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Language and Learning

COMMENTS AND LETTERS

What is an ALL professional? A reply to Vered (2016)

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Recently, Vered (2016) was published in this journal, espousing an active link between writing and other curriculum areas. Whilst the goal may be laudable, the paper contains inaccuracy which needs to be commented upon. Vered claims that "The University does not appear to employ 'Learning Developers' or 'Academic Language and Learning [ALL] professionals'" and that Student Learning Centre (SLC) "staff do not readily self-identify as ALL professionals" (p. A-157). The evidence for this statement, and the clear insinuation that SLC academic advisors do not fulfil this role, is apparently derived from the author's recollections at a single seminar. On this occasion, participants were asked by a presenter whether they were teaching staff or ALL staff. Quite apart from the problematic issue of how we label ourselves and how others choose to do so, a "show of hands" to a single question in one seminar from an unknown number of staff, constitutes a very poor level of evidence and has resulted in a misleading, if not slighting, interpretation.

For the record, the SLC is an academic unit which employs nine permanent staff in academic advisory roles. Of these, seven hold doctoral qualifications and of the remaining two, one has submitted for that qualification and the other is currently completing. A wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds is a strength of the unit, but it is worth noting that education and liberal arts are well represented. The SLC team members are actively involved in all aspects of their academic roles, publishing and regularly presenting at conferences. Their contributions are both ALL related and associated with other disciplines. One member is a current state representative of AALL[1] and another is a past representative. Furthermore, in recent years, five SLC staff members have published articles in JALL (Teoh, 2011; Pourshafie & Brady, 2013; Miller, 2015; Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016). Ironically, Vered (2016) even cites one of these papers (Miller, 2015). The Student Learning Centre comprises a group of highly skilled and experienced academics dedicated to the enhancement of student learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This is achieved through a combination of individual student assistance (most commonly with academic language), lectures embedded within existing courses and with our own for-credit courses. We entirely reject the poorly supported assertion that we are not Academic Language and Learning professionals.

References

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Reply to Student Learning Centre, Flinders University

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I agree, Flinders University Student Learning Centre employs many highly qualified professionals who are active in research and scholarship and, I had not intended to suggest otherwise. My observation was about professional identity and not about professionalism. Describing a set of pedagogies that I deploy for the development of student writing, I framed my discussion within a context informed by both the literature and the institutional setting. The opportunity to have the expertise among Student Learning Centre staff directed toward classroom pedagogy and collaboration with teaching staff would no doubt help generate beneficial practices across the university.