Widening Participation in Bristol’s two universities

Dr Tony Hoare (UoB) & Dr Richard Waller (UWE)

Paired Peers Dissemination Event, Burwalls, July 1st 2011
Benefits of a comparative WP study:

- Our students’ lifeworlds intersect
- A ‘proximate other’ sharpens the analysis of each
- We interact and collaborate already
Different Contexts 1

- Bigger (c2x total students)
- Newer (by a century)
- More part-timers (10-fold)
Different Contexts 2

- City centre site
- Traditional academic fare
- Stronger research focus
Different Contexts 3

WP Performance Indicators:

• UWE higher Performance Indicators (though both usually below ‘benchmarks’)
• UWE higher non-completion rates (over 2x)
• UWE higher HEFCE WP income (c6x)
• Both have range of WP ‘milestones’ etc but UWE’s extend beyond registration

So fairly typical ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Universities

Now for our Three As…
Actions 1 – Mainstreaming evidence

Clear case for mainstreaming in both Unis:

- WP strategies
- Dedicated WP teams
- Horizontal and vertical linkages
- Echoes in related policies
Actions 2 – Mainstreaming processes

Long WP chronologies:

- UWE – 1995+ …2006-12
- UoB – 1999+ …2009-16

Research foci:

- UWE – eg ‘Four Cities’, Aimhigher
- UoB – direct links to own WP experiences especially since 2006 (eg WP Research Cluster)
**Actions 3 – Coverage and engagement**

**Delivery mechanisms:**

- Some in common, some individual
- Coverage of 3 (UoB) and 4 (UWE) life-cycle stages

**Resource commitments:**

- Hard to compare, but UWE’s WP expenditure was c2x UoB’s – claims 4\textsuperscript{th} highest outreach + bursary Uni. spend
- Both into school Academy support – UWE 3 (incl first in country), UoB 1
Assessment – Enabling factors

• Independence within national parameters
• Both have strong senior management buy-ins and successful grass-roots ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns
• Geographical reach – local/regional (UWE) and national (UoB)
• Motivations differ – financial dependence (UWE); personal drive, win/win ‘quality + diversity’ agenda (UoB)
• Different media profiles…
Media interest

• UWE was recently Xcel Widening Participation University of the Year!

• UWE named 'Best Institute of Widening Participation' at 2009 national awards. Two UWE students also won individual awards
Media interest

**Daily Mail**

What kind of law is it that fails to lock up burglars but destroys innocent men like Matthew Kelly?

LYNDA LEE-POTTER SEE PAGE 13

**Bid to ease university entry for poor pupils**

Jack Grimston

The most senior figure in higher education has sparked a new row over bias in university admissions with a call for a huge increase in the use of preferential offers to benefit applicants from under-performing comprehensive schools.

Steve Smith, president of Universities UK, said research from Bristol University justified offering places to candidates from poor schools whose A-level results are up to three grades lower than those who are better educated.

The policy is likely to provoke claims from grammar schools and the independent sector.

Tony Hoare, director of widening participation research at Bristol, accused opponents of his policy of following a "grade fetish approach" that gave unjustified importance to raw exam results.

Bristol has advised its tutors to use Hoare's research in deciding their offers. The university insists this will be only one factor and that it has not adopted a "blunt" policy favouring one group of applicants.

Hoare said his findings could lead to tutors either making offers at different levels depending on the candidate's school or offering a place to a pupil from a poorly performing school in preference to one who had
Assessment – Successes and challenges

• Both have WP strategies firmly in place
• UWE – clear across-the-board growth in Outreach, Bursaries and ‘PIs’
• UoB – also Outreach growth but less in ‘PIs’
• UoB – robust counter to ‘social engineering’ charge through contexting methodology
• But both face sector-wide and locally-specific challenges which may be shaped by the ‘imminent’ White Paper and revision of ‘Access Agreements’
Association

- *Discipline support* for local schools – WP spin-offs
- *Unintended* benefits between Unis
- *Collaboration* on range of Outreach work
- *Joint WP research group* – ‘Paired Peers’ as part of a bigger agenda
Conclusions

• Of course we’re *different* – in motives, resource levels, media interest and geographical reach

• But we’re *surprisingly similar* too – strong, long-lasting commitments, firm embedding and support, positive messages

• And we *enjoy* working together…
Maybe others would too...