Equity and Diversity

EPHEA 2013 Conference

Organisers’ Report

Hosted by The University of Western Australia in collaboration with Curtin University of Technology, Edith Cowan University and Murdoch University

EPHEA 2013 Conference

*Building for the Future: Leadership, Community and Social Inclusion*

Organisers’ Report

The 11th biennial EPHEA Conference was held in Perth, Western Australia, and hosted collaboratively by The University of Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology, Edith Cowan University, and Murdoch University. The Conference took place from Tuesday 26 to Friday 29 November, and was held at the University Club of WA.

1. Organisers

During the months leading up to the event, representatives from all four universities worked closely together through regular meetings, contributing both professional expertise and practical skills throughout the planning process. Excellent groundwork was done by Celine Gaudin at UWA, after which all aspects of organising, from reviewing abstracts and corresponding with delegates to sourcing caterers, entertainers, sponsors and volunteers, as well as budgeting, scheduling and producing the program book, were managed through in-house teamwork without employing a professional Events Manager. This enabled us to offer a more personalised service to delegates, and allowed more control over all elements of the conference. It was therefore highly rewarding for the Committee to see a 99% satisfaction rate with overall conference organisation in the post-conference survey.

The EPHEA 2013 Conference Committee consisted of the following members:

Beverley Hill (Chair), UWA

Fay Davidson, UWA

Malcolm Fialho, UWA

Christine Gunson, ECU

Erica Lewin, Murdoch

Louise Pollard, UWA

Judy Skene, UWA

Lucienne Tessens, UWA

Claire Webb, UWA

Amanda Willis, Curtin

Anneli Strutt, UWA (Conference Coordinator)

2. Delegates

Attendance at EPHEA 2013 surpassed all expectations, with delegates arriving from 38 Higher Education institutions across Australia and New Zealand as well as from the UK, US, Canada and Japan. In addition to 11 Committee members, 12 volunteers and 15 invited speakers, we had 154 full conference attendees (including seven students), 15 single day attendees, over 30 delegates attending single sessions and a handful of guests at the social events. Special guest Lenny the guide dog was also in attendance at the Opening Ceremony, and a total of 61 delegates were present at the AGM.

In addition, the opening Keynote sessions were attended by a number of senior representatives from the host institutions and key stakeholders, and a particular highlight was the presence of theUnited States Consul General, Ms Cynthia Griffin, with men in dark suits and earpieces adding to the general air of excitement.

3. Presentations

Our international and diverse range of Keynote, Invited and Panel Speakers covered topics ranging from indigeneity, gender, race, privilege, disability, diverse sexualities, and widening participation in the Higher Education context. The Speakers were frequently identified in survey responses as one of the best aspects of the conference, with the majority of respondents stating that they would recommend the content of presentations to others. The conference was also perceived to have a strong start with Professor Jill Milroy’s opening Keynote, as well as a strong finish, with Ms Mary Kelly’s concluding presentation.

**Table 1: Keynote, Invited and Panel Speakers**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Speaker and Institution** | **Title of Presentation** |
| Winthrop Professor **Jill Milroy** (UWA) | *Building Aboriginal Futures as Presence not just Absence: Education as Key or Cage?* |
| Professor **Bob Wood** (University of Melbourne) | *Building for Greater Gender Diversity in Senior Leadership* |
| Mr **Craig Ritchie** (Department of Education) | *Towards Collaborative Policy in equity* |
| Professor **Sue Trinidad** (NCSEHE) | *Closing the Gap Between Equity Policy, Research & Practice* |
| Dr **Jennifer de Vries** (Independent Researcher) | *‘Some things change, some stay the same.’ Gender processes in a STEM Faculty* |
| Ms **Dawn Hough** (Pride in Diversity) | *LGBTI Workplace Inclusion: The New Imperative* |
| Mr **Glenn Singleton** (Pacific Educational Group, USA) | *Courageous Conversation: Getting to the Heart of the (Racial) Matter* |
| Dr **Katie Ellis** (Curtin University) | *Rethinking Access* |
| Professor **Mustafa Ozbilgin** (Brunel University, UK) | *The Paradox of Leadership for Diversity and Leadership Diversity in Higher Education* |
| **Denise Conway** (Aranmore Catholic College)  **Greg Kelly** (Karratha High School)  **Kurtis Leslie** (Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed School, Coolgardie)  **Ali Zafar Mohammadi** (Perth Multicultural Organisation)  **Greg Ryan-Gadsden** (The Smith Family) | Partnership Panel: *Widening Participation in Higher Education* |
| Ms **Mary Kelly** (QUT) | *Social Justice and Universities – Looking Ahead* |

Individual presentations were divided into two formats: 45-minute Full Papers (13 in total) and 30-minute ‘Nuts & Bolts’ papers (45). While the call for abstracts elicited papers under four main streams, due to the overwhelming popularity of student outreach–focussed presentations, a flexible approach to streams was adopted during the reviewing process.

The most challenging aspect of timetabling was ensuring that at least one staff-focussed paper was scheduled for each session. Despite our best scheduling efforts, several survey respondents noted the general shortage of both staff and Indigenous-focussed papers. A consideration for future organisers might be to elicit papers specifically in these areas, and it was also strongly hoped that having an Indigenous Keynote speaker would be continued at future conferences, as well as including a Pasifika Keynote speaker.

All recorded Keynote and Invited speaker presentations, as well as PDFs of individual Powerpoint presentations have been made available through the EPHEA website: [www.ephea.org](http://www.ephea.org)

4. Budget

The success of the conference was made possible by two sources of seed funding (since returned), as well as financial contributions from all four universities and other sponsors (see table 2). In addition to the costs outlined below, UWA contributed an additional sum to increase the conference coordinator’s FTE from 0.8 t0 1.0 during the months leading up to the conference. The Committee was also particularly pleased to realise its original intention of increasing the seed funding to be passed on to EPHEA 2015, by $2,000, to account for inflation.

Much was learned about budgeting along the way through various financial surprises: one party speaking in Australian dollars and the other in American; no promised refunds of room deposits; suspiciously shifting decimal points in quoted prices; a range of retrospectively applied taxes, and even attempts at money laundering through the online registration site. This was truly a first for EPHEA 2013: a quick internet search for “conference scams” revealed numerous reports of fake conferences aiming to extract money from prospective attendees, but we appeared to have the first instance of fake delegates![[1]](#footnote-1)

Of those delegates registering for the entire conference, 74% registered by the earlybird cut-off date with 26% paying the full registration. A total of 11 refunds were issued.

**Table 2: Conference Budget**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Seed Funding** |  |
| AUT (EPHEA 2011) | 15,000 |
| UWA Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor | 20,000 |
| **Total** | **35,000** |
|  |  |
| **Revenue** |  |
| Registrations | 105,150.00 |
| Sponsorship (Curtin, Murdoch, ECU, Unicredit, ATEM, Promaco Conventions) | 7,200 |
| **Total** | **112,350.00** |
|  |  |
| **Expenditure** |  |
| Speakers (fees, travel, accommodation , gifts) | 19,887.22 |
| Website/registration/refunds | 16,265.85 |
| Printing and stationery | 2,432.14 |
| Social Events (venues, catering, entertainment, transport) | 35,390.57 |
| University Club and Arts Building (conference venues, AV, catering) | 27,687.64 |
| Other (volunteers, supplies, committee meeting costs) | 1,835.08 |
| **Total** | **103,498.49** |
|  |  |
| **Return of Seed Funding** |  |
| Seed funding for EPHEA 2015 | 17,000 |
| Return of Seed Funding to UWA | 20,000 |
| **Total** | **37,000** |
|  |  |
| Total Revenue + Seed Funding | 147,350.00 |
| Total Expenditure + Return of Seed Funding | 140,498.49 |
| **TOTAL Conference Surplus** | **6,851.51** |

5. Highlights

Despite a fair share of manic moments leading up to the conference, the entire process can only be described as *fun*, and we believe this was reflected in the atmosphere throughout the week. Guided by Bev Hill’s confidence-inspiring motto of “too early to panic” everything seemed to be on track until the week before the Opening Ceremony. Suddenly, thunderstorms were threatening to displace us from the Sunken Garden; the brand-new lighting rig we had been assured would be constructed in good time had “only just arrived in the country”; our paella caterers had dropped off the radar and not responded to any communication for the past three weeks, and what we had confidently been calling the 8th biennial conference turned out to be at least the 11th. Thankfully this last fact had not been printed in the program books— which, we then realised, someone (conference coordinator) had only ordered 100 copies of, instead of 190. Yet all came good in the end and the opening night turned out to be magical, with the young Indigenous dancers from Balga Senior High School providing the perfect welcome to WA.

Another highlight was surely the cocktail reception in King’s Park. After months of debating and trialling entertainment options, the trance-like atmosphere in the Frasers function room when *African Music Circles* took to the stage proved we had made the right choice. Having been advised that the interactive drumming workshop would last for “15 to 30 mins depending on the group’s enthusiasm”, the drummers who engaged the crowd at 7.15pm were still going strong at 8.55 – five minutes before closing time. For some, the night continued with an extended wine appreciation tour of Perth night spots, and the following morning brought reports of blisters from drumming so hard.

A final highlight for the Committee was our wonderful volunteers. Comprised of students from Curtin, ECU and UWA, as well as students from the UWA Centre for English Language Teaching, the volunteers’ efficiency and friendly manner was praised by staff and guests alike, and their contribution to the smooth running of the event cannot be underestimated. It was a particular pleasure to see the language students interacting with delegates and presentations while enjoying unparalleled real-life practice. The Committee would also like to acknowledge the behind-the-scenes tech support provided by the reassuring presence of Kenn Martin. Every conference needs a Kenn Martin.

6. Feedback and Recommendations

The post-conference survey had a response rate of 41 % and the overwhelming single response to questions such as the reason for attending, the most beneficial aspect of the conference, and what was liked most about the conference, was “networking”.

This was pleasing to the committee, as we had considered leaving out the cocktail reception in order to keep costs even lower, however delegates saw the value in having (informal) opportunities to network, with many desiring even more time.

The question of allocating more time for presentations and discussions was also raised in the survey responses, and other valuable suggestions included featuring a Pasifika Keynote speaker, inviting students to give Nuts & Bolts presentations, and holding the conference at the beginning of the year when there is more funding available.

All in all, the conference was deemed to be an invaluable platform for interacting with (and meeting new) colleagues, finding out what others were doing across the sector, as well as facilitating internal team-building. In one respondent’s words, “EPHEA conferences are invaluable life-savers.”

Anneli Strutt

Conference Coordinator

EPHEA 2013 Conference

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1. Tip: If six people from a ‘company’ unknown to you, Google or LinkedIn register for an Equity Practitioners’ conference, be wary. Especially when, after each has indicated a disability and Halaal diet, you follow up and their response is: “Please kindly disregard the mobility, hearing and visual requirements.” Not to mention when, the following week, they ask for the registrations to be refunded onto a different credit card, ending the email with: “KINDLY DELETE IMMEDIATELY AFTER USE.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)