Program Achievements
February 2015

Demystifying the links between school, university and professions

Business  Design  Engineering
Health    Law    Sciences

www.leap.vic.edu.au
**Introduction**

Students from low-SES communities often experience limited interaction with role models who work in different career fields requiring university qualifications. As a result such students are less cognisant of the range of benefits and opportunities a university education can bring.

Learn, Experience, Access Professions (LEAP) engages students with universities and professional communities to demystify the links between school, higher education (HE) and professional careers helping them to understand the possibilities and value of HE in realising their career goals. LEAP extends the generic aspiration raising offered directly through individual school-university partnerships enabling partners to draw on more opportunities than would otherwise be possible.

Through different LEAP into... professions, the Program offers access to a range of activities supported by an online presence to help school students and their families discover a range of different professions. Business, Design, Engineering, Health, Law, and Science professions are covered. The associated LEAP activities allow students to learn more about the professions and the diversity of jobs. The role of HE in these profession career paths is explained, informing students’ aspirations.

The LEAP Program utilises two mutually reinforcing foci “Understanding the Professions” and “Making it Happen” to both engage and inspire students to discover the professions and make the leap to future careers.

**The aims of the LEAP Program**

LEAP stimulates students’ interest in targeted professions, enabling them to experience and engage with a range of career possibilities:

- Enhancing students’ and families’ understanding of how to prepare for entry to specific fields, supporting informed decision-making, and
- Challenging and extending students, increasing their confidence and enthusiasm along with career and course aspirations.

LEAP targets 278 schools Victoria-wide, to engage LSES students with universities and professional communities.

**LEAP Program Achievements**

- A unified approach by the nine Victorian-based universities along with government, independent and Catholic education sectors.
- Establishment of effective profession-related activities that follow a Learner Progression Framework targeted at students from Year 7 to 12, including:
  - *Hospital Experience* days for Year 9/10 students in various locations,
  - *Engineering Experience* days at different university campuses, each attended by students from multiple schools,
  - multi-day holiday workshops for senior students including Advanced Engineering, Drawing Workshops and the Legal profession plus single day events in Health, Sciences and Business.
- Establishment of our website www.leap.vic.edu.au providing targeted content on selected professions, easily accessible by school students, parents and teachers which:
  - provides an access point to apply for activities and events
  - provides regular news and updates via eNews to over 1,000 subscribers
  - provides easy links to partner universities
  - provides shared learner journey blogs and graduate career stories of current and past university students.
- Engagement with 236 of our targeted schools in Victoria by the end of 2014.
- Over 18,000 student attendances at LEAP activities across Victoria.
- Establishment of effective and rigorous evaluation processes, providing quality feedback.
- Over 83% of students found participation increased their knowledge of jobs in the professions.
- Over 69% of students indicate the activities helped them learn about study options and pathways into the professions.

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### Feedback from participating students and teachers

#### Students attending Design events:

- “There are heaps of university courses that involve design. Much more than I thought.” Y9
- "Learned about study pathways to design. I'm really interested in going to university.” Y9
- “It expanded my knowledge of what varieties uni has to offer and how far uni can take you.” Y9

#### Students attending Engineering events:

- “I learned about software engineering, something I am very interested in but until today had no idea how it worked exactly.” Y10
- “Meeting professionals and actual engineers, being able to have a one-to-one conversation about their experience. Experiencing what university would be like. The information and pathways of different courses and meeting different people from different universities. Being involved in teamwork.” Y11
- “University should always be considered as an option and there are many choices of uni.” Y10

#### Students attending Health events:

- “Learned more about uni life, about setting goals and how to achieve them to have a good educational future.” Y12
- “There are so many pathways to get into most health careers, which is comforting knowing it’s not ‘now or never’ as it sometimes feels.” Y12
- “There are a lot more medical fields that would suit my interests. It also made me more aware of what the courses and university are like.” Y10
- “Uni isn’t scary and everyone is here to help you. School made me think uni was a solo journey, LEAP made me realise it is a journey with the Uni.” Y12

#### Students attending Law events:

- “I’d never had a class or a program at a university before so it was quite interesting. We learnt about politicians, about our future education and what’s in store for us. We learnt about the Acts and watched a scene from a TV series on law and about the courtroom. We worked in groups for many activities which were very interactive. We worked in pairs and attempted to try to solve civil law issues. The course was very interesting.” Y11
- “Learned about different branches of law and study that I didn’t necessarily think about.” Y10
- “I really enjoyed learning about court cases today but I also really enjoyed the opportunity to learn in a more interactive university style way. I wasn’t sure about how uni would be but now I am.” Y10

### Feedback from teachers

#### Teachers attending activities:

- “Started students thinking about their future. Presented options they may not have considered. LEAP is important for regional/rural students who don’t have the same opportunities.” Teacher
- “This activity may inspire some kids to investigate uni options where they may not have considered them before.” Teacher
- “Relevant, Current, Well presented, Well organised. I have watched students engage in a meaningful educational process, learn about engineering principles and apply them in a positive environment.” Teacher

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LEAP Program Funding

LEAP is a joint venture of the Victorian universities and the Victorian campus of the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Department of Education and Training (DET), Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). Initial funding has been provided through the Commonwealth’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

Governance

LEAP is overseen by a well-established and committed Steering Committee. Day to day operations are managed by the LEAP Program Team, and operational staff at each participating university. Together they provide the Program with an effective organisational structure and governance.

LEAP Program partners:

- Australian Catholic University
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
- Deakin University
- Department of Education and Training
- Federation University Australia
- Independent Schools Victoria
- La Trobe University
- Monash University
- RMIT University
- Swinburne University of Technology
- The University of Melbourne
- Victoria University

External Evaluation - National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education

Undertaken in 2014, this evaluation conducted school-based focus groups along with data analysis.

Their major findings were:

◊ LEAP is held in high regard by schools participating in the LEAP program and teachers believe it to be having a positive impact on students’ knowledge of professions and aspirations towards university.

◊ LEAP is effective in providing students with information about the nature of work in the targeted professional areas of law, design, engineering and health.

◊ LEAP is effective in increasing the knowledge of teachers about the targeted professions.

◊ LEAP is successful in giving students and teachers information about alternative pathways to the targeted professions and this information is considered valuable by students in the upper years of secondary schooling.

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Contact details for further information

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