

An update from the
**Vice-Chancellor
and President**

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY



Tuesday 28 April, 2020

Dear colleagues

It is over one month since we transitioned to online delivery and working from home arrangements. These are extraordinary times which have required us to think differently about how we work, both now and into the future. I have been incredibly impressed with everyone's response at this time of change, including your continued support of our students who are also adjusting to this new mode of learning. As we continue to manage this very uncertain landscape and you deal with the challenges at home as well as with work, I would like to sincerely thank you for all that you are doing. I know life isn't easy right now, but I feel confident that together we can adapt and plan effectively for the future.

Supporting our students

It is important to support our students who are suffering financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. We have already established a financial assistance scheme for domestic and international students and hundreds of applications are being processed. Because this hardship is likely to continue for the remainder of the year, many students may still struggle to continue their studies without ongoing support. A special student support fund has therefore been established through our [Federation University Australia Foundation](#). The executive team have agreed to take a 10 per cent pay cut which will be donated to this fund. Other senior staff are encouraged to donate 5 per cent of their pay to this scheme and I hope that everyone else will also consider [making a donation](#) to help support our students.

Future opportunities

During this rapid period of change it is important that we look beyond our current circumstances and seek new opportunities. I encourage you to offer your ideas and thoughts as we look to the future. Developments that we have been considering for some time are already a reality. Just one month ago, our PVC Teaching Quality and Innovation was developing an online teaching and learning strategy. Given the unanticipated progress with online delivery since then, we can now accelerate the strategy to focus on a range of new digital growth/partnership opportunities. Another

area is micro-credentialing. The Federal Government has identified funding for short courses such as nursing, teaching, health, IT and science as part of the higher education assistance package. This is an early opportunity to fast track our efforts with micro-credentialing and the Schools have identified a range of short courses which the university can offer this year.

Thankfully, our program review last year identified several important new courses in Allied Health, Engineering, Business and Social Sciences that are highly relevant to our communities and industry, and will continue to be rolled out as planned.

There are also opportunities for us to build new industry and community partnerships to assist in the recovery process. The Federation Business School has already taken a lead in this through their partnership with Commerce Ballarat which has developed the *Connect, Evolve, Recover* series of online events designed to support local industry throughout the pandemic.

Support for staff

Now, more than ever, we want to ensure that you feel supported and so we will be launching a new COVID-19 VOICE survey of all staff that is focused on the health and wellbeing of our workforce during the pandemic. Our Human Resources team will provide more information on both the survey and FedFlex program this week.

VC staff forums

I will be able to answer your questions and speak in more detail about these matters in a series of virtual VC staff forums that will be held next week via Microsoft Teams. You will be sent a diary invitation this week. You need to accept this invitation to ensure you can join the forum for the campus at which you are normally located. I encourage you to send any questions you have in advance to feedback@federation.edu.au.

Again, I thank you for everything you are doing to support the university and its students during this difficult time. What we have been able to achieve in a relatively short time frame has been truly remarkable. I ask for your understanding and cooperation as we continue to navigate uncertainty and make decisions that will lead to the best outcomes for our staff, students and wider communities.

Best regards

Helen