

Transcript

Impact on Indigenous students with Professor Leanne Holt

SONAL SINGH: I would like to invite Leanne Holt. Leanne is the DVC Indigenous at UNSW. For Leanne, the key question that we had was... You have looked at the presentation from everybody, and you have read the report as well. Do you think that the recommendations in the accord and further advantage or disadvantage Indigenous students? And what you think will be the greatest challenge for university to implement the priorities of the accord?

LEANNE HOLT: Thank you. I believe the recommendations will in vantage-- advantage Indigenous students if they are implemented effectively. I've heard a few comments in the last couple of weeks that there is nothing unexpected in the accord report, which initially I thought in my first read.

However, as I read through the full report, it has eliminated-- lined out many opportunities to transform how we see and feel higher education. The creativity and impact of the outcomes will be in the implementation, and how we articulate the recommendations into our reality.

To some extent I think we need to lose our corporate memory of the traditional structures and assumptions that have driven the cultures of universities, and be bold and courageous in reimagining the future culture which is aligned to our contemporary diverse communities, that haven't had the privilege of being in the crowd, and provide the opportunity of a higher education that positions them to strengthen their family legacy.

I think we come from a country that has the oldest living culture in the world. It experienced the worst health, economic and social outcomes of any population in the country. Investing in the people that have sustained the environments of this country or thousands of years is a sound investment.

And as the accord rightly highlights, makes a valuable and significant contribution to the sector and our global intellectual capacity. I think the accord reinforces that universities need to provide safe and empowering environments that are conducive to the success of First Nations students.

That First Nations Australians should be at the heart of the higher education system. And in the full report, First Nations as mentioned 299 times in the 358, or 408, I've lost 10 pages, highlighting potentials and oppositions-- opportunities for funding opportunities for First Nations people. And therefore the impact went to the skills, attitudes and values of broader societies.

It promotes-- proposes that this is achieved through First Nations student participation and success, leadership, representation, and self-determination. And with a couple of people who have talked

about ATEC already, I think it could provide a wonderful opportunity to bring important stakeholders together. And I think it actually response to quite a few of the Q&As that people have put in today. And the questions that they have asked. How will we do this? How will this be achieved?

I think ATEC will answer a lot of those questions, should be in fermented-- implemented appropriately. I think it can be innovative and assist much-needed cultural change at universities, towards self-determination for First Nations people through education and research.

I think entering First Nations Voice as truly representing the needs of our students and communities, will be key to achieving impactful outcomes, along with the recommended First Nations Commissioner and Counsel which is also being discussed.

Increasing the opportunities for lifelong learning through greater connections. I know that Nathan and Sharon have put this, particularly around cross pathways between TAFE and university, and not just one way.

I think adding to this the other opportunities that connections with TAFE can provide, like we know that a lot of our First Nations students, their highest altercation certificate 3-- qualification is certificate 3. How do we adopt lifelong learning as a structure that can bring students through to diplomas, and articulating through to university and beyond, undergraduate and beyond?

Adding to this possibility is a connection to universities with industry, which can result in real opportunities for our students to decrease their financial burdens through paid internships and create professional networks and experiences, is priceless. Although First Nations tunes are more likely to get a job straight out of university than nonindigenous students, their career progression is much lower.

So what can we do through the student journey that can counteract this? The opportunity for First Nations students to access Commonwealth funding while studying part-time will make a significant difference to a community of skins that are more likely to study part-time, based upon financial burdens, extended family and community response ability, and navigating a university landscape for the first time in their family history.

The report recommends opportunities to ensure students success is equally valued, and providing every opportunity to ensure First Nations tunes will succeed academically, professionally, economically, culturally and emotionally, it's crucial. Not just through an ordinary student experience, but through extraordinary experience.

The challenge will be in the investment by government, universities themselves, not just financially although it has been discussed that the funding model needs to be prioritised.

The biggest challenge is being able to reconceptualise the future of higher education, and understanding what it means for First Nations Australia is to be at the heart of the University. The success of the recommendations will be based on understanding how truly listening to the needs of First Nations people, and leadership having a voice that contributes effectively to decision-making, relative to both implementation, and as someone else said in the Q&A or the chat, building on the outcomes into the future.

If the implementation is one thing, how do we sustain that growth? And including respect full and reciprocal relationships at the highest level of government and university, but mostly for our First Nations community to see and understand that universities are replaced that they can belong, and that they can try.-- Ari place, and they can thrive.

12 years after the Barrett review, we are keen for this to happen. But not to hold up the current recommendations being actioned, and not duplicating the review. However to contribute to reimagining the future of higher education, and what does it mean to put First Nations Australia is at the centre of higher education systems? What role do universities play in the future were First Nations people are healthy, economically and culturally strong?

I believe the accord report provides the opportunity to do this, and to make this happen. But it has to happen now, and it is up to all of us, the sector, to capture the essence of the recommendations, advocate the government just how important it is for the positive future of our nation, and to ignite powerful conversations within our universities that demonstrate that time is now for change. Thanks.

SONAL SINGH: Here, here well said. I think because for all of us to be bold, courageous, and typical-- push on with the work we need to do.