

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2

Output Group: 2.4 – Funding for higher education

DEST Question No. E273_04

Senator Stephens asked on 5 June 2003

Question:

- a) What were the key issues of a study done with funding of \$143 000 to Steve Garlick?
- b) Did it find that the extent of the engagement by universities with their communities vary considerably from one university to another? Do some universities appear to genuinely engage and others appear to simply give it lip services?
- c) Were there any recommendations that identified ways to increase university engagement with their communities?
- d) Were any of the recommendations advocating a system that provided a loading for each student enrolled at a regional university?
- e) What are the guidelines for the process of allocating such a loading?
- f) Will there be any requirements for a university to actually engage with its community to attract these funds?
- g) What criteria have been established to determine if a university has engaged with its community?
- h) Has a strategy been developed to evaluate the effectiveness of these loadings?

Answer:

Study on the engagement of regional universities with their communities

In the answer to E272_04 we referred to several studies by Steve Garlick commissioned by the Department, *Engaging Universities and Regions* (\$61 518) and *Creative Associations in Special Places: Enhancing the partnership role of universities in building competitive regional economies* (\$61 470). The questions have been answered using the first report above, published in December 2000.

- a) The study, *Engaging Universities and Regions*, explored the university-region engagement agenda to see how it has the potential to generate national, regional and institutional returns across a wide spectrum of societal objectives. Engagement was assessed across 16 university campuses in relation to three knowledge-based outcomes for regional economic development: student labour market flows, economic development priorities and social capital. The report identified enablers and impediments to greater operational engagement. With several exceptions, the study

found that campus structural factors, such as the size relationship between the main campus and the regional campus and the proportion of external to internal full-time students rather than either regional structural factors or operational factors appear to be most significant in determining social capital engagement.

- b) The study found that the extent of engagement did vary widely across the sixteen university campuses studied and the 15 regions in which they were located.
- c) The study did not explicitly make any recommendations about ways to increase university engagement with their communities. The study did conclude that policies and programmes at a government, university and regional community level need to take account of the structural differences between campuses and regions so that they reflect local circumstances.
- d) The study referred to his previous report, which identified policy and program initiatives that could enhance university-region engagement, including incorporating a regional dimension into the specific-purpose funding for universities.
- e) The regional loading will be allocated for domestic Commonwealth funded student load at eligible regional campuses. The criteria for eligibility are that the campus is located outside a mainland State capital city area in a population centre of less than 250 000 people.
- f) The purpose of the regional loading is to address the higher costs that regional campuses face due to location, history and size, and to recognise that they have less potential to diversify revenue sources, for example, commercial partnerships and attracting fee paying students. The loading is not directly based on the issue of engagement with their community but as the Garlick study noted, additional funding can be an enabler for regional engagement, and the additional funding could assist regional campuses in greater engagement with their regions.
- g) No criteria have been set for measuring the engagement of universities with their regions. The Collaboration and Structural Reform fund may be deployed to foster greater collaborating and engagement between a university and a region.
- h) The regional loading will be reviewed in 2010-2011 against its capacity to assist regional institutions to meet the additional costs related to the provision of higher education courses in regional areas.