

Industry partnerships help deliver successful outcomes

Collaboration has been the key to delivering successful outcomes in science education. The Science Teachers' Association of Western Australia (STAWA) has worked with PICSE at the University of Western Australia (UWA) for a number of years to mutually support each other's goals.

This year, collaboration focused on PICSE's week-long activities in the Great Southern region. With STAWA's support, UWA Science Education Officer Belinda Pope visited five Albany schools.

Belinda not only outlined career options in primary industries to 160 Year 11 and 12 students, but conducted the Science Investigation Awards (SIAs) with 250 Year 8, 9 and 10 students.

Students who participated in the SIAs also have the chance to enter STAWA's Science Talent Search, offering another arena to further hone their science skills.

"Our students enjoyed the exposure to careers in biological science," Dave Cooper, Head of Science at North Albany Senior High School, said. "At the end of the day, they discussed their



John Clarke, CEO STAWA, and Belinda Pope, PICSE SEO, with SIA students in Albany

plans for next year's competition and this year's STAWA Science Talent Search."

STAWA CEO John Clarke also attended the SIAs and spoke with teachers and researchers, linking PICSE's industry contacts with science teachers from around the State.

Following the SIAs, STAWA hosted a Sundowner for PICSE's local teachers and industry partners.

"The opportunity to engage with other professionals in science education and discuss different approaches was a highlight," Geoff Bunn, Head of Science at Denmark Senior High School, said.



..... From the Director

PICSE Alumnus canvassed at Board meeting

The University of Western Australia (UWA) hosted the second PICSE National Advisory Board (NAB) meeting in early September and considered a range of new program and strategic implications stemming from the Think Tank presentations and discussions. One of these new directions considered was the development of a PICSE Alumnus.

At the Think Tank in June, the strongest collective message from the PICSE students was to "maintain engagement". These young people wished to maintain the PICSE industry linkages and build a vibrant national student network while at university. This can be interpreted in many ways, but on closer examination, it refers to a formal and structured Alumnus.

This makes a lot of sense. After all, it was the PICSE intervention during Years 11/12 of real, practical and cutting edge applications of science that triggered the attitudinal change in students, which resulted in new study and career directions.

PICSE's industry partners played a critical role during the Industry Placement Scholarship and could develop this role during the tertiary



The PICSE National Advisory Board at UWA. Visit www.picse.net for membership details.

journey of the student and into professional employment.

The development of a PICSE Alumnus would build a formal industry engagement with students, as well as formalise the current mentoring and support role undertaken by some PICSE students.

An important outcome of the Think Tank will be to build a national community of enthusiastic university students and young science professionals - a PICSE Alumnus.

Associate Professor David Russell



PICSE looks to the future

One of the outcomes of the second PICSE National Advisory Board, informed by the Think Tank, was to develop new partners, use new technology and build further interest for PICSE.

The contribution of primary industry partners to the PICSE program is paramount. It's their collective commercial application and ongoing research that makes the science real, relevant and attractive to students. It also provides the stimulus for teachers to support the delivery of the science curriculum. A key message from a cross section of Think Tank participants was to develop new partnerships.

Our primary and middle school engagement is based on the PICSE Science Investigation Awards (SIAs) where Science Education Officers (SEOs) spend time in classrooms assisting students plan and complete an open-ended scientific investigation.

The success of this program is based on the quality of the interaction of PICSE SEOs with students and teachers. Despite the high demand nationally for the SIAs, the reach of this program is limited by the physical number of schools capable of being visited each year.

PICSE is collaborating with a national agribusiness partner to develop an innovative, cost effective electronic version of the SIAs that will ultimately have a truly national reach. Using a web-based platform, schools outside our current reach will be able to access a SIA



Science teachers attending a PICSE Professional Development course.

style program to support investigations in classrooms. This will provide more equity of support to teachers in non-PICSE areas.

PICSE has enjoyed strong support from science teachers. Stemming from discussions at the Think Tank, PICSE and the Australian Science Teachers Association (ASTA) will formalise this existing relationship with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

This new partnership will highlight synergies between the two organisations and describe several planned new projects that will further enhance our relationship and benefit ASTA members and PICSE stakeholders.

Raising community literacy regarding sustainable production, food quality, environmental stewardship and rewarding careers remains a pressing issue for governments, the research community and primary industries. This message was consistently referred to at the Think Tank.

PICSE and other partners will join forces to scope the viability of producing a one-off magazine which will showcase the role that science plays in building food and water security for Australia. The publication will highlight:

- The sophisticated bio-science that drives innovation and positions Australian agriculture at the forefront of technology development and adoption;
- Influence broader community understanding of Australia as a world leader in science, agricultural technology and innovation; and
- Promote the exciting science-based career options available in primary industries.

The 2012 Australian Year of the Farmer presents a unique opportunity to raise the rural sector's profile and promote science careers in agriculture. The joint campaign will recognise the importance of human capacity to securing Australia's food and water future. PICSE will draw on its extensive partner base to inform and secure the viability for this exciting opportunity.

This is indeed an exciting time for PICSE.

Vic Dobos



Jonty from NW Tasmania whose project was awarded "Best Investigation Year 7/8" at the UTAS SIAs