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Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

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Professor Martin Bean CBE and Professor Peter Dawkins AO
Leads, University-Industry Collaboration in Teaching and Learning Review

Via email: DESE-TertiaryProjects@dese.gov.au

Dear Professors Bean and Dawkins,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a brief submission in response to the Terms of Reference of the ***University-Industry Collaboration in Teaching and Learning Review***. We are very keen to assist you and the Review team further as you identify specific industries, case studies, strategies and policy reform ideas of interest.

Our submission has two main aims. The first is to propose that an additional government investment of \$150 million in the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) and use of the already-established NPILF framework would both enable and measure a substantial increase in the reach and impact of university-industry collaboration. We sketch briefly below the rationale for this proposal. The second is to highlight how – through embedding Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities in a variety of different ways across our programs – we are striving to ensure that all our students graduate with the knowledge, skills and personal qualities they will need for success and fulfilment in work and life. We hope these examples will add to the rich variety of case studies you will gather from across the sector.

1. An additional investment in NPILF

In the University's most recent (2016-2020) Strategic Plan, we committed to creating an industry and community engagement team to provide education-focused coordination, relationship management and facilitation to support sharing of good practice, multidisciplinary engagement and expanded opportunities for industry and community projects, internships, placements and research projects. Over 2016-2020, we invested \$8 million in this team which created and delivered a program of *Industry and Community Project Units (ICPUs)* – described further below – that are now providing a meaningful experience of industry and community engagement for more than 4000 students annually. These units have a common macro-design and support multidisciplinary teams of students to address problems and challenges identified by a wide range of partner industry and community organisations. The [units](#) are open to a majority of our undergraduate students, complement the substantial program of placements in the more professionally-oriented undergraduate programs and ensure that *all* of our undergraduate students now have access to meaningful industry engagement in their program of study. Students and partner organisations alike report high levels of satisfaction with the units. Students describe the units as transformative as they experience taking their evolving expertise and working with others with different expertise to address a multidisciplinary problem or challenge that matters to an industry partner. Partner organisations value the “out-of-the-box” thinking that students often develop, including from disciplines that may be outside their usual in-house capability set, and, of course, they also value exposure to potential talent. We are happy to

provide more details, but we mention this example, because an investment of \$8 million over five years has enabled us to create what is now a self-sustaining program of industry engagement impacting an additional 4000 students annually. We believe this is the kind of investment needed to make a substantial difference. Scaling from our own student cohort to the entire sector suggests that an investment of the order of \$150 million would allow each institution to develop a program that would add most value in their own context, and do so through the already established NPILF framework.

Examples of the kinds of educational engagement activities that could be enabled by such funding include:

- Building the industry and community relationships and internal university capability so every undergraduate student can have at least one meaningful work-integrated learning experience;
- Creating scaffolded learning activities across the curriculum to prepare students in their early years of University to make the most of work-integrated learning experiences in a later year;
- Collaborating with industry and community organisations to develop new educational programs that meet emerging workforce needs; and
- Supporting the development of entrepreneurial skills, experiences and outcomes at all levels of the curriculum.

2. Embedding WIL and the development of broader capabilities across our programs

While most of our undergraduate students can access the relatively new University-led ICPUs just described, you will appreciate that all students enrolled in our extensive offerings of accredited professional programs must complete minimum WIL requirements, which we deliver in close partnership with a wide range of public and private industry organisations in Australia and overseas.

Notwithstanding the continuing challenges to WIL posed by the pandemic, we are committed to expanding and strengthening our relationships with our industry partners to create more high-quality opportunities for our students to develop the practical skills they will need to thrive throughout their careers.

Case studies

Improving work-integrated learning

Through our [Industry and Community Project Units](#) described above, we have partnered with over 60 leading business, government and community organisations in Australia and globally to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to work in multi-disciplinary teams on real-world projects set by our industry partners. Our 2021 partners include Accenture, Allianz, ANZ, Cochlear, Coles, Ernst & Young, IBM, KPMG, NSW Treasury Corporation, Randstad, TAL Insurance, Wandiyali Environa Wildlife Sanctuary and Westpac. With teams composed of undergraduate students from diverse disciplines, this program reinforces the importance of developing the flexibility and breadth of perspective necessary to interact productively and creatively across cultural, disciplinary and professional boundaries.

Reforming curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, including industry involvement

(1) Our award-winning [Professional Engagement Program](#) (PEP) is embedded within all our undergraduate **engineering degrees** accredited by [Engineers Australia](#). The PEP aims to develop students' workplace competencies and transferable employability skills that companies look for in engineering graduates.

(2) Our dedicated [Work-Integrated Learning Hub](#) provides opportunities for all **Business School** students to put their learning into practice, gain critical employability skills and solve real problems in collaboration with industry partners through work placements, internships, consulting projects and cultural immersion programs. Two programs of note are below:

(i) The [Industry Placement Program](#) (IPP) gives Business School students the opportunity to work for a leading firm as part of their degree. The IPP offers placements with local firms in Sydney (working at least three days a week for 10 weeks during semester, or an equivalent number of hours over the summer break) and international firms in China (Shanghai) and the United States (Los Angeles and San Francisco).

(ii) The [Business Practicum](#) is a consulting project that allows students to work with a company, SME, not-for-profit or government organisation as part of a unit of study; on a live industry project throughout the semester. Students develop a consultancy with classmates to address a real problem or issue facing the partner organisation.

(3) [Job Smart Edge](#) is a program designed to address the specific challenges of providing industry experience for **international students**. Developed by the University of Sydney Business School and offered in partnership with Practera, it offers a curricular or co-curricular program comprising digital industry projects, personalised coaching and opportunities to build connections with start-ups, small and medium sized enterprises and leading organisations. In 2020, *Job Smart Edge* won the overall Global Education Award at the 2020 QS Reimagine Education Awards.

(4) We enable our undergraduate and postgraduate students to engage in business startup and other entrepreneur training programs, equipping them with the practical skills needed to accelerate their ideas, careers, or research. For example, through our [Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program](#), which includes the award winning [INCUBATE](#) startup program, we provide students with both curricular and non-curricular opportunities to learn, hands-on, about how to commercialise ideas and research successfully.

Enhancing pathways and partnerships between schools, VET, higher education and industry

Our [Poche Centre for Indigenous Health](#) has longstanding and deep partnerships with the VET sector, as part of its work to improve health outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through training of locally based health service delivery. Since 2014, the Poche Centre has administered a scholarship program which collaborates with industry and community partners to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the opportunity to earn a VET qualification to then work in Indigenous health care and/or undertake further education and training.

To date more than 500 scholarship students have gained 528 TAFE qualifications, with an average course completion rate of 93 per cent (between 2014-2019). This completion rate is more than three times the national rate for the same cohort studying at TAFE. Five graduates of our TAFE program have gone on to university and two have graduated from the University of Sydney.

The scholarship program partners with local health services and state and federal health councils/associations to ensure students have employment opportunities and support during their studies, and further study and/or career pathways afterwards.

We would be very happy to discuss any of our programs further if that would assist the Review and we very much look forward to your report.

With best wishes,

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