Editorial

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Welcome to this special issue of the Journal consisting of 12 of the papers presented at the *Ninth Biennial Conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning* held at the *University of Queensland* on 26 and 27 November, 2009 (http://www.uq.edu.au/aall/). The conference theme was "Learning together: crossing boundaries through collaborative practices within and beyond the tertiary context", and all the papers in this issue have undergone the same double-blind, peer review process using the same criteria as are applied to regular papers submitted to the journal (see: http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/about/editorialPolicies#peerReviewProcess).

A number of themes link groups of articles in this issue. One theme is related to the significant current focus in the Australian higher education sector on ensuring that all students, but particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, develop high levels of English language proficiency during their university studies. In relation to this issue, Laurie Ransom reports on the use and outcomes of a post-entry Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA) in use at the University of Melbourne, while Kate Chanock, Carolyn D'Cruz and Donna Bisset report on their experiences with an online tool created and used to develop first-year students' competence in grammar and punctuation.

Another issue of considerable current concern in the Australian higher education sector is the major recommendation from the Bradley *Review of Australian Higher Education* (http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/default.aspx) that access and outcomes for students from low socio-economic outcomes be greatly improved. Such students can be expected to have particular academic language and learning (ALL) developmental needs as they adjust to the rules and mores of tertiary institutions, and these are analysed in an article by Ann-Marie Priest. Two other papers which will be helpful for working with such students, and students in general as they adjust to the demands of higher education, are the article by Chad Habel on the development of academic self-efficacy in students, and the paper by Annie Bartlett on the development of student self-responsibility for their academic language and learning. In addition, Johanna Einfalt and Janet Turley report on success with an embedded, collaborative model of teaching academic and information literacy skills to first year business students.

Assisting students to successfully make a transition of a different sort is the theme of the article by Gwyn Jones, Helen Farrell and Rosalie Goldsmith. In their article, a preparation program for international students making the transition from student to researcher is discussed.

The conference theme of "collaborative practices" was directly addressed by some of the above-mentioned papers, but its value for achieving improved learning outcomes for students was a major focus of the papers by Robyn Yucel, who discussed the idea of a "community of practice" in a large first year biology course; and by Sue Prentice et al. who described and evaluated a "collaborative program to support students on academic probation".

The final three articles in this issue are linked by the themes of research and evaluation. Regarding research, Lalitha Velautham and Michelle Picard illustrate the value of action research involving a collaboration between ALL staff and academics. Carl Reidsema and Pam Mort also discuss a collaborative research project focussing on identifying the features of the best reflective writing in an engineering design course. Finally, Marie Stevenson and Bev Kokkinn develop a provisional framework for the highly challenging task of designing useful instruments for the evaluation of one-to-one teaching by ALL educators.

On behalf of the conference organising committee, I'd like to commend these articles to you and hope you find them both interesting and useful.

David Rowland
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