

Opening

Host: Welcome to this edition of the *ASCILITE Wavelength Podcast*. I am your guest host, David Porter. In this episode of *Wavelength*, it's awards season. No, I don't mean red carpets, little gold statues and celebrity face slaps. We are talking about awards for excellence in learning and teaching. Michael Cowling talks with Professor Angela Carbone Director of the Australian Awards for University Teaching, and we'll hear from some of ASCILITE's AAUT award winners.

Lastly, in "The Student Voice," our students tell us where universities need to focus post-pandemic and as we learn to live with COVID.

Segment 1: Michael Cowling interviews Michael Milford

Host: The Australian Awards for University Teaching, more commonly referred to as the AAUT, were established in 1997 by the Australian Government to recognise excellence in university teaching. In 2021, the awards were cut from the Australian Federal budget, which left the future of the awards uncertain. Since that time, Universities Australia stepped in to support the awards. Michael Cowling talked with Professor Angela Carbone about her history with the awards and tips for prospective nominees.

Michael Cowling: Today, we're happy to be joined by Professor Angela Carbone, who is the Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching Quality for the STEM College at RMIT, but more importantly, I think, for a lot of our listeners, the Director for the Australian Awards for University Teaching, which has been around for almost 25 years. So, Angela, welcome to *Wavelength* today.

Angela Carbone: Thanks Michael, good to be here.

Cowling: Awesome! Thanks for being here, too. So, I'm going to start with a softball question for you—a nice easy question to get us started. You've obviously been in in learning and teaching and really specifically involved with the AAUT for a number of years. Tell us a little bit about your background, how you how you started in academia and how you sort of ended up where you are, briefly.

Carbone: Yeah, just very briefly, I started in academia as a research assistant and a tutor in computer science, and that was in 1989. I know it sounds like a long time ago, over 30 years ago. So, yeah, I've got 30 years of experience as an academic in higher education. I'm currently, as you said, employed as the Associate DVC Learning, Teaching & Quality in the STEM College at RMIT. But prior to this appointment, I've held learning and teaching leadership roles at Swinburne and at Monash University.

So, I've had probably the past 15 years in those leadership roles, and that's where I've contributed to developing the university's education strategy, really focusing on their policies and procedures, quality enhancement processes, academic development, curriculum architecture and course and program renewal. My research has been driven by a desire to improve teaching practice and student learning, specifically in the STEM disciplines, through the use of peer learning frameworks, technology and innovation. In 2010, I was awarded a National Learning and Teaching Fellowship, and in 2012 I was awarded a Senior National Learning and Teaching Fellowship. I'm currently co-leading a special interest group in the scholarship of leading as part of the International Society for the

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, as well as managing the national awards. That gives you a little bit of background.

Cowling: Wow, look, I've already learned something new, which is that I didn't know that your background way back when—we won't say how far back when again, but way back when—was actually in technology. You know, you're a computer scientist, just like many of the people that listen to *Wavelength*, because, of course, we're focused on ed tech, and we have a lot of technologists as part of our audience. So, that's awesome!

So, I'm gonna make you cast your mind way back, right? I'm going to make you cast your mind back to the Twentieth Century because, as well as being the director of the AAUT, you are also won one of the first...I think maybe it was the third year of the awards...you won the Australian Award for Teaching Excellence, tell us a little bit about what you won the award for.

Carbone: So, it was the second year that the awards ran, and I was the first female academic to receive the Australian Award for University Teaching in the category of Computing and Information Services. That category doesn't exist anymore, but that was a category back then. And I also received the Prime Minister's Award for University Teaching as well. So, big shock to me, because back then, I was a tutor. You know, I was a Level A Academic, but I really focused on improving learning in my classroom. But, I also had a broader faculty perspective in university perspective, and so, you know, when you asked me, "Oh well, what did I do?" Well back then I was already introducing technology to support teaching and student self-directed learning by introducing an online quiz, which I developed with my honours student, and the quiz was called Caddell quiz. It gave students immediate feedback, but it also provided academics with information—a bit of analytics around which questions the students got wrong, you know, the majority of students got wrong. So, then academics could reflect on, "OK, did the students misunderstand this concept, or did I poorly word my questions?" That was one area, but the other thing I introduced was I looked at supporting the different student cohorts. So back then and still the case today, there's really low numbers of females doing computing. We still have low numbers of females, but we also had like almost a bipolar student group, where we had students that were really struggling with technology—they don't know how to turn the computer on—and then we had students that were really advanced. Their parents were, you know, managers and directors in IT software companies, right? So, we have the two different cohorts. So, there's a couple of things I did so for the to support the low numbers of females, I introduced a mentoring program. For the students that were struggling, I had introduced a data analytics tool, which was based on technology, and it was a visualization tool and we called it GSPI. It was called the Graphical Student Progress Indicator, and it's been published in a few journals. And what that did was got students to see how they are progressing on weekly basis, as well as giving that information to the academics or teachers to see how particular students were progressing so they had this early warning system already in place. So, I feel like I was ahead of the time. You know this is talking about this is before learning management systems even existed, right?

And then for really bright students, I wanted to extend them. I wanted to challenge them, so we looked at developing these cross-disciplinary projects for the bright students. And they did that as zero credit points, and that project still exists today as far as I know back in in computer science at Monash. So that was a real hit. I had also just enrolled in my PhD, and the PhD was focused on the student learning experience. And what I was looking at was characteristics of programming tasks that led to poor learning behaviours and encouraged good learning tendencies. So, it was around the activities that we gave the students. And then finally, I was also involved in helping new academics do like a suite of tools, tips, techniques, tricks to help them with their teaching, so you know that's some of the things that I did that led to the award back then, 30 years ago.

Cowling: It's great to hear what you've done in the past, and you're maybe making people a little bit cagey about applying for an Award for Teaching Excellence—such a wide breadth of what you've actually done, and I'm sure, as the current direct you say, “You don't have to have quite that wide of breadth to win.” I certainly didn't mean when I won the award.

I wanna move on to something a little bit trickier, which is that obviously this year was an interesting year for the AAUT because there were some funding changes and there was a concern there for a little while, but the AAUT may no longer be funded. We've now found out that Universities Australia is going to continue to fund it, I assume with help with from the universities that are its members. And I'd imagine you were a big part of that fighting for keeping learning and teaching excellence here in Australia. So again, relatively briefly, I mean, why do you think that learning and teaching excellence is important for us to keep here in Australia, apart from the fact that people get to win awards and feel nice about winning the awards, or is that the point?

Carbone: Well, I've always held the view from when I first started in academia that teaching is as important as research. I think both go hand in hand, so we recognise our brilliant researchers for their discoveries, for their new knowledge they create, and how they advance their discipline. So, I think it's really important that we recognise and reward our best academics, especially given that much of the funding that's contributed by students subsidises the research work that academics do. And I think, having these awards, makes teaching more visible domestically and internationally, and students look at our ranking tables and some of the ranking tables now also incorporate teaching and how universities are improving in their teaching and helping students get employment. For me, having the awards says Australia as a country values learning and teaching at the tertiary level, and it opens up opportunities for the brilliant teachers to share their insights.

Cowling: Look, I think that's really important, and you may know...I don't know if you do...We had Sally Kift on *Wavelength* a couple of episodes ago, and, of course, Sally is also part of the AAUT Awards and was chair of one of the award categories and is also President of the Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows. She said a very similar thing, and I think, hopefully as we get more people talking about that, I think it's really important for us to recognise teaching as important as important as research. So, I'm a big fan of the awards continuing on, and again not just because I won one, but because I think they are important to the Australian higher education landscape.

So, I had a question that I was gonna ask you on notice, and I was gonna ask you the question because ASCILITE is a society about educational technology. That's really our focus technology-enhanced learning. I've now discovered that you are a technology person, so this is gonna be an easy question for you, which is how do you think technology fits into the puzzle of learning and teaching from an awards perspective, and maybe also from a perspective of what you do RMIT as well?

Carbone: Yes, I think technology is really important. I mean, I obviously thought it was important 30 years ago because I was always, you know, trying to exploit the affordances of technology wherever I had the opportunity to. But I see technology as an enabler to help learners connect with other learners, to help learners connect with their educators, and to help learners connect with information, right? And I see our courses, like some of the new courses we're developing in the STEM College at RMIT, are using a lot of virtual reality and augmented reality. So, we can see, you know, things that that were normally in 2D on an A4 sheet of paper. With virtual reality, you can now look at these things in three dimensions. You know, we've got students grabbing molecules, turning around and looking at the molecules and looking at properties of molecules. It helps that didactic teaching. It enables it to become more interactive, so we have, you know, a number of academics developing videos, but now embedding opportunities in those videos to help students

engage with the content, right? It helps us organise our content. We've got these fantastic, beautiful templates that we're using in our LMS system. So, it helps academics organise their content, but it also helps students see structure and flow of information as well—what leads to the next thing and chunk things so that they're manageable. And so, they can just focus on one piece of the elephant. So, assessment can be more creative. I think we're looking at how we can use technology to make it more creative and help students connect with other students from around another part of the world. And the last thing technology provides is really valuable analytics that have helped students with their learning but also help academics. So, I think it's really, really important.

Cowling: Awesome, interesting. Look, I'm not surprised, though, now knowing your background to hear you say that. But it's great to hear you say that. Talk about new affordances and new opportunities. That's certainly to me as a technology person. That's what they're there for, but the learning does come first, and I think I'm hearing that from you as well, “The learning needs to come first.”

I'm gonna ask you a question on notice. This one's a question that I didn't crack you for, but you've mentioned analytics a couple of times. Where do you think we are with analytics at the moment? I feel, just to set you up, I feel we're still quite early days in terms of learning analytics. We've got all of this data, not entirely sure how to use it in a lot of cases. But maybe you can tell me that there's more research than I think you've clearly been in the game a lot more than that.

Carbone: So, I think there's two aspects, too. I think we've got the capability to come to deep dive in into data and look at the data. But, what data is useful, and how do we visually represent that data so, at a glance, you get the information that you need, right? So I think there's still a bit of work to do in that space. So, what is the problem we're trying to address or what question are we trying to ask? Once we know that, then we can mine the data, and then it's a matter of how do we visualize it so we can interpret it. And then once we've got that data, then what do we do with it, right? That's the next step. If we know students with advanced warning systems. If we know students aren't progressing, what do we do with that? How can we help them progress? And I think that's the next step.

Cowling: Yeah, look, I think so, too. That would be exactly what I would say is we got all this data. We are still working out what exactly we want to do with it.

So, let's kind of kind of go back towards that idea of working out what to do with things, and you obviously see a lot of people that are applying for awards and various other things, and of course in your role at RMIT you have lots of people involved in the STEM College that maybe are starting in a particular discipline area like we did way back when in technology but want to be better teachers, want to be better specialists, better teachers in the classroom, but don't really know how to do it. So, maybe drawing a little bit on your own history, but also on what you've done with the awards so well, how can people make that transition? Or is that a really hard question to unpack?

Carbone: No, no, you know. I'm glad you gave me this question beforehand, because I sort of thought of six things that I would advise academics to do.

So, the first thing, like if you're an academic and you're not a learning and teaching specialist and you want to become a better teacher, the first thing I would do is undertake some self-reflection. So, review your feedback that you get from your students every semester you get feedback from students. So, I'm a bit tired of hearing academics saying, “Oh, you know this is just the students perspective.” Well that's right, it is the students perspective we are obliged to listen to that perspective and see what we can learn from it. Don't dismiss it. Take that opportunity to read their

comments and think about how you're connecting with your students and how you can engage your students in the material. So, that's the first thing.

You know, the second thing is I would call in a peer and ask them to review your course, and it could be review what's on the LMS. It could be what you face to face review. Your assessment could be review any part of your course and get some feedback from a peer. If you don't value what the students are saying, value something that your peer says. We value peer comments with research. Why wouldn't we do it for teaching?

The third thing I would do is find out who are the best performing teachers in your faculty or in your school, connect with them. Have a conversation with them and find out what they are doing and how they are, perhaps, leveraging off technology to improve the learning experience. That's the third thing.

The fourth thing is attend some relevant professional development workshops that are organised with your university or in your university? So, attend some of them, because you'll be surprised how much you learn just by attending some of that. Make time fine. Block out some time to attend.

The fifth thing is touch base with a learning designer. Every university now has learning designers in their university, and they are specialists in helping you design and rethink your course, so it provides a really good learning experience for students.

And then, finally, the sixth thing, and this is if you've got time, this is to keep abreast of trends and challenges that are facing, you know, sort of that education piece and in higher education. And so, one thing I do is read the *Campus Morning Mail* every morning, look at *The Conversation* and what's in *The Conversation*— you know, the latest trends. I always look at the *Educause Horizon Report*. You know every year they talk about emerging trends. I've connected with networks in CAULLT, which is the Council for Advancement of University Leaders in Learning and Teaching. I'm part of ISOTL. I'm part of HERSDA. So, there's lots of things that you can do. But also keep a focus on what's coming out with the regulatory frameworks—you know, TEQSA and the standards framework.

So, they would be my six sort of pieces of advice I'd give those academics.

Cowling: What an awesome list. I feel like I'm just asking you the shortcuts to get to get yourself an award for AAUT. This is gonna be the most listened to part of this interview, I think.

Carbone: I hope so.

Cowling: Yeah, that's an awesome list. Thank you so much, so I know we've only got a couple of minutes left, so I'm going to ask you the last question, which I asked everybody, right? I asked Sally this question. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about education tomorrow, what would it be? And this could be education in general. It could be the Australian higher education sector. Take it the way that you want.

Carbone: Yeah, so look, I'm gonna answer it based on work I'm doing at the moment, and that is, you know, looking at programs, looking at the quality and the viability and the sustainability of our programs. And one thing that was a challenge, you know, 30 years ago when I first started in academia, was programs are delivered as a set of courses, right? And you wanted the program to be designed as a whole, but as people leave and come in, academics will focus on their course and think about their course and forget about the program as a whole. And as things have changed and evolved, we need to go back and look at programs as a whole. So, I don't think we've got it right. I think we need to bring program teams together, so everybody knows each other in the team, they

can have meaningful conversations around blended learning. Blended learning didn't exist 30 years ago. They can have meaningful conversations around what analytics they want to use, meaningful conversations around assessment, and meaningful conversations around how we're going to help students get employed, and design the program as a whole. So, that would be the one thing I would change or I would work at.

Cowling: Interesting, interesting. Totally different answer than I've gotten from others, but I think a very great answer because I think it goes to the silos that are so often something that we have in academia. People working in their own little space, and this idea that when you're designing a program, you have to try and get out of those silos. Also, get out of those silos with your teaching and with your research with various other things as well. That's a great answer. I love it, so thank you so much. I think that's been awesome. I think you've given people some really good tips and really good practical advice. And I really appreciate your time today, Angela. So, thank you so much for being a part of the *Wavelength Podcast*, and all the best with the AAUT Awards in 2022.

Carbone: Thank you, Michael. It was a real pleasure being part of the *Wavelength Podcast*, and thank you for the invitation. I hope people get something some value out of it.

Segment 2: ASCILITE AAUT Winners

Host: As we continue our conversation around the Australian Awards for University Teaching, we should mention that the call for nominations is due out at the beginning of May 2022. More information on the awards can be found on the Universities Australia website at universitiesaustralia.edu.au

ASCILITE is fortunate to have a number of AAUT recipients amongst its members. We talked about the work for which they received recognition, their advice for prospective nominees and what impact the awards have had on their careers.

David Porter: I reached out to three AAUT winners from the ASCILITE community who very generously agreed to share their experiences and insights into the awards process. They'll introduce themselves.

Lynn Gribble: Hi, I'm Lynn Gribble from the School of Management and Governance at the University of New South Wales.

Amanda White: Hi my name is Doctor Amanda White from the accounting discipline at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Matt Bower: Hi, my name is Matt Bower. I'm a professor in the educational technology field in the School of Education at Macquarie University.

Porter: The AAUT award criteria are fairly general in terms of the kinds of activities considered in the awards. Therefore, I asked each of the winners to provide an overview of their applications.

Gribble: My citation was for outstanding contribution to student learning focused on innovation and leadership, so mine is for a decade of creating, sharing and advocating deeply personalized learner-centred and innovative online teaching strategies for business students using readily available technologies. So, what that means is that I sought to find a way to personally connect, even with very large cohorts, through digital means, but not by creating bespoke technology or using expensive technology, but looking for what I'd say are the tools hidden in plain sight in everyday technology

that really allowed me to connect personally with students. So, I was starting to employ these technologies that really said it has to be both learner-centred and also personalised so that you feel like you're the only person in my classroom every single time.

White: The foundation for my application and the reason why the assessors thought I was worthy of receiving a teaching award was around my work in teaching auditing. Now everybody has a misconception that accounting is really dry, and even drier than that, is considered auditing. So, I really talked about my journey of how I've reformed and revolutionised perceptions around auditing, including improving skills of all students in communication, employability skills using different teaching and learning styles, like peer instruction and flipped learning, and providing students with more agency over their learning, as well. I also do a lot of work on YouTube, and the assessors were really impressed with my work in developing a large YouTube audience—a global resource to help students learn especially through the pandemic. That was really helpful, and then also my work in academic integrity, especially in areas like open access resources for everyone and anyone to reuse and remix under Creative Commons licenses.

Bower: So, the basis for my application was centred around advancing the technology-enhanced learning design capabilities of pre-service teachers. While I do do other things around the institution, I really wanted to focus on that work and how my teaching had impacted upon those students and even beyond the institution, insofar as what they carried forward into the schools that they were teaching in. But, I did throughout the application weave in other aspects of teaching, leadership and research, but all in sort of advancing the technology-enhanced learning design capabilities of teachers.

Porter: Each of the winners also shared their journey or path to the AAUT award.

Gribble: I had several awards from my own faculty and also a UNSW Teaching Award—Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award—and that was the catalyst that said to me, "Wow! I wonder if what I'm doing could be recognised at a national level." And at a national level, you're in a completely different playing field to earn this recognition, these citations show that you are outstanding in a field because of the process of how few from an organisation, then how few, even then, can earn from within your organisation, so that means that you've really been able to put forward a case that shows you are not just good at teaching. It's not that you're doing a good or even a great job. What an AAUT actually says to the world is, "I am doing something that is special, measurable and has been recognised by an external peer review panel as being outstanding, not just good, outstanding. And once I understood that it was about that impact and how it was outstandingly different, not just good, that for me made doing the application really interesting, but when I earned it, I was just so thrilled to be able to say my work has been recognised, peer reviewed nationally, in a very small pool for its excellence and its impact demonstrated.

Bower: So, my background before I entered the higher education area was in teaching in schools and because I was passionate about teaching and inspired by my teachers. So, I think I really carried that forward when I became a teacher in higher education. And because my discipline is education, it enabled me to confidently write about and indeed analyse my own practice and also to be innovative in what I did, and that led me to apply for internal Macquarie University teaching awards and also the old ALT-C Citation Awards, which was awarded back in 2010, I believe. Following that, I immediately applied for their Teaching Excellence Award in about 2012 and was unsuccessful, and I thought, "Well, that's sort of too hard." But then, after operating for another several years in higher education teaching and doing a lot more things outside the institution, I realised I probably had the

opportunity to write a stronger application, and fortunately that application, with the help of a lot of people from around the university and beyond, was successful.

White: I came to apply for an AAUT Teaching Award because I had previously applied for and received a citation, and my university awards coordinator approached me and said, "Amanda, the university would like to nominate you for a teaching award with the AAUT. Would you like to apply?" Applying for an award is really daunting the very first time that you do it, you have to make sure that you understand the criteria and get together your evidence brief and proof of what you've been doing in your teaching and in your research and in your service in your institution, but once you understand the mechanism of how awards processes work, I think it's fairly straightforward. It's a different style of writing than writing a research paper 'cause you're doing a lot of storytelling, and you're talking about yourself rather than talking about, perhaps, a research topic. But once you get into it and you understand the criteria, I think it flows really nicely. And it's difficult, but a really useful learning experience to apply for an award at your faculty, your institution, or at the national level through the AAUT.

Porter: Each of our award winners were happy to share their best tips on preparing award applications.

Bower: So, it's obviously really important to understand the criteria and to write the application in direct accordance to those criteria. You can do a whole lot of really wonderful things, but the people who judge the applications base it around the criteria that they're presented with. So, that's obviously important thing. You need to show a lot of evidence rather than just talking about, "Oh yeah, my teaching's really great." You need to have hard evidence relating to why you're teaching was outstanding?

Gribble: The thing to do is to start to say not just what do I do, but why is it different, special or outstanding. Then how do I know that—through impact and what are the concrete measures? So, who would say it? It's not just about one student or one cohort, it's gotta be sustained. So, if you've done something great, the real question is can you sustain that over multiple semesters, multiple terms, multiple years? That's what an AAUT is looking at, so you might win your university award or your faculty award. But once you get to the AAUT level, there are all these things that you're now competing more broadly...and I don't like to use the word competing...but it's your recognition is being assessed more broadly. So, it's showing not just that it was good...and I keep coming back to this. But whenever I work with anybody, they can show me that what they're doing is good—their student satisfaction is good, you know, the course is rating well, people are completing. That's expected. That's pretty much what is expected for everybody. The thing that I always say is "What makes you different or special?" And you've got to get that elevator pitch really clear in your own mind and write to that. I'm special because I do X, and here's the measure of how I know that is special, and that's what an AAUT is.

White: One of my mentors, Associate Professor John Tyler, helped me with my first citation application, as did Professor Jo McKenzie at UTS, and they really reinforced with me that it's about storytelling. You're telling people about who you are and what you do. And you have to understand that they will have no background or understanding of who you are or what you teach. So, it really needs to be that elevator pitch and assuming that people don't understand your discipline area. But storytelling also means that it gets quite personal, and I really love talking about my personal journey. The other thing that's critical is making sure that for every claim that you make, think something that you are claiming to do or claiming to have achieved, that you've got evidence to back that up, whether that's from student evaluations, collecting your own data, journal—whether that's

published journal papers—or even just your own personal notes and observations over the years. Making sure you've got evidence to support each of your claims is really important.

Porter: I wanted to know what had changed for each of the award winners since receiving their awards.

Bower: There is that sort of, you know, really 10 minutes of fame and national recognition. But then there were invitations to be on panels and to speak briefly about things. They're also, within the institution, I'm now the Chair of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee. And if I look at it, I think that winning that award was probably something that really contributed to being me appointed in that position, and it also, I suppose, provides me with almost the reputation and confidence even to talk about how we might advance learning and teaching. And I think people do...so by being a little bit more known...people take seriously what you're saying and give it full consideration. So, it's a wonderful honour, but it's also a responsibility, I think, once you get recognised with the Teaching Excellence Award, you really need to do your bit to try and give back and advance teaching excellence within the institution and also, however you can, outside the institution as well.

White: Being an AAUT Teaching Award winner has expanded my network, in terms of people who might be interested to chat to me. I've had certainly an increase in the number of speaking engagements that I've done, whether that's presentations at my specific university or keynotes at business schools, at other universities or international panels. That certainly has increased my profile, and it also gives you a little bit of a kudos and clout, so that if you make a suggestion, people now also think, "Oh okay, Amanda's not just got a great idea. She's got a great idea, and other people think her ideas are really great as well."

Gribble: For me, my voice as an educator has, dare I say, roared more loudly with the recognition of an AAUT. It's put my achievements front and centre at a university level, not just at my faculty level or even at my school level, but it said loud and clear that what I'm doing should be taken notice of. So, I think often as academics we do great work in the classroom. We do great work in our offices. We do great work in our faculties, our own individual schools. But, an AAUT is putting your university out there and saying, "This university is a leader because it's actually doing this." So, it's the recognition within my university, but it's also outside of that to say how well our university is doing in this space of online and digital learning, and my personal contribution is to make it to be a digital innovator that makes online learning an extraordinary experience. I want it to be transformative. I want every student to feel they've personally experienced something that's just for them. And I've been able to be louder and prouder about that and our university has been able to be louder and prouder about that as well.

Porter: Lastly, Amanda summed up why her learning and teaching honour is superior to other disciplinary achievements.

White: Yeah, people are like, "Oh well, I've got an A or an A-star publication." We have these rankings in business schools, and I said to a colleague, "Look, I wonder what my teaching excellence award win, how does that compare with, you know, is that like equivalent to an A-star publication?" And a colleague of mine at another university said, "Amanda, you know in your field of expertise or in business. You know there might be 500 A-star journals published every single year from academics within Australia, but there was only one teaching Excellence Award winner." So, I'd like to think that, you know, it's a pretty special thing.

Porter: We want to thank our winners for participating. Also, we should mention here that ASCILITE sponsors a number of awards for both academic and professional staff innovators in learning and teaching with technology. More details can be found under Get Involved at ASCILITE.org.

Mid-Program Break

Announcer: This podcast is brought to you by ASCILITE and tell as the Technology Enhanced Learning Accreditation Standards. TELAS is a rigorously derived framework that recognises quality online learning through a certification process. The standards for free. Find out how to get your course certified at www.TELAS.edu.au Now back to our podcast.

Segment 3: The Student Voice: Future of Higher Education Following COVID

Sound effect: Phone ringing

Voiceover: We spoke with students across Australasia about contemporary issues in tertiary education. This is what they said. This is “The Student Voice.”

Announcer: So, we're now a little over two years into the pandemic, across the tertiary sector. Everyone appears to be trying to find their way and to determine which of a countless number of possible futures we might be facing.

In this edition to “The Student Voice,” our students provide their advice on where institutions need to focus their attention as we learn to live with COVID.

We spoke with...

Gayani: Hi, I'm Gayani. I'm a doctoral student originally from Sri Lanka.

Zack: Zack studying a Bachelor of Science Education in my third year with a Chemistry major.

Juliana: I'm Juliana, a mature-aged post grad student in Education.

Announcer: The students were concerned about diversity, workforce readiness, and the role of technology going forward.

Gayani: Thinking about the challenges of tertiary education, now that hopefully post-COVID era, I would say the increasing diversity of student learning requirements and providing an optimal learning environment, in line with the increasing diversity of students, would be one of the biggest challenges higher education industry is facing, and I don't think it's futuristic as well. It's currently happening, but the higher education industry is turning a blind eye most of the time. But, that is gonna be a bigger issue with the number of students engaging in higher education. And also the diversification of qualifications offered in higher education, I think that's where we need to start thinking about different modes of delivery to make sure that students have an optimal learning environment, so that would be a bigger challenge. And also, another challenge would be creating job-market-ready graduates in a highly competitive market right now, because comparatively, back in the day not everyone who gets through a HSC would go out with a university degree or a TAFE...like tertiary education would not be the end for anyone who goes through HSC. But now, it has come to the point that tertiary education is so common. The competition is really high for students. And just the university's role in making students career ready, job market ready, that is going to be a bigger challenge. Because at the end of the day, the future that students are there, the

graduates are out there with degrees but are not really suited for job market, it's not just too far away. Because a lot of students are coming out of universities currently, but not necessarily the number of jobs for the qualification that they are coming out of university with.

Zack: OK, so I think the challenge that tertiary education faces ahead is, I think, they really need to be aware that...even though that, you know, I mean, as we can see by this pandemic...is that even we thought it was going good and everything is going to go back to normal that it can just spike up at any moment. So, I think a lot of...like my university, at least the subjects I'm taking, are more prepared to flip flop between the two, but in a positive way. You know, saying if we're face to face, this is what we do. Like, they've got they've got plan A, Plan B. If we're entirely online this is what we're going to do.

Juliana: There are some issues that I think that we're gonna see in the future that will come from this situation, especially related to well being and mental health. I can see lots of people being impacted because of isolation, because of maybe this lack of experience that they signed up for when they became uni students. No one that I know that studies with me actually signed up for online learning. Right? However, there are some changes that are coming that I think will stay—this blended learning, this way of, you know, being flexible about your learning and teaching. These things, I think would stay. However, I think that we'll have to be way more flexible and way more understanding with these students that are studying at this moment. Because what we are going through, I can't recall anything similar in the past, so everything that we're doing in the future is going to be new as well. So, we have to be very careful on the way we are taking decisions in this very near future.

Announcer: All of the students agreed that student well being and support were key factors to support students well into the future.

Zack: The financial side of it is immense, and so, I think what universities need to take into account is that even though there are some immense budgetary issues. I know that I'm so my first-year chemistry tutors that were excellent had to be let go in the mix, which is...I don't know or, like, pretend to know anything about the requirement for that...but they need to make sure that there is still enough support left in terms of academic services, in terms of the Co curricular services, in terms of all this, that the students who are attending university, whether it be face to face or online, are still getting the required support, they're still getting the time that they require from their lecturers, because I think, you know, the biggest fear for any university student is that they are, you know, just the another number, another HECS bill for the for the university to use. I'm sure that some people...I mean, definitely some people have in this pandemic...feel that they have really just been kind of a cash cow. Luckily, I don't feel that way, but I know that some people definitely have. So, regardless of whether we're face to face or online, universities need to make sure that they still have the support in all its capacities and not in a showy way, where they're just saying like, "We are supporting people in these ways." I'm talking about like, actually just like the person who isn't advertised—that you know, just the regular person who's doing their bachelors and is struggling with assignment and they need assistance and they get it. Grand statements are good if they're followed by reality. But I think the day-to-day assistance, I think it's what really matters.

Juliana: I love talking about the future of education, especially because I study this. So, for me it's something that really it's a passion for me. I think this way that we were fast forced to get affected had its positive sides. We, in this blended learning, actually can bring lots of positive things as flexibility and getting students to know where and when and how they want to learn, giving them the freedom to decide things that they were not really able to. I think in this near future, it's going to

be a bit like the student-centred approach that is going to leave the paper and start being reality in our lives. I just can't believe that we are still holding assessments that everyone has the same assessment to prove that they learned something that they understand something. So, why can't I agree with my teacher on how I'm going to prove my knowledge and my understanding of something? I know that when we are talking about massification of learning, you know, lots of people learning at the same time, this can be a little bit tricky. But that's what the technology is there for, right? So, we can usually we can easily use some artificial intelligence in education and start using those tools to work the way they should. So, maybe the as this famous researcher says..I love him. He's Australian—Neil Selwyn...He says, let the machine. do what they do best, and the teachers will do what they do best, right? So, knowing your students by their names, I mean this close relationship and understanding their students way of learning, not only going, “This is the way it's going to be done.” No, let's agree on how we're going to be doing this and when we're going to be doing this. So, I think there's a very bright future coming up, leaving the memorization aside and thinking about really effective learning for students, counting on machines as friends, as helpers and not as enemies. As some people can say, incorrect teachers will never be replaced. If you, if you think you're gonna be replaced by machine, you're not doing your job right, right?

Gayani: And this is a personal take on one of the biggest challenges of university for me. From my experience, seeing students, like peers going through, and also from a teaching perspective that I casually engaged with is creating learning environments that are not mentally eroding students. We always say that I survived university; hardly say I flourished in university. That side is heavily neglected in higher education in tertiary education. Students are barely surviving. Like, it could be good experience at the end of the day, but do we actually say, “I flourished in my tertiary education period of life”? So, that's a bigger challenge to have graduates who are actually being like, “I am a better person. I'm a more mentally stable person out of university.” So, I think less explored, but is a bigger challenge currently.

Closing

Host: And that concludes another ASCILITE Wavelength Podcast.

Thanks to our segment producer Michael Cowling; our guests, Angela Carbone, Matt Bower, Lynn Gribble and Amanda White; and our students Gayani, Juliana and Zack.

Music for the podcast is produced and performed by Kevin MacLeod of Incompetech.com. Thank you for listening to the ASCILITE Wavelength Podcast. Find out more at ASCILITE.org.

Epilogue

Host: Hi, I'm David Porter, one of the producers of the ASCILITE Wavelength Podcast. I wanted to take a moment to invite you to be part of the podcast. We've designed the ASCILITE Wavelength Podcast to be community contributed. We invite academics, professionals and affiliates passionate about learning and teaching in tertiary education to pitch and produce podcast segments. If you are interested, we invite you visit ASCILITE.org and check out the Connect section for further details and submission guidelines. And we at ASCILITE want to thank you for listening.