

ACSME: A TALE OF 30 YEARS OF CAPACITY BUILDING AND STEERING A COMMUNITY

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The rate of change in higher education is daunting, requiring all educators and leaders to invest in their capabilities and learn from others. Channels for sharing practice, innovation and research are a critical positive influence on the quality of teaching - delivering sustainable improvements for students and stakeholders. The Australian Conference for Science and Mathematics Education (ACSME), and its antecedent UniServe Science Conference, have brought Australian university science and mathematics educators together for over 30 years to lift learning outcomes for students and teaching experiences for educators. Reflection on the history of this conference reveals critical structures and mechanisms that have made this success possible.

ACSME was an evolution of an earlier conference established through UniServe Science, a clearinghouse for curating University-level teaching resources on the internet at The University of Sydney. The affiliated UniServe Science Conference served '*to evaluate, promote and disseminate the use of new technologies in undergraduate science teaching to all universities in Australia*' (Yeung, 2019). With foresight, conference booklets, other publications and a journal helped to share teaching innovations and build discipline-based scholarship of learning and teaching in the Australian context. In concert, the conference and publications created a community and steered that community.

In 2011, two things happened, a name change to ACSME, and influence of this community was expanded as a national conference rotating between states enabling more stakeholders to take ownership of the conference. ACSME continued to run out of The University of Sydney till 2015. During this period, there was a national uplift in learning and teaching driven by the establishment of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. In parallel, the Australian Deans of Science (ACDS) became increasingly active in university science teaching. In 2016, ACDS took carriage of ACSME through its newly established ACDS Teaching and Learning Centre (Johnson, 2014).

There are three enduring threads through the history of ACSME: a *distributed leadership* model (Sharma et.al, 2017) that fosters emerging leaders, *partnership* with science disciplines and the ACDS, and a *productive combination* of inquiry into teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). ACSME provides an important mechanism to lift educational practice for Australian university science educators. Its sustained contribution is needed now more than ever in a world facing artificial intelligence, social disruption, and the impact of climate change. Educators must band together to share good practice and enhance student learning. This paper charts the history of ACSME, weaving through the three threads to extract lessons learnt as stepping-stones to the future.

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