



COMMUNITY & PUBLIC SECTOR UNION ♦ SPSF GROUP NSW BRANCH

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7 December 2016

Angelo Kourtis
Vice President (People and Advancement)
Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797
PENRITH NSW 2751

By email: essex@westernsydney.edu.au

Dear Mr Kourtis,

Re: Project Essex Discussion Paper Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recent discussion paper in relation to the Project Essex review of shared services at Western Sydney University. The CPSU and its members have a number of concerns, which are detailed below.

Impact of the Early Voluntary Retirement Scheme (EVRS)

It is our understanding that the change plans triggered by the Project Essex review will be the vehicle for managing the approximately 200 vacancies created by the EVRS. We applaud the decision to prioritise those areas that are most affected. However, we note that the University has no control over where these vacancies will occur. With this in mind, what will happen if it transpires that the 'most affected' areas are not the logical choice of order, or fall into the category of 'complex' sections to be left to last? What interim measures will be put in place?

Workload

CPSU members are particularly concerned about potential increases to workload. The EVRS will see a drastic reduction in staff numbers, and the discussion paper alludes to further losses to eliminate 'duplication of services'.

We remind the University of its obligations in relation to Professional Staff workloads under clause 26 of the *University of Western Sydney Professional Staff Agreement 2014* ('the Agreement'). Excessive workload poses a WHS risk, and impacts on staff ability to access leave entitlements.

Finally, we note that excessive workloads would jeopardise the design principle 'focus on students and each other'. It will not be possible to deliver the 'best possible outcomes' for

students and stakeholders if staffing levels are insufficient.

Consultation

In reaching their conclusions, we are told that Deloitte consulted with Deans, Directors, and School and Institute Managers. CPSU members have expressed concern that by speaking only to these higher-level managers, the picture captured may not be entirely accurate. It is worrying that decisions around 'reduction of duplication' and 'consolidated processes' may be made without actually speaking to the staff with a working understanding of day-to-day operations.

Moving forward, it is promising to see the University's commitment to consultation and adhering to the provisions of the Agreement. However, our members have expressed concern over the lack of transparency in the activities of the Project to date. Similarly, staff feel that the University has not provided adequate communication throughout the initial phase of the process, leading to a great deal of confusion and distress.

Risk Assessment

Despite identifying 'be risk aware' as a design principle, the discussion paper proposes that risk assessments will not occur until the Planning and Design phase. We would argue that this may be too late. Risks should be identified well *before* any decision is made to consider undertaking university-wide changes.

New technology, relocation of office spaces, increased workloads, and access to leave entitlements are but a few obvious examples of the types of risks likely to be encountered if the University acts on the recommendations of the review.

To take Student Services as an example, 'technology enablement' has been identified as a critical requirement to give effect to the proposed changes. Any new system poses a raft of potential risks, each of which could be disastrous. What system do you plan to use? Is it already in place, or will it need to be developed? How will it interact with systems and processes elsewhere in the organisation? Has it been adequately tested and implemented? Have all the bugs been eliminated? Have all staff received the necessary training?

Consolidation of Tasks

While we appreciate that the scope of the Deloitte review included identifying opportunities for greater efficiency, CPSU questions whether consolidation will be effective or appropriate in all instances. It is telling that the term chosen was 'similar', rather than 'identical', implying that differences do indeed exist.

It is unclear from the document what methods or indicators were used to determine the similarity (or otherwise) of any given function to others provided elsewhere in the University. We therefore request a more detailed breakdown of how these conclusions were reached, and what threshold was applied to determine whether particular functions were deemed similar enough to be consolidated.

Further, CPSU seeks assurances that where tasks from diverse areas of the University are consolidated or centralised, adequate training will be made available to staff.

Proposed Timeframes

The discussion paper indicates that areas with high interdependency will be prioritised for change in the first quarter of 2017, while complex areas with increased risk will be held off until later in the year due to the additional planning required. Somewhat paradoxically, there are instances where interdependency itself will lead to complexity. How will this be resolved?

We would appreciate a response in consideration of our members' feedback, and look forward to ongoing participation in the consultation process.

Please contact Jen Mitchell, Industrial Officer in relation to this matter on 0499 799 054 or via email at jmitchell@psa.asn.au

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jen Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

Jen Mitchell
Industrial Officer