable for teaching” that matched those that would support a promotion based on research. Pointing to his grants, awards and publications:

I put my application in for full professor based on a teaching and research portfolio and they knocked me back. I was probably a bit premature – but I was challenging them to say put your money where your mouth is. (award winner, Group of Eight university)

The most constructive approach seems to be for institutions to regard teaching awards as a part of a teaching portfolio in a promotions process that places sufficient weight on teaching excellence for it to exercise significant influence on all promotions. In this way, universities can ensure their internal reward structures align with their teaching and learning strategy.

The policy may require applicants for promotion to demonstrate they engage in scholarship and leadership. An award, in itself, therefore may not be enough. Such a policy must also ensure that award recipients have some incentive to continue to focus on their teaching rather than being forced to drop it in favour of research because, at least for the purposes of promotion, they have already achieved all they could in the education sphere.



I don't need to prove I'm a quality teacher any more – no-one's going to come and question my quality of teaching. So, now what I need to do is build up the research to match that ... (award winner, ATN university)

### *Distributive Leadership*

Awardees have often been used by their institutions to mentor colleagues, assess internal awards and help create stronger applications for the national scheme. These were leadership roles that many relished. For Lynne Hunt, being able to facilitate the first Indigenous winners of the Prime Minister's Award while at Charles Darwin University was a "real career highlight". One respondent recommended to other award recipients that they "play an active role in helping to grow the next generation of award winners: meeting and working with them helps you to continue to grow".

Some awardees felt that they owed it to their colleagues to encourage their activities in teaching and learning. Prime Minister's award winner in 2007, Keithia Wilson, for example, was keen to be supportive:

I'm an overly responsible type anyway so I'm more likely to say 'yes' than 'no' and I do feel a responsibility to give back ... I've said 'yes' to most things even though at points I've thought 'it's actually a bit much', because people don't realise how many other things you've been asked to do ...

Recognising that "there are certainly some excellent teachers around me", Joe Wolfe (award winner, 2004, The University of New South Wales) encouraged students to nominate his colleagues for awards. Such efforts may be recognised later by the next crop of winners. At Flinders University, two successful nominees reported that they had been encouraged to apply by previous awardees:

... we've got someone who's done this, who's successful, who can help us and be that actual example when you're in close proximity to say 'this is do-able'. (Claire Smith, award winner, 2006, Flinders University)

Similarly, Matthew Allen was able to support his colleagues' application for an internal institutional award for their program:

... what I really said was 'I know how to win awards so let me win one for all of these people' who were all quite junior at that stage. And it boosted our kudos and credibility as an area ... (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

Awardees were also used by their home institutions to assess teaching awards and select nominees for the national awards – 42 survey respondents noted that they had had increased opportunity to do so since their award. Some drew on experience as national assessors to aid colleagues in their institutions and disciplines nationally.

Acting as an assessor or a mentor in this way was one means of giving back to the institution or the discipline. However, some awardees were shrewd enough to acknowledge that it might also take some of the pressure off them to support university activities:

... we get some award winners every year so ... the load is spread out (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, The University of Queensland)

... every time someone won an award ... there was a wider pool of people who could help people so we weren't always asked to comment on every round of citations and awards. And I liked that. (Heather Burke, award winner, 2006, Flinders University)



Yet, there was some concern that too much emphasis was being placed on using awardees for replicating successes in the national awards:

People have asked me to help people win awards ... but there's been not a single effort or question from anywhere on campus that's asked me to share knowledge, or share insights or share experiences on my *teaching* – maybe the obsession with awards is more overwhelming than the obsession to really authentically change teaching ... (award winner, IRUA university)

Those who sought leadership roles hoped for more. A few universities have become more systematic in the ways they deploy their awardees. Griffith University now showcases award winners in order to disseminate examples of better practices in support of broader university educational strategic priorities. The university plans a 'Principles in Practice' video that will be shown at Celebrating Teaching Gala Nights and uploaded to its website. The video will feature students, nominated by award winners, reporting on their experiences in relation to the Principles. Award recipients have run lunchtime Celebrating Teaching Seminars and have taken part in Celebrating Excellence in Teaching Week. Podcasts of the sessions and interviews with awardees have been placed on the Griffith Institute for Higher Education website and on iTunesU. The university's Educational Excellence Committee is chaired by a Prime Minister's award winner and promotes engagement, disseminates outcomes of grant and award schemes and fosters scholarly networks. The university maintains a databank with details of grant and award winners from 2005 to 2010. The databank is used by deans of learning and teaching and heads of schools to spot potential applicants for higher levels schemes, and identify best practice and partners for grant applications.

Awardees often become part of the informal networks from which senior management draw. One deputy vice-chancellor used to have open sessions where those academics in the institution with connections to the ALTC "would know the coffee pot was on and they'd drop in and just have a chat across Faculty and School boundaries in a very informal and casual way" (Vianne McLean, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality), Queensland University of Technology). ALTC Awardees were specifically invited and might be asked to speak briefly about their work to a group of 20-30 people. Adrian Lee (former Pro Vice-Chancellor, The University of New South Wales) suggested awardees might act in an unofficial policy advisory capacity, being brought in to "brainstorm" with various associate deans, or learning and teaching committees.

Awardees may also be encouraged to take part in university or inter-university level teaching and learning activities. As Director of Academic Development at Flinders University, Jan Orrell called on awardees to talk about their practices in staff induction and in the Foundations of University Teaching course new academics were required to attend. She did so on the basis that academics "liked hearing it from the horse's mouth, so to speak".

There may be some advantages in not formalising the access that awardees have to senior management. In workplaces where teaching awardees are viewed with distrust, it may make more sense not to single them out as having special privileges but, instead, to create avenues for a larger category of people, even if these routes are most likely to be followed by awardees.





Approximately half of awardees sought leadership roles. Perhaps the same number reported they had indeed taken on such roles following the award, either formally or informally. This included a significant proportion of people who had played some role at university level. In some cases, promotion and both the opportunity to take on a leadership position and the skills to do so were facilitated by receipt of the award.

Unfortunately, two quite small groups of people were left angry or cynical. Some awardees did not receive a promotion and believed that this reflected badly on their institution. Other recipients did receive promotion but were abused by their colleagues as a result. Institutions need to tackle the myth that teaching 'doesn't really count', legitimate a pathway to promotion and leadership through education at the level of policy and protect those who progress through this route, building networks to support the career development of those who might become involved in educational leadership.



## Chapter Five: Building Networks of Award Winners

If award winners are to develop their skills and experience, they may find it useful to build connections with fellow awardees who share an interest in contributing to learning and teaching policy and practice. Many of these networks may be informal, but institutions and national teaching and learning bodies might see some benefit in establishing more formal structures with clear functions, resources, and articulation to other structures. In this chapter, I examine awardees' experiences of and attitudes to networking with their peers at institutional and national levels and look at the successes and failures of attempts to establish formal networks inside and outside Australia.

### *Networks within Institutions*

Senior educators in a few universities reported bringing groups of award winners together for various purposes. As Pro Vice-Chancellor, Marnie Hughes-Warrington (herself a Prime Minister's award winner) sought to unleash the potential of award winners by arranging to meet them soon after she arrived at Monash University. She found that, even before the meeting, awardees were asking her if they might be involved in teaching and learning projects:

... the award winners we just got at Monash, I emailed them and congratulated them and said 'I'd really like to have lunch with you and talk about this experience with you'. And without even prompting them they got back and said 'I'd like to know how I can do more' ... I was absolutely thrilled!

She encouraged university structures and, in particular, various education working groups to see teaching award winners as a resource. In turn, she hoped awardees would "feel like they're setting the agenda on some issues that are important for the university" and gain an "intimation of what they're able to do".

... if you put them in conjunction with the emergence of new governance structures that have Associate Deans ... then I think you have got a real recipe for progression and agency and opportunity, and university-wide contribution – but the people in more senior positions maybe haven't realised the potential of those two things.

Not every institution had the capacity to tap into the resource offered by teaching award winners. The director of a university centre for teaching and learning agreed her institution could create a network of ALTC Fellows, ALTC Project Leaders, and award winners: "We've wanted to. We just haven't had the energy and the time – we're kind of killing ourselves already. So we've let it go untapped".

Among the 18 Australian institutions whose submissions Nagy et al. (2011) analysed, eight universities had established communities of practice as a result of the PEI. In some cases, these communities of practice drew heavily on the presence of national teaching award winners. Australian institutions have not been alone in seeing value in bringing award winners together. In New Zealand, Massey University has had considerable success in national teaching awards, winning 11 awards between 2002 and 2008. Recognising the possible value of bringing together award winners as a group, the university established the Teaching Excellence at Massey (TE@M) group. TE@M has met with and provided occasional advice to Massey University's vice-chancellor. It has recently been involved in creating a mentoring system for academic staff wishing to exchange ideas about effective teaching and learning practices. TE@M has informed the selection process for senior leadership in learning and teaching at Massey, meeting prospective candidates and offering



external applicants a tangible demonstration of the institution's commitment to education. Massey's approach has its parallels in Australia where several universities – including Flinders and the University of Southern Queensland – have established an 'Academy' or 'College' that comprises of or includes award recipients.

Flinders University used part of the PEI funding to establish a College of Distinguished Educators (CoDE), comprising all recipients of national teaching and learning awards and grants. The purpose of the College was "to unite staff with national recognition for teaching excellence, to use them as a source of advice and mentorship for other staff, and to promote them as a sign of university prestige" (Flinders University 2010). The outgoing Vice-Chancellor had been keen that awardees would be used strategically and sensitively, not as 'stars',

... being sent around to tell the rest of the troops how to do it, but [so] they're part of groups with a particular task to go and work around the university with their colleagues ... (Anne Edwards, former Vice-Chancellor, Flinders University)

Among other things, members of the College were expected to mentor a proposed pool of potential applicants to the ALTC. The College was also to be an opportunity for distinguished educators to be recognised in their own right, and rewarded through events and gatherings where they could share expertise and have the benefit of visiting experts so that they might "get a better sense of what's going on in the sector" (Iain Hay, Prime Minister's award winner, 2006, Flinders University). A 2010 review undertaken for Flinders University recommended "The role and purpose of this important group of potential teaching and learning leaders should be clarified through greater responsibility being given to the group themselves. It is suggested that this be peer-led with an allocated budget, and the group elect a president and an executive with portfolios".

The University of Southern Queensland's Teaching Academy was designed to celebrate and promote the careers of academic and professional staff who had already demonstrated excellence in teaching. Recognising the activities of these staff was seen as important both for the sake of members of the Academy and also as a way of inspiring and making it possible for others to follow them. The Academy was also intended to provide a community of practice which would support both members and their colleagues outside the Academy by promoting, supporting, disseminating and exemplifying learning and teaching scholarship, facilitating collegiality and knowledge sharing, providing leadership opportunities, engaging in ongoing professional learning and reflective practice, enhancing university wide participation in learning and teaching initiatives and providing opportunities for international networking and community engagement. The Academy was launched in 2008 with 42 members – including the 16 recipients of ALTC grants, citations and awards – but by July 2011 it was inactive, pending the arrival of a new pro vice-chancellor.

Groupings such as those at Flinders University and the University of Southern Queensland have sought to reduce the gulf in the value ascribed to quality research and quality teaching. Unfortunately, there are some serious difficulties to overcome before such structures can achieve their aims, and this may be why other institutions such as The University of Queensland and Edith Cowan University have contemplated and rejected such structures.

Colleges might exist to lead learning and teaching, contributing to university committees and working parties, playing a role as mentors, acting as a lobby group and lifting the profile of education inside and outside their institution. As an accessible pool of expertise,



Colleges might be asked to undertake special projects at the behest of senior management. For central university units concerned with teaching and learning, they also provide an additional point of access to faculties. For senior managers used to working either through formal structures or through their own, personal, informal networks, a College offers both a challenge to their existing practices and a significant opportunity, allowing them to test new ideas in a supportive environment. Members of senior management may need time to develop an understanding of the value of the College and it is worth learning from the experiences of other institutions. If the membership is expected to take a leadership role, they need to be invited to do so and supported by the senior executive in their engagement with specialist academic development units and the wider academic body. Colleges need to receive a clear mandate and be resourced to achieve their goals. Without this, they can be left with little sense of direction. They also need to develop their capacity for self-management so that they can act on their mandate. Such a role may not be recognised as important by institutions more interested in lifting the trailing edge of academic performance, places where:

... it's not about ... 'lighthouses', it's about getting everybody lifted up equally ... I think you could have found a place in there for groups of award winners or similar but [my institution] chose not to do that ... (award winner, ATN university)

Academies or Colleges offer members recognition of their worth to the institution as educators. There may be some value in granting recognition and nothing else. However, it is possible that terms such as 'Distinguished Educators' might be perceived by academics both outside and inside the College as elitist, provoking rejection among academics outside and embarrassment inside.

Perhaps a worse fate than being viewed as elitist, is one of being seen as illegitimate. Colleges can act as a peer support network for members. However, if selection criteria do not ensure the quality of members and it appears that the wrong people have been offered recognition, those outside the College may mistrust the motivation of the institution in establishing the College, and the membership in taking part in College activities.

Griffith University also plans an Academy of Scholars and has developed its proposal in a way that responds to the difficulties encountered at other institutions. The Academy at Griffith University has clear aims, membership criteria and identified relationships with formal structures. It is being established to: "recognise and reward the achievements of outstanding Griffith educators"; "enhance the profile of learning and teaching"; "enhance leadership in learning and teaching"; "contribute to learning and teaching strategy and practice"; "contribute to the dissemination of scholarly good practice in learning and teaching", and "position Griffith as an exemplar institution for rewarding and recognising excellence in learning and teaching" (Griffith University 2010). The Academy will consist of invited national teaching award winners, ALTC Fellows and Discipline Scholars, recruited for a three year renewable term. Members may be asked to drop out if they fail to continue to demonstrate leadership in learning and teaching. Run by a steering group drawn from the members and resourced by the university, it will both contribute to institutional capacity building and advise the senior executive on learning and teaching. As a result, it is positioned to work with deans (learning and teaching) and advise the university's leadership through regular meetings with relevant education portfolio holders.



## *National Networks of Teaching Award Winners*

Several groupings of nationally-recognised teachers have been established outside Australia over the last two decades. The groups vary in how they started, who can join and how, and whether they are self-administering or are supported by a parent organisation. However, in each case they have struggled to play a collective role as educational leaders. Three of the best developed groups are in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada.

In the United Kingdom, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme was established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland in 2000 in order to raise the profile of teaching and learning and reward and celebrate teaching excellence (HEFCE 2003). The scheme looked both forwards and backwards, combining “the benefits of a traditional prize, a development grant and a fellowship within one scheme, recognising past achievement but also supporting future development” (Skelton 2007: 216). Within a research-intensive university culture, the prize money was intended to signal a serious commitment to teaching.

Skelton’s survey after one year (Skelton 2004) found that many award-winners had reported a sense of validation of their “teaching identities” as a result of the award. However, others felt torn between the possibilities of an educational role and the conventional demands of their discipline-based research career. A 2003 review (Frame et al. 2006) reported mixed attitudes to receiving a fellowship. The tensions already noted by Skelton remained but some awardees reported their concern at being labelled a teacher in a research-intensive institution and noted a complete lack of interest in their achievement among their colleagues and managers.

While the scheme recognised individual excellence initially by giving £50,000 to be used over three years to complete a “funded activity”, after 2006 the scheme was revised to grant £10,000 for the awardee’s own personal or professional development. Between 2007 and 2010, individual awards were complemented by a separate fund for projects where the principal investigators were National Teaching Fellows.

An early aim for the scheme was for the fellows to work together to promote effective teaching and learning (Institute for Learning and Teaching 2000 reported in Skelton 2004). Operating as a collective, this offered a “potential platform for the expression of “grassroots” opinion on teaching in higher education” (Skelton 2007: 217). However, by 2002, this had met with limited success, with fellows coming together occasionally to discuss individual projects. Skelton (2004, p.460) noted that ‘a “shared identity” beyond camaraderie has failed to develop among the fellowship holders’, a consequence, he argued, “typical of any interdisciplinary group, split, for example, by subject and experience” (p.460) and lacking “a shared sense of purpose and common set of educational values” (p.464). Skelton noted that fellows “were to act as agents of change... But it will not just happen naturally, especially if there is no shared vision about the purpose of higher education.” (Skelton in Leon 2002).

Skelton (2005) suggested that award winners might be able to make a greater impact if they had administrative and academic support for their projects. He argued that more experienced educational researchers might be able to act as mentors for award winners who may have had little experience operating with research methodologies outside their own disciplines.



Drawing on a 2003 survey, Frame et al. (2006) found that National Teaching Fellows had found greater opportunities through the maturing discipline-based entities within the Learning and Teaching Support Network. However, the restructuring of the scheme in 2006 made no reference to the possibilities of collective activities and it was left to a voluntary association of fellows to fill the gap.

By 2010, the 400 fellows were organised within an Association of National Teaching Fellows (ANTF) <<http://www.antf.ac.uk/index.html>> which, supported by the Higher Education Academy, facilitated networking and promoted innovative practices (Wakefield and France 2010). Formed in 2005, the Association was based on the premise that collectively they might have a greater impact on higher education:

It gives a voice to a collective of individuals who have been recognised for their excellence in teaching practice and their ability to inspire both colleagues and students. (Eales-Reynolds and Frame 2010, p.8)

The Chair represented the Association on the Academy's Board of Directors and its Academic Council. Each year, members of the ANTF are invited to act as specialist readers, evaluators and consultants for various activities of the Academy. While the Academy hosts a website for fellows, this is fairly static and the Chair of the Association acknowledged that the electronic members' Forum was not well used (Eales-Reynolds 2009). The announcement of the 2010 fellows published on the Higher Education Academy website described a partnership between the Academy and the Association to encourage fellows "to contribute to debates about teaching and learning practice and policy at disciplinary, institutional, national and international levels".

ANTF supports the Academy's induction of new fellows and intends running workshops for those institutions whose members are eligible to apply for National Teaching Fellowships but rarely do so. In 2010, the Chair and Deputy Chair called on the European Union to adopt a fellowship scheme across the Common European Higher Education Area (Eales-Reynolds and Frame 2010).

New Zealand established national teaching awards in 2001 as a way of recognising and encouraging excellence in teaching across the tertiary sector. The awards were also intended to enable teachers to enhance their careers and exchange better practice (New Zealand Qualifications Authority 2001 reported in Jesson and Smith 2007; Maharey 2002). By 2006, the awards were described by the Minister for Tertiary Education as:

an important counter to the past tendency to reward academic staff primarily on the basis of their research. It has been a serious anomaly that the large bulk of a tertiary teacher's time and effort is devoted to teaching, and yet, in the university context at least, career advancement has been on the basis of a record of research. (Cullen 2006)

The Minister explicitly identified award winners as current and future leaders of tertiary education. At the 2006 awards ceremony, he applauded:

awardees who, whether they like it or not, are recognised as leaders within their institutions and across the whole of the tertiary sector. I trust that you will take your award both as a recognition for your years of hard work and as an invitation to provide leadership within the sector and enhance further its reputation for quality teaching. (Cullen 2006)

In 2007, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Tertiary Education Commission ran focus groups to support the development of new national quality assurance arrangements. Past winners of the Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards were consulted,



an arrangement applauded by the Minister of Tertiary Education (Cullen 2007). The opportunity to take advantage of “those whose excellence is already proven” (Cullen 2007) was made easier by the creation of Ako Aotearoa – the national centre for tertiary teaching excellence in New Zealand – and a network of award winners (Buckingham 2008).

Apparently charged by the government to look for ways that top teachers could “maximise their contribution to the best advantage of the whole sector” (Street 2008), Ako Aotearoa’s 2008 Strategic Plan proposed a national academy of award winners, the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence <<http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/academy>>, “to be both a major resource for enhancing teaching practice in New Zealand and an authoritative voice in the development of tertiary education policy in New Zealand”. Established by award winners with support from Ako Aotearoa, the Academy’s first national event, on educational leadership, was opened by the Associate Minister for Tertiary Education who saw the Academy as providing a structure so that “our excellent teachers can begin to reinvest their expertise in others” (Street 2008).

The Academy has pursued its role by providing “advice and support on tertiary education practice and policy from a practitioner perspective” and collaborating with “Ako Aotearoa and other organisations for the benefit of educators and learners across all tertiary sectors” (Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence 2009). The Academy works under the umbrella of Ako Aotearoa and has held annual symposia since 2008 open to all past award winners. The symposia also host invited international guests, including on at least four occasions national award winners from Australia. In 2008, I was asked to discuss the beginnings of my research on national awards in Australia (Figure 5) and have subsequently advised on future invitees. These guests have been asked to facilitate access to international collaboration, a role that has also benefitted the Australian visitors:



Figure 5: Attendees at the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence, Wellington, New Zealand, 23 October 2008.

Last year, I was extremely fortunate to be invited to speak to the [Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence] ... There were two things that I found really inspirational about that experience. First, in NZ, winning an award is viewed as base for growth and that growth is seen as being accelerated through collaboration and support. Second, I loved the fact that award winners came from the private, technical and higher education sectors. What a great way to learn, collaborate, try. (Survey respondent)

The Director of Ako Aotearoa described the Academy as:

... an important national resource for New Zealand’s tertiary sector, being a repository of teaching expertise, wisdom and innovative practice. They are an important voice in the continuing debate about how to provide the best possible educational opportunities to all of New Zealand’s tertiary learners. (Coolbear 2010: 9)

New award winners are partnered with existing members of the Academy immediately prior to the awards presentation. The Academy also provides some funds for member groups “to develop/disseminate teaching practice or promote the academy” (Academy of Tertiary



Teaching Excellence 2010). These funds were used to scope ideas about what constituted a good teacher among award applicants. Over the last year, it has developed and presented position papers “on various aspects of tertiary teaching” (Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence 2010) and has also had a representative on the national awards judging panel and the Board of Ako Aotearoa.

There are, of course, other examples of national networks. Since 1986, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and 3M Canada have jointly sponsored the 3M National Teaching Fellowship. The fellowship recognises exemplary contributions to teaching and educational leadership in Canadian universities. Fellows are invited to participate in a four-day retreat at Chateau Montebello to discuss and share past teaching experiences and develop new ideas. By 2001, there were 150 fellows who had come together to form the Council of 3M National Teaching Fellows <<http://www.stlhe.ca/constituencies/3m-council/>>. The Council now meets annually and has undertaken collaborative projects, publishing collections of stories celebrating teaching and learning.

Finally, there have been various attempts to link national networks. The first international meeting of teaching award recipients from North America and the United Kingdom occurred in San Diego in 2004. Subsequent meetings have taken place in Canada (2005, 2008), the United Kingdom (2006), and Australia (2007). At the 2005 Canadian meeting, attendees argued that, as “teaching and learning champions”, recipients of national awards should ‘go where they are “valued and invited”, to share and extend experience, visions and strategies’. One group suggested that dialogue across borders might be achieved through three-day international retreats, an extension of the Canadian 3M model (Fancy 2005). This became the Multinational Teaching Fellows Interest Group which met at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference (ISSOTL) in Indiana (2009), Liverpool (2010) and Minnesota (2011).

No network of Australian national teaching award winners exists. Indeed, there does not seem to have been any attempt to establish one. As a member of the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) and then the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT), Alan Robson did not recollect any discussion on the subject:

... when the teaching awards were being [established] ... there was no idea that there would be any Association of these people or that they would do anything collectively ...

Perhaps, in the early years, it was assumed that the awards simply represented recognition for what awardees had already done. It was an end point and there was no need to burden awardees with excessive expectations. Interviewees speculated why little else happened. Tom Stannage, winner of the inaugural Prime Minister’s Award in 1997, thought awardees would have been reluctant to raise the possibility as “... the risk of being seen to be elitist and different was probably kicking around among too many”. Other interviewees pointed to the lack of capacity at national level when the awards were set up by the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching. In contrast to New Zealand, this meant that there was no-one to create, run and fund the network. There was also little in the way of a broader sectoral structure with which such a network might engage. By the time the Carrick Institute was established, Carrick staff may have felt that they were simply the custodian of an existing program that belonged to the federal government. Certainly, by then, a pattern had already been established. After the ceremony, awardees did not meet again as awardees.





Of course, awardees often found they were working together through other ALTC-funded programs – on projects, as ALTC Fellows or as Discipline Scholars. However, the chance was missed to create a group along the lines of the Canadian 3M Fellows, the New Zealand Academy, or the ALTC Fellows.

If the awardees had little chance to meet as a group *after* the ceremony, for several years they were brought together beforehand. Started in 1997 by the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development, the AUTC and then the Carrick Institute ran an annual National Teaching Forum. Held in Canberra in connection with the awards ceremony, the Forum gathered together senior university members with those people shortlisted for awards to hear keynote speakers. The AUTC described the major goal of the Forum as providing “an opportunity for the higher education community to share information about innovations in teaching and learning” (Australian Universities Teaching Committee 2004).

Award finalists were then asked to speak about their teaching. Parallel sessions offered shortlisted nominees an occasion to explain their ideas to each other and for them to be heard by a variety of senior executive staff.

I'd really enjoyed the day after when we could talk about things – I think I was talking about diverse student bodies in teaching and I'd enjoyed the company of the people very much and could see that something very important had happened in my life. The award was great but something really important had happened in terms of contacts. (Tom Stannage, Prime Minister's award winner, 1997, ex-The University of Western Australia)

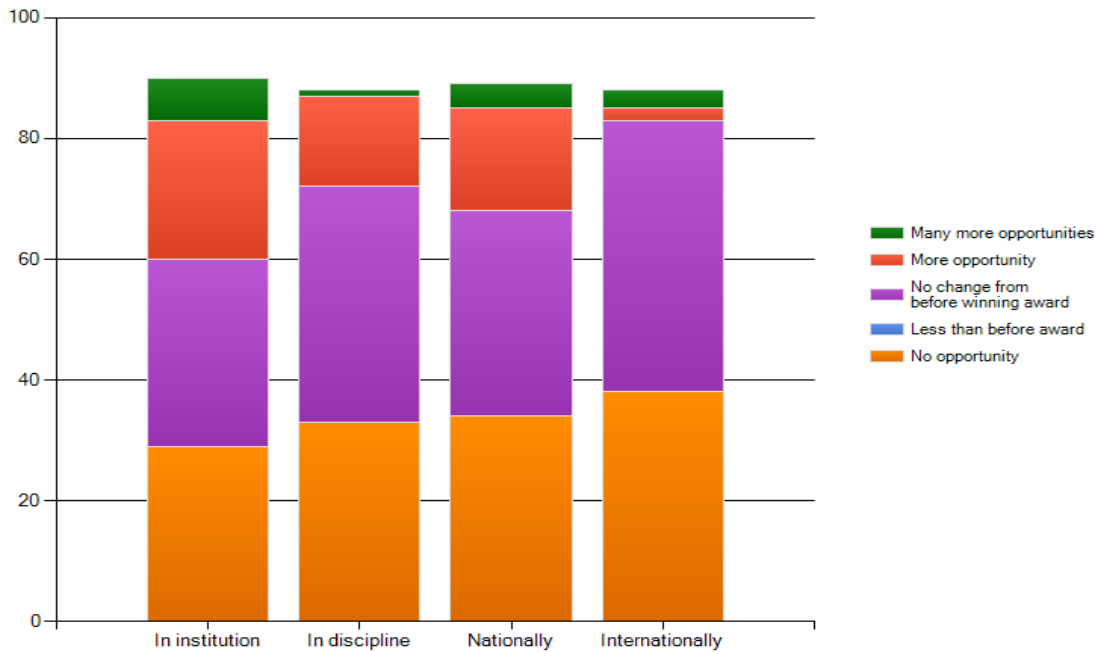
I thought it was fabulous ... because how often do you get to bring together across the whole nation people at that level interested in the same things and finding out what other people are doing? (Sandra Frid, award winner, 2005, Curtin University)

Of course, for finalists nervous about finding out who had won an award, this may not have been the best time to reflect on their work. Some interviewees reported that the quality of presentations was patchy and that some finalists had used the platform to attack their own institutions, much to the discomfort of their senior colleagues. As the Carrick Institute expanded the opportunities to formulate and share better practices across the sector, the Forum lost much of its value for pro and deputy vice-chancellors. The practice of running a Forum was ended in 2006 and the money diverted to other ALTC programs, including the new program of citations.

As a result, few survey respondents indicated that they had had an increased chance to work with other awardees as a result of their success in the awards. Thirty out of 90 noted they had had a greater opportunity within their institution, 16 (of 88) within their discipline, 21 (of 89) nationally, 5 (of 88) internationally.

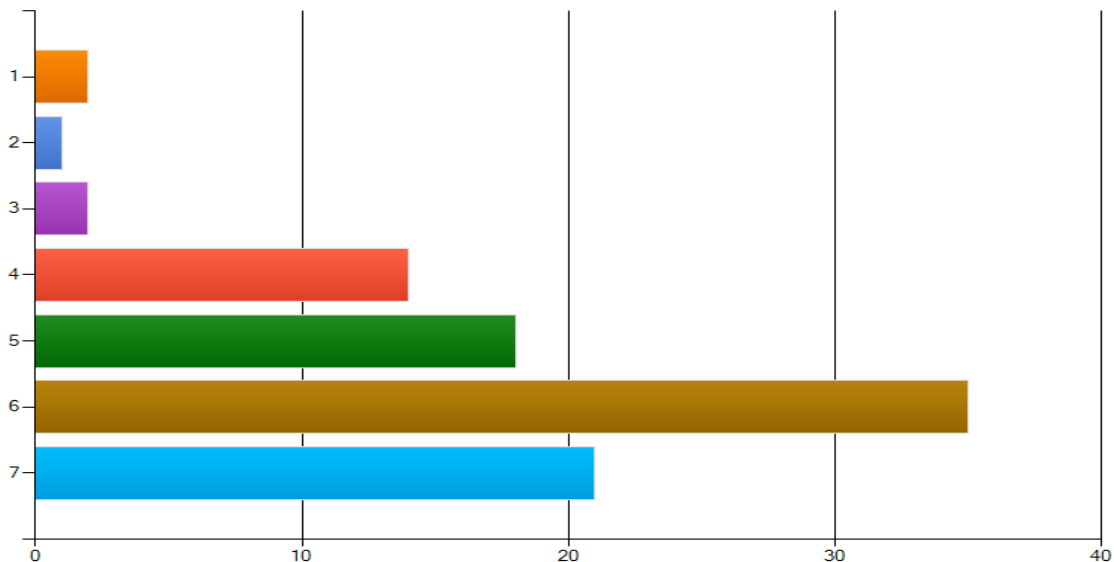


**Since winning the ALTC national teaching award, have you had the opportunity to work with other award winners?**



This stands in contrast to the way respondents assessed the value of creating opportunities for awardees to work together. On a scale of 1 (not important) to 7 (extremely important), 74 out of 93 respondents rated the value of working with other ALTC award winners as important (5 or higher), with 21 rating it as extremely important.

**Do you see value in working with other ALTC national teaching award winners, whether from your institution, discipline or other institutions? (1= not important, 7= extremely important)**



Given that teaching excellence can be demonstrated a number of ways and that no-one is a perfect teacher, there is so much to learn from talented teachers across the country. The benefit of collaboration is well established in research, so opportunities should be more readily available to bring together the best uni teachers in Australia. (Survey respondent)

It makes sense to work with those that don't see boundaries, people who have a sense of purpose born from their interest in their students' learning, people who aren't afraid to make



mistakes, who are able to operate in an environment working alongside their students more than with their colleagues. (Survey respondent)

I am at the stage now here I would like to extend my learning and teaching research ideas into the nation[al]/international context and working with other ALTC award winners is a huge networking step ... (Survey respondent)

I think it would be excellent to work with other ALTC award winners. They would likely be 'kindred spirits' and share the same passion for teaching and learning. (Survey respondent)

Indeed, some still held out hope for a more formal network that could share practices and experiences within a community of academics engaged in teaching and learning:

Discussing issues, teaching methodologies, ideas etc with other like minded award recipients can be inspiring. Simply taking the example of meeting the other award winners at the ceremony and dinner in Canberra last year was fantastic and I would really appreciate being able to do this on a regular basis. It is always a learning experience that I value. (Survey respondent)

How do we build a relevant teaching and research practice if we do not work together, and build on the foundations that have been recognised in such an award. (Survey respondent)

... simply the fact that, taken together, they represent a community of academics interested in scholarship of T&L means that this would be a valuable development. (Survey respondent)

If a community were created and resourced, it should be capable of establishing and articulating its own priorities:

A collective of top teachers is in a position to demonstrate the power and importance of the teaching activity to external stakeholders especially government who ultimately provide the funding. (Survey respondent)

... if they just give a little bit of seeding money to the group of award winners and say 'how do you want to do this?', I'm sure a positive outcome would [emerge]. (Marnie Hughes-Warrington, Prime Minister's award winner, 2008, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Monash University)

Of course, there was considerable caution about building a network without purpose or as an "exclusive club":

It depends on what you are collaborating towards. (Survey respondent)

There'd be value in it if there was a purpose to it. Since I don't know what that purpose could be ... I can't see it being important to me. (Survey respondent)

One awardee pointedly remarked that he didn't want to talk to a "bunch of award winners" but rather to people "who have really interesting ideas" or "who need to hear how to be a better teacher" (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University).

A few respondents suggested possible purposes for a network of award winners. Some were keen to work with other members of their discipline. Other respondents were keen to find ways to move beyond the confines of their home discipline. Awardees might share their experiences and offer support to each other:

Attempting cultural change single-handedly is dispiriting – shared experiences and simply sympathising with like-minded people is part of what keeps you going. (Survey respondent)

and work together to achieve institutional change:

If we take as the overall goal 'improving learning and teaching at the university level' then the award winners should make a pretty powerful group to bring about change. (Survey respondent)



I think there is value in working with other award winners in terms of trying to transform/change the more 'traditional' types of teaching practice employed/inherent within and across disciplines within higher education. (Survey respondent)

... the voice of the award winners, done in sensitive ways, could be very influential I think. Whereas 10 years ago it would have been 'look at us' ... now it would be 'listen to us' ... (Tom Stannage, Prime Minister's award winner, 1997, ex-The University of Western Australia)

There was also support for smaller specialist groups of awardees to develop a network. This was emphasised by one recipient of the Neville Bonner award, the national award for Indigenous education:

Particularly with the Neville Bonner award, it is important for the recipients to connect and continue to support one another, also for opportunities to work collaboratively as we are such as small group. (Survey respondent)

Such a group might be able to take advantage of the recently established Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network.

If the organisation responsible for running the national awards wants to establish a network for award winners, it could follow the New Zealand example and start slowly by bringing the new cohort of awardees together with a previous wave of recipients to allow them to discuss what they might be able to do and what they might want to do once they return to their institutions. This meeting could be held either before or after the ceremony, so that it costs very little more to initiate discussion as a cohort. DEEWR might also maintain a public database of winners with updated contact details and areas of expertise:

maybe [it is for] the ALTC people to say 'let's look at the skills we've now got in our register of winners – let's look at how we can get these people out and about to spread the word about why it is that what they're doing is worthwhile talking about'. (Salvatore Di Mauro, award winner, 2006, Griffith University)

As the number of award winners has risen, several universities have made the decision to forge them into a group in order to raise the profile of teaching and learning. Groups of award winning staff have advised senior executives on issues relating to teaching. They have established teaching and learning mentoring circles, and have provide a framework of peer support for potential award nominees and for the general enhancement of teaching quality. However, the groups that have been created have not been without their problems. Isolated from both the formal structures that run teaching and learning and from senior management, they have been troubled by charges of lack of direction, elitism and illegitimacy. These consequences may be the result of poor planning or execution and, while groupings are always likely to go through periods when they are more or less active, it is quite possible that they need not be flawed in these ways.

Although some universities have chosen to create groups of award winners, the organisations responsible for the national awards in Australia have not. This sets Australia apart from those countries with which we often compare our practices. In Canada and New Zealand, for example, independently resourced networks have enhanced the national debate and contributed to educational practices. Future custodians of the national teaching awards in Australia could follow suit at the national level. They could link Australian awardees with the colleagues in other existing networks and work with the networks to encourage similar structures to evolve in those countries like the United States, Malaysia, Eire and Hong Kong that, like Australia, have national awards but no national network (Trempp 2010).



## Conclusion

At the beginning of this report, I noted the difficulties Australian universities were facing in recruiting and retaining high quality staff, and in replacing the current generation of educational leaders. The reviews of Australian national awards only hint at the strategic role such awards might play in cultivating a new generation of leadership. The omission is curious given that: first, Ballantyne's study revealed that recipients of awards appear to be drawn into teaching and learning administrative roles; second, earlier national teaching grants seemed to be successful in using analogous bid-led innovation programs to promote the emergence of leadership (Anderson and Johnson 2006); and, third, while not being a precondition of an award, national award criteria value nominees who demonstrate "leadership through activities that have broad influence on the profession" and the Prime Minister's Award requires recipients to have an exceptional record of educational leadership (Carrick Institute 2008).

It is possible that teaching awards might foster the emergence of educational leaders either by acting as an incentive for academics before they apply for an award or by giving recipients greater authority, and opportunities, to influence teaching. Put another way, in terms of Ramsden's scales of leadership (1998), these awards might foster the emergence of educational leadership by: providing clear goals and contingent reward, as well as promoting teachers who might engage others through "inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration, spontaneity and trust" (Ramsden et al. 2007).

One of the claims for national awards has been that they have elevated the status of university teaching by improving the reward structure and increasing the public profile of academics with strong track records in the practice and scholarship of teaching (McNaught and Anwyl 1992; CSHE 2005). Of course, many recipients were already quite senior at the point they won their award – often at associate professor or above. Others may not be able to provide appropriate leadership:

It's not a leadership program and people are not necessarily selected for those qualities, although as time's gone on that's become part of one of the de facto criteria in how they demonstrated it, because the standard just goes up each year. (Denise Chalmers, Director of Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, The University of Western Australia, and former Director of Carrick Institute)

Lee Dow (2008) heard from a couple of senior people in the sector that "some who have received the highest awards would not be those they would seek out for insights and wisdom in teaching and learning" (p.29). In my research, one recipient who moved to a leadership position in his department suggested claims for the national awards had long been over-stated and represented hopes rather than empirical evidence:

I think there was too much expectation built into the development of Australia's teaching award system that it would be this profoundly revolutionary step forward that would then have significant institutional consequences kind of carried in the bodies and minds of the award winners ... I think it was idealistic to assume that awards systems would engender significant institutional change. (Matthew Allen, award winner, 2000, Curtin University)

I was tempted to call this report, 'What is the Point?'. Not because I thought that there was *no* point to the awards, but rather because I have identified some tension between retrospective and prospective visions of the awards, and their understanding of the point in an academic career at which a national teaching award might be received. The award may



well represent an *end point* for or, perhaps, a *high point* in an academic career. It acknowledges and celebrates nominees' contribution to teaching and learning and places no obligation on them. Teachers may be close to retirement or content to continue in the same role long after they have received their award. There is nothing wrong with this. Indeed, it would be perverse if awards removed the very best of our teachers from their interaction with students.

However, there is a difference between not wishing to place an obligation on an awardee and failing to offer him or her opportunities to flourish. Were the awards to constitute recognition and no more, this would be a wasted chance. Instead, there may be a possibility that awards might constitute a *turning-point* or a *point of acceleration*, enabling some of the best teachers in Australia to have a greater impact both on the students for whom they already have a direct responsibility and more broadly through their institution, discipline or across the sector. Recipients could be strategic assets, playing a key role in developing teaching and learning initiatives and championing change in learning and teaching policies and practices. Indeed, national award winners *have* been used inside their institutions, across Australia and beyond as status symbols, teaching assessors, drivers for change and motivational speakers. They have developed policy, written grant applications, and mentored colleagues. However, few institutions have worked strategically to tailor opportunities to meet the desires and strengths of the individual awardee or the considered needs of the institution. I urge institutions and DEEWR to assist awardees in making a contribution to the sector, by finding out more about the strengths and weaknesses, hopes and ambitions of awardees, offering practical support to maximise the impact of the award, and helping to discern directions that an award winner has not considered.

It is crucial that a significant proportion of our future educational leaders move through their careers with a commitment to and an understanding of teaching and learning, working in cultures that recognise “teaching is a core business and that we need to value it, recognise it, nurture it” (Mark Freeman, award winner, 1997, The University of Sydney). Like other academics, awardees should have the possibility to progress their careers in this environment. For this to happen, some institutions will need to revise their approach to promotion so that policies for recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching are both adhered to in practice and are seen to do so. They will also have to reconceive their relationship with awardees so that they are “not just harvesting from them but reinvesting in them” (Merrilyn Goos, award winner, 2004, and Director, Teaching and Educational Development Institute, The University of Queensland).

Several award winners are finding ways to build careers around educational leadership. Recipients have comprised a significant number of the successful applicants for two ALTC programs structured around the activities of leading educators. The ALTC Fellowships Program has been used by academics to “develop a program that explores and addresses a significant educational issue” while Discipline Scholars have been collaborating with leaders of their discipline to develop minimum core standards for students at graduation. One of the co-recipients of the 2008 Prime Minister’s Award reflected on how the award had both allowed her to acknowledge her desire to work in university leadership and also helped her secure a senior position as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) at Monash University:

I was under the impression that declaring the aspiration that you want to work in university leadership just isn’t something that you do. Having won the award, I felt that I had been granted permission to own up, ‘out myself’ and moreover to write a future for myself ...



Awards aren't simply affirmations of past practice; they are also intimations of possibilities to come. (Hughes-Warrington 2009: 33)

In presentations about this research, I have introduced a metaphor of 'the key'. Some awardees reported that they were content to wait for opportunities to come to them. Others were more proactive. If awardees can view the award as a key, they might be more tempted to try to unlock a series of doors with it. What awardees find behind some doors might be unattractive. Some doors might remain closed. However, a few might open, and allow an awardee to learn from and contribute to new educational communities. Some awardees might find themselves progressing within their own discipline or institution. Others might find themselves extending into areas well beyond their home discipline, institution or geographical location. With these hopes in mind, I invite awardees to enjoy what the award brings, let their professional life open up, grab opportunities, speak to new issues, challenge institutional poor practice, take risks, and see where serendipity leads them (Israel et al. 2010).



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## Appendix: Dissemination Activities

### Presentations

Invited briefing for DEEWR (Alison Johns and Suzi Hewlett), Perth, 4 August 2011.

'Teaching Awards in Australian Higher Education'. Teaching and Learning Research Colloquium, The University of Western Australia, 8 June 2011.

'Experiences of Writing and Applying for ALTC Fellowship, or "Pick me, Pick me"'. Invited presentation (with Sally Kift) on Australian Learning and Teaching Council Fellowships, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 10 February 2010.

"Hotshot teachers and the death of their academic careers", or "Is there life after Awards". Keynote address to Celebrating Teaching Excellence Week, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, 2 November 2009.

'Agents of Change'. Poster Session, Australian Learning and Teaching Council Fellows' Forum, Sydney, 11 February 2009.

'Making the best of it'. Invited address (with Ron Smith) to the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence, Wellington, New Zealand, 23 October 2008.

### Publications

Emerson, L., Israel, M. & Hay, I. (2011) So, You've Won a Big Teaching Award – Some Things You Might Want to Know. Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence, 8 August. <<http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/community/ako-aotearoa-academy-tertiary-teaching-excellence/resources/pages/so-you%E2%80%99ve-won-big-teachi> >

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At the request of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) at The University of Western Australia, I drafted a proposal for teaching awards for one of the international groups of universities to which UWA belongs. The proposal for the Matariki International Awards for Teaching Excellence was based on the best practice ideas contained in this report. It has received endorsement from the UWA Senior Executive and will be presented to the Matariki group for its consideration.

The chair of the panel reviewing the PEI at Flinders University asked for a submission to be made to the panel. A written submission was supplemented by a teleconferenced interview, and some of my recommendations found their way into their final report.

The ALTC has distributed both *Advice for Institutions* and *Advice for Winners* to PEI network members, and *Advice for Winners* to recipients of awards in 2011. It was also provided to Alison Johns in August 2011 to assist in the transition to DEEWR of the programs administered by the ALTC.

Ako Aotearoa has posted a New Zealand version of *Advice for Winners* on the Ako Aotearoa Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence website. A parallel study is planned for New Zealand using the survey instrument developed for this report.

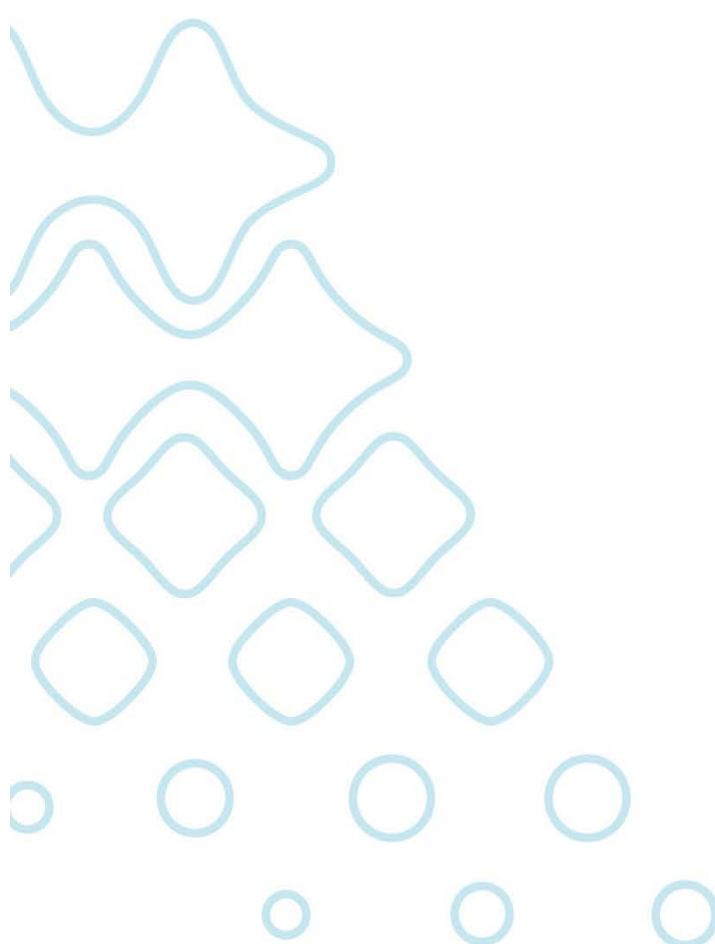


**Mark Israel** is Winthrop Professor of Law and Criminology and Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) within the Faculty of Law at The University of Western Australia, and an Adjunct Professor in the School of Law, Flinders University. He won the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year in 2004. Mark was appointed a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom (2008), and both a Teaching Fellow (2009) and a Discipline Scholar (2010) of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

Email: <[mark.israel@uwa.edu.au](mailto:mark.israel@uwa.edu.au)>

Website: <<http://www.uwa.edu.au/people/mark.israel>>





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