Transformative learning support models in higher education
educating the whole student
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Edited by
Margaret Weaver
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Contributors

**Pat Atkins** has been the Director of the Personalised Integrated Learning Support (PILS) Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the Open University (UK) since February 2005. She has a wide experience of supporting higher education students, particularly those studying at a distance. Her previous roles include working as an academic tutor, designing and delivering induction and study skills programmes, researching student retention and improving practice in the design and delivery of student information, advice and guidance. More recently she has focused on working with and developing colleagues who deliver student support in all its forms, to look for ways to enhance, capture and disseminate good practice in a large institution with several thousand teaching staff. She has a particular interest in helping colleagues develop and acquire expertise in online support of students, built on an early career in software development. Pat’s experience of working with systems has also influenced her holistic view of learning support, looking at ways to improve the integration of student’s developing skills, interests, motivations and confidence within their chosen academic discipline.

**Professor Peter Brophy** was Professor of Information Management at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) from April 1998 until August 2008. He founded the Centre for Research in Library & Information Management (CERLIM) at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) in 1993, moving with the Centre to MMU in 1998. At UCLAN he had, as well as directing CERLIM, been responsible for the University's library and IT services. Previously, he had held posts at Bristol and Teesside Polytechnics and Strathclyde and Lancaster Universities. Peter has extensive management, research, development and consultancy experience. He has directed a series of large European Commission funded research projects as well as a variety of studies in the UK. In 1998-99 he was the elected President of the UK Institute of Information Scientists. He is a Fellow and Honorary Fellow of the
Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He has published widely in the field, including numerous journal papers and four recent monographs, the first three for Facet Publishing: *The Academic Library* (2nd edition, 2005), *Measuring Library Performance* (2006), *The Library in the Twenty-first Century* (2nd edition, 2007) and *Narrative-based Practice* (2008). Currently Peter is Principal Consultant with LIMC Ltd. He can be contacted at office@limc.co.uk.

**Dr Scott C. Brown** has been active in higher education through leadership involvement in state associations and national conventions, publications, and presentations on a wide range of topics such as creating powerful learning environments, understanding complex issues of identity, and examining student affairs as a profession. He has served as the Convention Chair of the 2005 American College Personnel Association (ACPA) National Convention, editorial member of the Journal of College Student Development, and recipient of the Fulbright Seminar Grant (Germany), ACPA Annuit Coeptis and the ACPA Emerging Scholar awards. His research on student learning includes ‘Learning Across the Campus: how college facilitates the development of wisdom’, a theory detailing the process of how students integrate and what they learn in and out of class and on and off campus. He is currently developing the Wisdom Development Scale (WDS) with Jeffrey A. Greene. He played a significant role in the creation of ‘Powerful Partnerships: a shared responsibility for learning’, a collaborative project between ACPA, American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), to create synergy among all members of the academic community concerned with undergraduate education. Scott currently serves as Associate Vice President and Dean of Students at Colgate University.

**Dr Philip Cohen** was appointed Head of Library Services at Dublin Institute of Technology in 2004. Before that, he worked for more than 20 years in a variety of posts in various university libraries in the UK: Manchester Metropolitan (twice), Northumbria, Bournemouth and Liverpool. Philip has been involved with library design projects throughout his career. He is particularly interested in finding solutions to reconcile the competing space demands of different groups of library users.

**Dr Jen Harvey** is currently the Head of the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre (LTTC) of the Dublin Institute of Technology. The LTTC provides a range of academic development and support for staff involved in third level teaching including a suite of postgraduate programmes. Jen has been in this role from 2003;
prior to this she was the DIT Head of Distance Education. Before moving to Dublin she worked as an Implementation Consultant for the LTDI, a SHEFC-funded project based in ICBL (the Institute for Computer Based Learning), Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh. She is actively involved in both the Learning Spaces and Grangegorman Project Planning group, working towards the relocation of the Institute to a single-site campus. Her current research interests relate to the use of technology to support learning, student assessment strategies, practitioner-based evaluations and communities of practice.

Hannah Hough is the Head of Academic Services at the University of Cumbria, managing the resource collections of the Library and leading the information fluency skills agenda across the institution. Hannah has oversight of the Learning Gateway at the Fusehill Street Campus in Carlisle; a large technology-rich, flexible, learning environment with a specialist facilitation team for the development of user skills and experience. Hannah has a professional interest in embedding key skills into the curriculum, bridging the skills gaps that can emerge between all levels of study and the application of interactive online learning for the effective support of information skills. She also sits on the CILIP Information Literacy Group Committee as International Liaison Co-ordinator and Training Officer, co-ordinating national Continuing Professional Development workshops for Information Professionals and maintaining links with international contacts.

Professor Philippa Levy is Academic Director of CILASS, the Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences, and a member of the Department of Information Studies, at the University of Sheffield. She is also currently leading an institutional development project on the theme of ‘strengthening research-learning-teaching linkages’. Her research interests are in the areas of higher education pedagogy and learning support/development, including the educational roles of information professionals, and in the scholarship of learning and teaching. She has a special interest in the use of digital technologies in learning and teaching, including in design for learning. She recently led an evaluation project that focused on the role of the Learning Activity Management System in design for inquiry-based learning; this project, entitled DeSILA, was funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) of the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Through her role with CILASS she is taking forward a number of research projects exploring aspects of the student and staff experience of inquiry-based learning, and she has also become involved in the design of new learning spaces, including an ‘inquiry collaboratory’ that was selected by JISC in early 2007 as an exemplar of good prac-
tice. Philippa was awarded a University Senate Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2002, and jointly won a Fédération Internationale de Documentation ‘paper of the year’ award in 1995 on the subject of networked learner support.

Sara Marsh took up the post of Director of Learner Support Services at the University of Bradford in Summer 2007, assuming responsibility for a wide range of support services including Library, IT, Careers, Disability, Counselling, staff and student development, the Graduate School, and a range of educational development and teaching quality enhancement initiatives. Previously she was Deputy Director of Library and Information Services at Swansea University where she had worked since 1996. She was involved in a range of externally-funded projects including the ongoing development of the University’s South Wales Coalfield Collection and the establishment of the regional library collaboration group ATLIS. Sara has been an active contributor to the profession through CILIP and more recently in SCONUL through UK Libraries Plus and SCONUL Research Extra. Sara was a key member of the group that worked to unify these two external access schemes to create SCONUL Access. She was on the steering group for the HAERVI project looking at visitor access to e-resources in HE institutions, and also member of the INSPIRE steering group.

Lindsey Martin is the eLearning Strategy and Development Manager at Edge Hill University. She has an institution-wide remit to assist and support staff in faculties and services to implement flexible and distributed learning and e-learning. This role includes responsibility for managing the Learning Technology Unit within Learning Services and SOLSTICE, the HEFCE-funded Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning which has a focus on supported online learning. She was awarded an Edge Hill Learning and Teaching Fellowship in 2004. She won the Society of College National and University Libraries Staff Development Award in 2001 for an innovative approach to new staff induction and training using a virtual learning environment. In 2005, she led a ‘New Academic Team’ that achieved runner-up status in the Times Higher Education/Learning and Teaching Support Network’s eTutor of the Year Award for an online information skills module. Lindsey has researched and published in the fields of changing learner support roles, e-learning and cultural change, and information and digital literacies; she is currently interested in researching academic literacies and tutor and student experiences of online learning.
Glynis Platt began her career in academic libraries at the University of Hull where Philip Larkin was Librarian. She spent 13 years working in further education libraries as College Librarian before moving to the South West Manchester College of Nursing as Division Leader for Learning Resources. In 1996 the nursing college merged with the University of Manchester. Glynis became a subject specialist in modern languages at the John Rylands University Library but was also appointed as Widening Participation Co-ordinator, the first and only such post in a UK university library, co-ordinating outreach work with local schools and colleges including the access scheme for young people working closely with the University’s Widening Participation Team on activities like research projects and summer schools. She has given presentations and papers at several conferences on the subject of widening participation in university libraries. Professionally, she became a Chartered Librarian in 1977 and was President of the North Western Branch of The Library Association in 1999. She has served as Chair of the CoFHE (Colleges of Further and Higher Education) North West Circle for many years.

Dr Kent Porterfield has worked in higher education, specifically in the field of student affairs administration, for nearly twenty years. He has been actively involved in professional associations, having held various leadership positions at the state and national level. He has presented on a range of topics at state and national conferences, including student affairs leadership and administration, student learning/development, academic and student affairs partnerships, multiple identities and issues of inclusion, and professional development competencies. He has served as Professional Development Chair for the American College Personnel Association, President of the Missouri College Personnel Association and Co-Chair of the American College Personnel Task Force on Professional Certification. He has received state and national awards and recognition for his outstanding contributions to professional associations and the college student personnel field. Since 2006, he has served as Vice President for Student Development at Saint Louis University. Prior to this, he held four different positions at Northwest Missouri State University, including serving as Vice President for Student Affairs for more than eight years. He has degrees from the University of Missouri (EdD) and Northwest Missouri State University MS and BS). With his wife and two daughters, he resides in St Louis, Missouri.

Frank Rennie is Professor of Sustainable Rural Development at the UHI Millennium Institute in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and is the Head of Research and Post Graduate Development at Lews Castle College, UHI. He is the Course Leader
for the MSc in Managing Sustainable Rural Development at the UHI. His research interests lie in the general areas of rural and community development, especially in community-based approaches to integrated sustainable development. Recent work has been on new approaches to online education and distributed learning with rural communities and individuals, particularly open access and open content resources. He is an advisor to several government programmes and committees and is a Fellow of a number of learned societies. Frank has been involved in developing and delivering various combinations of distributed learning solutions (with a particular emphasis on networked solutions for rural areas) with colleges and university partners in Europe, Asia, Amazonia, Africa, and New Zealand. He has published a wide range of materials related to rural issues, including over 20 books, and is a regular keynote speaker at international conferences. For further details see www.lews.uhi.ac.uk/frennie.

Sue Roberts is University Librarian at Victoria University of Wellington. Prior to coming to New Zealand in early 2007, Sue was Dean of Learning Services at Edge Hill University in Lancashire (UK) and the Director of SOLSTICE, a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching with a focus on supported online learning. Sue has also researched and published in the fields of learner support roles and teams, leadership and management, continuing professional development, digital library development and e-learning, and is the co-author with Jennifer Rowley of Leadership: the challenge for the information profession (Facet Publishing, 2008).

Dr Craig D. Stephenson is Head of Student Development and Advisory Services at the University of Cumbria. Working across two continents, in seven higher education institutions, Craig has operated in both the academic and service arenas of higher education institutions, most recently at the University of Cumbria (UK). Awarded a PhD in the Social History of Medicine (University of Warwick, 1993), Craig went onto research and publish in his academic field before developing a professional interest in working with students beyond the classroom and embracing the ‘seamless learning’ agenda pioneered in the USA. Consequently, he read for a Masters in Student Personnel at the University of South Carolina (USA) and then moved to the University of California, San Diego, where he directed the International House and oversaw a range of programming initiatives that strengthened a students’ leadership, cultural competency and employability skills. Returning to the North of England in 2002, Craig assumed his current position at St Martin’s College (now the University of Cumbria). His University awarded him a Teaching Fellowship in 2008 for his leadership of complex change in student development services. He has
presented widely on the topic of seamless learning and has served as a guest lecturer for the Student Services Masters’ Course at the University of Huddersfield.

Jan Stewart is manager of Student Learning Support Services at Victoria University of Wellington. She has 17 years experience in tertiary teaching and learning particularly retention and transition issues and is currently looking to develop more collaborative models across the university to improve best practice in teaching and learning and student outcomes.

Les Watson runs his own educational consultancy providing advice to universities and colleges on aspects of student support, learning space and library development, and the strategic deployment of information technology. He worked recently as interim Director of Information Services at Royal Holloway University of London, developing new learning spaces, and is also currently an expert consultant to the Joint Information Systems Committee e-learning programme on Technology Enhanced Learning Environments. Prior to this consulting career he worked as a teacher, senior lecturer, Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor in a number of UK higher education institutions. He has a reputation as an inspirational speaker and has undertaken many presentations and workshops for a wide range of organizations including a lecture tour on ‘Places and Spaces for Learning’ organized by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in Australia. Les has authored papers on many subjects, including aspects of higher education for the European Parliament, contributed to a number of books on the use of IT in education, and was the author of *Multimedia in Schools: the transition from primary to secondary schools* for the Scientific and Technological Options Assessment Office of the European Parliament. He is particularly well known for his development of the Learning Café Real@Caledonian in 2001 and the Saltire Centre at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Margaret Weaver is Head of Learning and Information Services at the University of Cumbria (formerly St Martin’s College). She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Teaching Fellow of the University. At her current institution she is the strategic lead for the Learning Gateway, the University’s new flexible learning and teaching space and a Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Infokit case study exemplar. In 2005–6 she led the Change Academy team, a national programme for change managers sponsored by the UK Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation, working with others on an action plan to further implement flexible and distributed learning. At Huddersfield University, she was
the Project Director of the JISC INHALE (Information for Nursing and Health in a Learning Environment) Project, funded as part of the Distributed National Electronic Resource programme, and Academic Librarian for the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences. Her research interests are concerned with understanding staff perceptions of learning in higher education, and she has written various articles on enhancing practice to better support learning and teaching within a changing higher education setting.
This book is about learners (students), their supporters (professional service staff) and our expectations of each other in conceiving the true value of a higher education experience. It attempts to show how they are each being remodeled and utterly transformed through purposeful delivery of increasingly integrated learning support services.

It is a timely text – there is increasing recognition that the total learning environment impacts on educating and supporting individual attainment in HE. As such, it takes the student view – inside and outside the classroom, on and off campus, physically and virtually and across professional boundaries. With the realization that all staff and the students themselves have a role to play in supporting and enhancing learning comes a lessening of the traditional gap between students, academics and service staff. In this new world, silo working is a thing of the past as institutional responses become more strategic in relation to learning support.

This book confirms that students no longer take a linear approach to education: they dip in and out as their circumstances dictate, and technology is enabling new ways to support them as they blend home, work and education. Increasingly their expectations are that there will be flexibility and support embedded in their course and that it will be pervasive – seamless, in fact. Consequently institutions need to take a holistic approach to supporting student learning – and many have, as evidenced by the rich case studies presented herein.

While researching my PhD on learning support professionals’ beliefs about student learning, I became aware that in contrast to other educational research areas (e.g. learning styles or academic conceptions of learning), there has been little study of the impact of learning environments on student learning behaviours, and on support for learners. This was borne out by the fact that the literature is largely clustered around the ‘professions’ rather than on the holistic academic support needs of the student. However, on the ground, staff are working innovatively in complex
multiprofessional contexts for, and with, students – and this is a global phenomenon.

This book brings those perspectives together for the first time, allowing personal stories from several countries to surface through narrative and through a sharing of the intimate experiences of leaders and practitioners in the field. Their voices transcend the interfaces between structure and context, providing a new frame of reference for our work in higher education. What is striking about the varied contributions, from the UK and abroad, is their unequivocal passion for students and how the transferability of the concepts, seemingly in diverse organizations, indicates a coherence between the professions previously undocumented.

These ‘conversations’ are not unique in themselves. I believe that they are happening in a great many universities, colleges, schools, workplaces and homes, in some cases virtually, at various stages of the student journey.

The chapters in this book have been carefully developed to illustrate key dimensions required for supporting students today and in the future, and also present a fresh approach to learning support. Further, it is hoped that these contributions will inspire, inform and raise the profile of learning support in higher education with informed practice at its heart.

In considering the situated nature of learning support, the work is firmly located at grass-roots level, at the nexus between the professions, to illustrate the synergies between cases. Consequently the chapters are deliberately varied and eclectic, uncovering the insights that are gained by coverage of a wide spectrum of experience among librarians, student affairs professionals, IT and learning technologists, educators and researchers. The cases are distinctive in their own right but each has elements of a new community of professional practice in a global context. The latter is concerned with integration, with extended dialogue with peers and students and with close alignment of pedagogy across the spectrum of learning support. The interplay of these perspectives means that the language and terminology used are challenging at times. It is hoped that you will persevere and consider the implications of the chapters and their applicability to your own situation as a way to see a different future, to build on your own repertoire of reflections on practice supporting student learning.

The book is divided into three parts, each providing a thematic framework concerned with a contemporary perspective on modern learning support practice. Every author is a leader and thinker in their own institution and in their field. The chapters can be read in any order, but there is a logic to their organization.

Part 1 discusses high-level government strategy and policy in England and New Zealand as a backdrop for the book. Subsequent chapters consider the changing
characteristics of our students and what shapes their experience, including a case study of a holistic university – one that employs pan-university collaborative approaches. This is followed by practical demonstrations of the opportunities and challenges involved in bringing about organizational redesign and redirection of resources while maximizing strategic investment to better support the 21st-century student. An Anglo-American perspective is contrasted with a British university approach. In all cases, alignment with academic practice and mission is considered and the advantages for students, academic staff and learner support professionals in working together are explained. Outcomes have certainly influenced new services at these institutions and affected complex cultural change informed by the changing profile of learners.

Part 2 is concerned with the design and practice of learning support services in shaping the learning environment. First, two exemplars of learning space design are presented, which have influenced institutional views of learning support and changed how services are being delivered, with positive effects on learners (in England and Ireland). The role of learners and their supporters in the planning and implementation of space yields unique insights into the pedagogy of the built environment, leading to the creation of a toolkit that can be used for planning new age campuses; a profile of active facilitative practice and possible future enhancements to an existing flexible learning space are disclosed. Next are two contributions on learner support practices across distributed institutions and networks, focusing on online media and their relation to physical environments, using examples in Scotland and a pan-European summary of projects that are influencing libraries in Europe. The latter reveals that to enhance the connectedness between the UK and Europe requires some exposure to a wider range of practitioner groups. How much greater then would be the join-up be across academic and public sectors at the policy and strategy level? Professor Brophy’s insightful exposition begins this process, successfully highlighting the massive shift that is taking place across Europe and offering a glimpse of the future for our increasingly digital libraries and learning resources services. In this context student learning support has yet to be fully understood – suggesting a potentially rich area for future research. A case study on the widening participation initiatives of a British research-intensive university completes the broad perspective on learning support, and the way that the library has hugely developed its role in assisting student progression is revealed and is perhaps unexpected.

Part 3 is about truly integrative practice examined through the lens of multiprofessional teams and through a reflective review of the composition of their skills portfolio and how they work together. The voices of the various professions are strong here, and linked to the view of the modern student is a case study on a staff
development initiative that united staff in their support of online learning (in England). There is a powerful essay taking the American perspective on personal effectiveness, with practical suggestions about how to maximize your influence – working strategically and intentionally – to increase your standing and gain personal agency. This is a difficult subject expertly presented – in effect a toolkit that is transferable to any academic institution. Finally, the book concludes with two chapters on research-informed practice and how relationships between the affective and cognitive are becoming better understood and acknowledged and are transforming our thinking about the orality of learning and its diffusion. The work of three Centres of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CETLs) provides a focus for this part of the book, which outlines a range of problem-based learning approaches taken by practitioners and students.

Throughout the book connections are made between the literature, professional practice and ongoing research to inform future developments and draw out the implications for services, institutions and individuals wishing to remain at the forefront of the student development agenda.

A number of core concepts emerge:

- The global learning support culture in the Western world is becoming established and increasingly homogenous as students take more control of their learning.
- Learning is complex, and our thinking on support must be sophisticated yet sufficiently simple in practice for maximum engagement.
- Partnership and collaboration is being extended across professional boundaries for the good of students and ourselves.
- The ‘experience’ matters more than it used to, and emotion in learning will transform higher education significantly in the future, with implications for the support of learning.
- We need to shift our thinking further to empathize more deeply with students; further research is needed into the conceptions of learning that staff hold in order to enhance learning support.
- Technology is important and accepted.
- Personal skills are an intangible yet very significant area: the behaviours we exhibit through our professional judgment and commitment are more important than ever.
- We need to strategize learning support even further so that the full range of professional expertise is focused on what learners need (not what we think they need).
• We need new ways to measure the impact of learning support services and student expectations, beyond the mechanistic, focusing on the experience and using rigorous qualitative methods.

Gathering such expert opinion together has indeed been a positive experience for me as editor, and an opportunity to engage with a wide variety of new thinking. I have learned a great deal about consensus in our support professions, their similarities and their differences (but more about their similarities), and I am full of admiration for the vitality that is present in each and every case study. Diversity is of course also present in our students, so it is only appropriate that we utilize this in our work to transform our own potential for growth and to understand more fully the complex and rewarding nature of learning support.

Finally, we should listen to the voices in this book, through the case study presenters, their thoughts, feelings and actions, and reflect on the soft skills that underpin them – in fact, the new skills needed that we all possess, sharing the traditions of our respective expertise. I have no doubt that new roles will emerge and become the next generation of learning support. Strategic and pragmatic approaches to learning support are required in this increasingly distributed, cross-cultural educational environment. This book cannot cover all elements, but I hope you will enjoy reading it and take what you need from it to develop your thinking and your practice – once read, there’s no going back!

Margaret Weaver

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