

## Research & Scholarship Opportunities

The NCSEHE aims to support communities of researchers interested in student equity and higher education, including research students working in this field. In 2010 scholarships will be offered for Honours students to undertake research at the University of South Australia and in association with the NCSEHE. Five Honours scholarships valued at \$4000 are available for a period of one year. Students are encouraged to develop projects that contribute to broader studies being conducted by other researchers and research students in the NCSEHE. Current research interests include students' aspirations for higher education; questions of definition and measurement in relation to equity groups; and better connecting university curriculum and pedagogy with the knowledge and learning capacities of students from under-represented groups.

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## Director's Reflections on the First Year



**Professor Trevor Gale**  
Director; NCSEHE

Looking back over the first twelve months of the National Centre's operations, my overwhelming impression is of intense activity and considerable satisfaction with what has been achieved. The NCSEHE has been born at just the right time, when student equity has become important again, but it has also meant that we have experienced and continue to experience incredible demands from within the higher education sector, as well as from schooling and VET and from other groups within the community. Student equity in higher education is necessarily related to student equity in other education contexts and to social and economic policy more broadly. Opportunities to provide advice, information and support and to push the nation's thinking on student equity have been many.

Fortunately, the Centre has fantastic staff and we have ourselves received considerable support from people around the country and overseas. As many will know, NCSEHE's primary objective is to conduct and disseminate research on this important area. Already it has delivered a major report to government on the design and evaluation of early intervention strategies in schools, which will become increasingly important if the 20/40 targets are to be achieved. This newsletter provides more detail on the National Centre's activities and on its plans for the future. Going forward, we hope to provide you with more regular updates, including through our new website: [www.equity101.info](http://www.equity101.info) This new site, which goes live in November, will be both a repository of programs, policy and research in the field as well as a forum for debate and discussion by equity researchers, practitioners and policy workers. Of course, there is much still to do. We look forward to working with you in this important area for Australian higher education and the nation.

## Research & Scholarship Opportunities continued...



The NCSEHE is particularly interested in receiving applications from students who intend to undertake a PhD in the Centre after completing Honours. Possibilities also exist for PhD students enrolling at the University of South Australia and studying in the NCSEHE to receive top-up funding supplementary to scholarships from other sources.

Applications for Honours scholarships are welcome up to Friday 12 March 2010, although applicants need to be aware that offers may be made before this date. An early submission is advised.

Applications to undertake studies toward a PhD in the NCSEHE are by negotiation.

For more information visit the national centre's website: [www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/scholarships.asp](http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/scholarships.asp)

or contact [Lalita.Mchenry@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Lalita.Mchenry@unisa.edu.au)



## Visiting Scholars



Professor Miriam David from the Institute of Education, University of London



Professor Lori Beckett from Leeds Metropolitan University

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education is pleased to be hosting the visits to Australia of two leading international scholars.

Professor David's and Professor Beckett's public speaking events run over October and November 2009.

For more information about these events please visit:

[www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/events.asp](http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/events.asp)



## Focus on equity

### Mr Stephen Parker

Research Support Officer; NCSEHE

The National Centre's founding director Professor Trevor Gale has been presenting keynote addresses at a number of universities across the country. Professor Gale has spoken about new understandings of equity and the implications of the Government's targets for higher education at the *First Year in Higher Education* conference in Townsville, and ANU's *Festival of Teaching*, among others.

### Early School Interventions report

The National Centre has just completed a DEEWR-funded research project entitled *Early school intervention as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged students*. The project investigated university outreach programs that are designed to increase university participation among low-SES and other disadvantaged students.

The report devised a method of outreach program design and evaluation that seeks to enhance equity and participation in higher education.

The report of the research is expected to be released in late 2009.

### New Research in the Field

Findings from the recent report on the *Graduate Pathways Survey* support the argument that once they enter university low-SES students do as well as their peers in terms of employment upon completion of their course. The latest OECD *Education at a Glance 2009* was released in early September. Of particular interest to the Australian context are the claims that the public financial benefits of tertiary education outweigh the costs.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board's *Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators* compares OECD and EU nations and notes that the proportion of 15-19 year olds not in employment, education or training is about 3.7%, slightly worse than the OECD average of 3%. For 20-24 year olds the international comparison is slightly better – 4.2% compared with the OECD average of 7.3%.

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Photograph and key text provided by TVET Australia.

Photograph: Members of the National VET Equity Advisory Council (l to r) Gayle Peake, Elizabeth McGregor, Sean Wrigley, Greg Lewis, Matter Machar, Natalie Walker, Caspar Cumming, Gary Kerridge, Trevor Gale, Tiga Bayles (Chair), Liz Reid (front).

## National Centre Director appointed to National Advisory Council

Earlier this year, NCSEHE's own Centre Director, Professor Trevor Gale, was formally appointed to the new National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC) by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard. This national advisory council has been established by the Ministerial Council to provide high level advice to training ministers on equity issues in the national training system. The establishment of the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC) represents a new direction in VET equity reform. Under the new advisory arrangement the focus has shifted away from a consideration of issues facing individual equity groups to a wider focus on supporting all learners in the national training system who are experiencing barriers to successful outcomes. Recognising that many clients in the VET system experience multiple disadvantage, the new Council will identify shared priorities for all equity groups,

while continuing to build on the work of the former National VET Advisory Alliance and the three National VET Advisory Taskforces (for Indigenous Australians, people with a disability and equity students).

With these goals in mind, NVEAC held its inaugural meeting on Thursday 13 August 2009 at the Marriot Hotel in Melbourne. At this meeting the Council discussed its priorities, future activities and developed a Charter, which has been submitted to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment for endorsement. The Council's future activities include Stakeholder forums, planned to occur later this year in each state and territory. Members of the Council will also take the opportunity to participate in conferences which deal with issues around equity in vocational education and training and the social inclusion agenda. In line with NVEAC's goals, Professor Gale will chair the Social Inclusion in Education Conference in Sydney in October.

To read more about NVEAC go to:

[www.nveac.tvetaustralia.com.au](http://www.nveac.tvetaustralia.com.au)



### *Focus on equity*

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A new NCVER monograph on higher education in TAFE (authored by Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie and others from Griffith University) explores the role and function of VET institutions offering bachelor degrees to students. The report includes discussion of the implications of sectoral boundaries (between VET and HE), the competing demands of mixed-sector institutions, and the perceived quality of degrees offered in TAFE. The NCVER research follows from Wheelahan's paper presented to the National Centre's Forum which presented evidence that most low SES students studying in VET are undertaking Certificates I, II and III, rather than the Certificate IV qualification required for articulation to university. □

Photograph:  
Lin Martin of the University of  
Melbourne addressing the forum  
in the University of South  
Australia's Bradley Forum.

Dr Lalita McHenry  
Centre Manager; NCSEHE



*“ equity101  
will use social  
software to  
allow  
collaborative  
development,  
through wikis,  
blogs, and  
groups – even  
allowing free  
web space for  
equity group  
pages.”*

Ms Jennifer Stokes &  
Ms Sophie Relf  
Project Coordinators:  
equity101 NCSEHE



## NCSEHE Forum

On February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2009, the NCSEHE held an invitation-only Forum to begin the process of mapping out a program of focused research for the field. The Forum brought together 70 of

the nation's leading equity practitioners and researchers for two keynote addresses, two panel sessions, two round tables, and sixteen individual presentations. The content was divided into four themes: (i) what happens inside higher education; (ii) the challenges of equity to higher education itself; (iii) equitable school outcomes, including access to higher education; and (iv) transitions and sector relations. The Forum proceedings are available from the NCSEHE's website:

[www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/default.asp](http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/ncsehe/default.asp)



In consultation with key stakeholders, the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education has been tasked to develop equity101: a site supporting dynamic collegial networks and providing opportunities to better locate information and scholarship for the growing equity community. The National Centre is pleased to announce the upcoming November launch of this groundbreaking site.

equity101 will offer a centralised online portal for those interested in student equity, and the wider higher education equity community, providing online spaces for increased collaboration and evolving discussions, raising awareness of equity news and events, and promoting wider dissemination of equity scholarship. Capitalising on the web 2.0 environment, equity101 will use social software to allow collaborative development, through wikis, blogs, and groups – even allowing free web space for equity group pages. The site will offer expert and community reviews of texts in

key categories, allowing users to easily find and identify relevant scholarship. The site will better facilitate collaboration and research for the Australian and international equity community, while also raising the profile of those who work in the equity in education space. Details of the site's key functionality – from a growing repository of national and international equity information to dynamic calendar updates of equity events – will be presented at the upcoming Equal Opportunity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia conference in Sydney. The National Centre is excited about the opportunities this site will provide; acting to build the scholarship of the field, increasing access to leading methodologies and providing future opportunities for equity research. Visit the site at [www.equity101.info](http://www.equity101.info)

