

MEDIA RELEASE

Available for immediate release: 26 November 2010

Attention: Higher education editors

Academic workforce needs regeneration

The academic workforce needs to be radically reorganised, according to a new report from the LH Martin Institute.

The Real Academic Revolution shows the organisation of academic work and the academic career structure no longer meet operational demands.

Academic work is growing in significance, while workforce capacity is shrinking, staff are being attracted to other sectors, and the tertiary landscape is changing.

Co-author Professor Leo Goedegebuure said recruiting people into existing roles was not a sufficient solution, because the work and workforce have changed. "If academic life is to be an attractive future career choice, it is necessary to provide a career structure that meets the reality and expectations of an increasingly diversifying workforce," he said.

The traditional idea of academics as all-round experts in teaching and research is fading. Now, academic work is about managing a portfolio of activities, many of which can be delegated.

This is evidenced by the explosion in sessional staff who conduct approximately half of all university teaching. Engaging these people is vital to the future of the workforce, according to the authors.

The report outlines strategies for effectively managing the future academic workforce, including refreshing the research degree, and customising career profiles.

Co-author Associate Professor Hamish Coates said higher education disciplinary and institutional groups need to act fast. "Now is the time for the Australian higher education community to draft and implement an agenda that proactively shapes the future nature of academic work and the profession," he said.

For interview: Associate Professor Hamish Coates h.coates@unimelb.edu.au / 0423 475 605
Associate Professor Leo Goedegebuure: leo.g@unimelb.edu.au / (03) 8344 0756