Special editorial to recognise the 50th edition of JANZSSA

Looking back…

Almost 25 years ago, in March 1993, the first JANZSSA was published, with the editorial proudly introducing the “Journal of the Australian New Zealand Student Services Association”. Presumably, the ‘and’ between ‘Australian’ and ‘New Zealand’ must have been added later! On the publication of this 50th issue of JANZSSA, it seems timely to look back at that very first issue, to gain a perspective on where we have travelled over the past 25 years. Below therefore is reproduced the very first editorial, from JANZSSA, Issue No. 1, March 1993.

For some years now we have been used to the irregular appearance of ANZSSA News in its various forms as a medium of information exchange, ideas and news in Student Services. In 1992, the Executive decided to separate the news, diary entries and gossip from ANZSSA News and publish it separately in ANZSSA Antics so that we could provide a more dependable diary communication to members while the News would be a vehicle for more substantial pieces which are less time-reliant.

The Executive has now decided to move to the next step and change the name of the publication to fit this new function. May we then introduce JANZSSA, The Journal of the Australian New Zealand Student Services Association. The intention is that we will move the journal slowly to the status of a fully-fledged professional journal with, eventually, refereed articles and, hopefully, an international reputation for saying important things about the areas of post-secondary student support. In the meantime the Executive will form an ad-hoc Editorial Board which will oversight the development of the journal with the editor, Olwen Steel, who will be delighted to find out what has happened to ANZSSA News whilst she has been overseas in Turkey.

This development is in response to the growing maturity of the student services sector in Australian and New Zealand universities and colleges. This maturity can be seen in the increasing levels of sophistication and scholarship that has marked the international conferences that have been held over the past decade or more. The quality of presentations has been increasing over the years and there is now a need for a vehicle for preserving a lot of this material in more substantial form.

The change of name will also indicate to university and college administrations the more substantial level of the content of the journal and will send a message that contributions in this area are to be taken at the same value of publications in other academic disciplines and specialties.

The Executive hopes that the members will respond to this change by submitting articles and papers for publication. The journal will continue to publish Conference papers, research reports, reports of projects and workshops as well as responses, reviews, discussion papers and letters. It will only work if members decide that this venture is worthwhile and support it with contributions.

Where we are now…

The editor at that time, Olwen Steel, as well as the Executive of 1993, would no doubt be delighted that JANZSSA not only has fulfilled its intended aim of becoming a ‘fully-fledged professional journal’ but has continued to grow so successfully. Through the relevance and sophistication of published papers JANZSSA has become a well-recognised online journal, accessible through some of the most prominent international academic journal databases such as SCOPUS and EBSCO. Clearly, members decided that JANZSSA was indeed “worthwhile” and this perception has endured, judging by the excellent contributions over the years. JANZSSA continues to provide a publication option for a steady stream of submissions, both refereed and professional, across a wide spectrum of topics. This 50th “Gold” edition of JANZSSA is no exception with a range of excellent papers on diverse topics that are both pertinent and timely.

Amongst the three refereed papers, Roxanne DuVivier and colleagues examine the development of a graduate program within the UK for Student Affairs Professionals,
applying competencies derived from the US experience; this is particularly relevant to those of us working within Student Services in Australia and New Zealand, amongst whom there is much current discussion about the desirability of postgraduate training specific to our professional work. Christine Minty-Walker and colleagues provide us with the results of the very first trial in Australia, delivered on a large-scale basis, that provided students with hand-held devices (iPads) to aid their learning. Given the increase in blended learning for on-campus students, and the rising enrolments in fully online degree programs, it is indeed timely to be reminded of the “potential and pitfalls” of technology in a learning environment. The third refereed paper, by Stephanie Black, takes a thorough look at the problems that can be associated with the sedentary lifestyle of many students, and proposes ways in which educational institutions could encourage increased levels of physical activity, hence improving not only the physical but also the mental health of students.

Amongst the six other papers, there are two Best Practice Case Examples: Bradley Kunda discusses the Global Leadership Program within a residential college; while Jonathan Munro and colleagues describe how technology is used to deliver 24/7 support to students via the implementation of an out-of-hours remote service that complements traditional on-campus services. Following these, Lindsey Pointer’s professional paper outlines an example of how a restorative university community can be developed, through the use of proactive measures and restorative justice processes. The second professional paper is by Vivienne Browne and colleagues who provide an extremely useful commentary and overview of the “Under the Radar” Report, published in May by Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, which examines the mental health of Australian university students and makes recommendations for ways that universities could offer system responses to promote student wellbeing, mental health and respond to student mental ill-health. Next is a report from one of our JANZSSA editors, Cathy Stone, on National Guidelines to improve student outcomes in online learning; a key outcome of a research project undertaken to improve access, participation and success in online higher education, funded by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) which published the full report in March. The final contribution is a most interesting Conversation Piece by Helen Stallman and colleagues; this is a thought-provoking critique of the use of “trigger warnings” and the implications for student resilience when used in university material to try to protect students from distressing content.

In 2017, JANZSSA continues to honour the original aim established 25 years ago of “saying important things about the areas of post-secondary student support”. This purpose continues to be achieved with the tremendous support and written contributions from the ANZSSA membership plus other colleagues, working in post-secondary education in Australia, New Zealand and, in recent times more frequently, from colleagues working in Student Services and Student Affairs internationally. The combined conference of ANZSSA in partnership with ISANA (International Education Association) being held in Brisbane from 5-8 December is another opportunity to hear some excellent presentations and to network with colleagues across the sector. Further information can be found at http://www.isana-anzssa.com/. Those presenting at the conference are warmly invited to submit papers by the end of January 2018 for the special conference section of the April 2018 edition of JANZSSA.

We hope you enjoy this 50th edition of JANZSSA and wish you all happy reading!

Cathy Stone
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