The Review of the Faculty of Information Technology
A Submission to the General Staff Team

1. Introduction

The Faculty was created in 1990 after Monash merged with the then Chisholm Institute of Technology which included the Peninsula Campus. The University also merged with the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education in 1990, established Berwick, Malaysia and South Africa campuses in 1994, 1998 and 2001 respectively.

Considerable progress has been made since the establishment of the Faculty in consolidating a very diverse group.

During the years 1998-2002, the Faculty grew strongly on the back of considerable growth in international students. The revenue generated by this growth was not fully utilized to grow the quality and quantity of Faculty academic staff and facilities. The student:staff ratios increased and the Faculty’s facilities did not keep pace with the growth. However the Faculty Office general staff grew strongly, almost doubling in three years 2000-2003. The staff numbers have come down since the peak of 2003 as some staff that have left have not been replaced.

The current arrangement whereby the Dean and the Faculty Office are isolated from the academic activities appears not to have helped the Faculty. The isolation appears to have contributed to poor communication between the Faculty Office and the Schools.

2. Administration and Technical Staff

The Faculty Review Scope lists the following questions:

- Does the existing general staff structure and allocation of responsibilities best allow us to enact our values and to achieve our vision, objectives, and KPIs?

- If a school structure is retained, how should administrative responsibilities be distributed between the Faculty Office and the School offices?

As noted above, the number of general staff increased by almost 100% over the years 2000-2003 although numbers have declined somewhat during this year. The non-academic staff (admin/technical) currently account for more than one-third of the total Faculty staff and the Faculty Office budget is currently close to an unacceptable $7m.

Currently there appear to be (I do not have access to the latest figures) about 125 administrative/technical FTE staff in the Faculty. Perhaps 75 of these staff are in the Faculty Office (including the Dean’s Office) and the remaining 50 are in the Schools. The Faculty Office appears to have seven Level 10 staff and perhaps 20 Level 8 staff (most of them have the title “Manager”). There are eight Level 8 staff in the Schools and no staff at Level 9 or 10.

The ratio of academic staff to administrative staff in the Faculty is well below the average across the university. Even if we are to compare the IT Faculty only with the average ratio for the Faculties of Business and Economics, Engineering and Science, the IT Faculty appears to have too many administrative/technical staff.
3. The Faculty Office

The Faculty Office has the following five sections:

- Academic Services
- Advancement & Relationship Management (ARM)
- Business Operations
- Student Services
- Technical Services

Each of these sections is headed by a Director. Amongst the five sections, the Student Services Section and the Technical Services Section are the two largest. The duties of each of the sections are as follows:

The Academic Services section is responsible for:
- Research Services
- Executive Services
- Quality Management
- Document Management
- Office Management

The Advancement & Relationship Management section is responsible for:
- Relationship Management
- Alumni Development / Faculty Fundraising
- Negotiation & Contract Management
- Scholarship Development & Industry Bridging
- Project Management
- International Marketing

The Business Operations section is responsible for:
- Financial Services
- Personnel Services
- Facilities Services

The Student Services section is responsible for:
- Faculty Admissions
- Campus-based Student Services
- Course and Enrolment Information
- Student Records

The Technical Services section is responsible for:
- Client Services
- Web Technologies
- Data Services
- IT Facilities Services and Support
4. The Schools’ General Staff

At the present time there are three Schools at Caulfield and Clayton and three at Peninsula, Berwick and Gippsland. If the current review results in some restructuring of the Schools then it is likely to impact general staffing within the Schools. Ignoring the possibility of restructuring and considering only the Australian campuses, the Schools each have a School Manager and a number of general staff that are organised somewhat differently in the different Schools. There is usually one or more financial staff and some Schools have technical staff, for example, SCSSE has a number of technical staff. It is quite possible that there is some opportunity for organising the School general staff better but this needs to be explored further.

5. Issues

We need to consider the following issues:

1. Does the existing general staff structure and allocation of responsibilities best allow us to enact our values and to achieve our vision, objectives, and KPIs?

2. If a school structure is retained, how should administrative responsibilities be distributed between the Faculty Office and the School offices?

3. Which one of the responsibilities listed above for the five Faculty Office sections is required to be done in the Faculty Office?

4. Should the general staff responsible for international and domestic marketing report to the Faculty Manager?

5. Should the staff responsible for technical services in the Faculty Office report to the Faculty Manager?

6. How can the Faculty Office culture be changed to be more service oriented?

7. How can communication between the Faculty Office and the Schools be improved?

6. Discussion

It is difficult to comment on these issues in detail without having a good understanding of what each of the duties listed on the previous page entail. It is however clear that the Faculty cannot achieve its vision and objectives in the present environment of reduced Faculty revenue with such a large expenditure on the Faculty Office. Also, it is clear that the structure of the Faculty Office needs to be flatter with fewer directors and managers. In some sections of the Faculty Office it has been reported that the chain of command consists of as many as seven or eight staff with the reporting line finally ending with the Dean (for example, in one case the chain is as follows: the Dean, the Faculty Manager, the Registrar, the Director, the Level 8 Manager, the Level 7 Executive Officer, a Level 6 staff and finally a Level 4 or 5 staff). This obviously cannot be effective or efficient and makes little sense.

It appears that the quality of Faculty Office staff can be improved. The Faculty has been accused in the past of not recruiting the best staff. With the present staff and their
attitudes it is difficult to imagine the Office having a culture of innovation and creativity. In addition, although the Faculty has much diversity in its student population there is little diversity in the Faculty general staff that serve them. It is also necessary that the culture in the Faculty Office be changed to be more service oriented rather than control oriented. All these problems can be overcome if the Faculty was to provide sufficient relevant professional development programs for the staff in the Faculty Office and general staff in the Schools.

The professional training should also ensure that staff understand that they need to be focussed on outcomes and not on personalities. They must understand that their role is to support the academic activities of the Faculty and therefore the needs of the Schools are paramount. They also need training to understand how to interact with a very diverse student (and academic staff) population and ensure that there is no discrimination based on religion, race, gender or age.

Looking at the responsibilities, and without having full details of what each duty involves, I assume that we need the following responsibilities to reside in the Faculty Office:

### Academic Services
- Research Services

### ARM
- International and domestic marketing
- Publicity and advertising including production of brochures

### Business Operations
- Financial services

### Student Services
- Faculty Admissions
- Student Records
- Course and enrolment information

### Technical Services
- IT Facilities services and support (including Labs)

We have left out many services from the list of services that the Faculty Office currently provides either because in our view the service can be provided within the Schools, the service does not appear to be essential or it is not clear what service is provided under the heading listed. It is difficult to make sensible comments even about something like Faculty Admissions since it is not clear what the Faculty Admissions staff do. Certainly there is work related to the VTAC rounds in November to February. There may be some work related to handling of postgraduate coursework applications but the remaining admissions work is not done in the Faculty Office. Most international admissions are (or should be) done by Monash International. All undergraduate domestic students come through VTAC. All HDR applications I assume come through the Academic Services section.

In my view, there is considerable scope for downsizing the Faculty Office, by perhaps as much as 50% and using the Faculty resources more efficiently and effectively. The student load in 2005 is unlikely to be greater than that in 2001 and therefore there is no reason why the Faculty Office in 2005 should be much larger than it was in 2001. The
number of sections in the Faculty Office should be reduced from five to perhaps two or three. Certainly the Academic Services section and Student Services section should be combined and report directly to either the Faculty Registrar or the Faculty Manager.

Furthermore, issues like whether the technical staff in the Faculty Office should be reporting to the Faculty Manager who is likely to have little knowledge of technology need to be looked at.

There is a significant problem of poor communication between the Faculty Office staff and the Schools. The recommendations below include a suggestion to improve communication.

7. Recommendations

1. The Faculty Office structure should be relatively flat with fewer supervisors, managers and directors.

2. The number of Faculty Office sections should be reduced. There perhaps need be only about 40 staff in the Faculty Office.

3. Consideration should be given to ARM and Technical Services sections reporting either to the Deputy Dean (if one is appointed) or to the Chair of a Marketing and Promotions Committee and the Chair of the Technical Services Committee respectively.

4. The Faculty should consider the possibility of some Faculty Office staff spending time in the Schools and some School general staff spending time in the Faculty Office to improve communication. Consideration should also be given to the senior staff in the Faculty Office (e.g. Faculty Manager, Registrar) regularly attending staff meetings in the Schools to improve communication.

5. Steps should be taken to improve the quality of general and technical staff in the Faculty. All Faculty Office staff (and the general staff in the Schools) should be required to undergo relevant professional development to improve their competence, to become multi-skilled, to improve service to their customers (viz. students, staff and Schools), and to learn to better interact with a diverse student population.

6. When new general staff is recruited, every attempt should be made to attract the best person available regardless of race, religion, gender and age. Further diversity within the Faculty general staff should be encouraged.

7. Consideration should be given to moving the Faculty Office so that it is located closer to the academic activities of the Faculty.

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