Protecting Small Surveying Programs

Craig Roberts (Australia)

Key words: Curricula; Education; Professional practice; Risk management; Advocacy

SUMMARY

Globally, tertiary programs offering surveying and geospatial qualifications are under threat. Whilst the tertiary landscape may differ in many countries, fundamentally the importance of surveyors to a functioning society is universal.

In the last three decades in Australia, the decline in commonwealth government funding has forced universities to search for revenue elsewhere firstly through student fees for local undergraduate students but more lucratively for higher fees from international students. Concurrently, the rise of university rankings in the early 2000s, to distinguish status, has supercharged fees for international students and become a significant source of revenue for Australian universities. Education has become a commodity.

In this new world of commodified education, small programs are vulnerable to university administrations looking to rationalise their course offerings. Heads of surveying programs, which are often small, must therefore advocate to protect their discipline.

This presentation will use the BE(Surveying) program at UNSW Sydney, Australia as a case study to present strategies to assert the importance of small surveying programs and to hopefully avoid regrettable decisions by university administrators.

Receptiveness to structural change, course delivery, relationships with the target profession that graduates will supply, developing talking points highlighting the value of a program to the wider community and communication within the university and beyond are all conferred.

It is argued that surveying program heads are best placed to advocate for the protection of their

program and must take a leadership role. This presentation is aimed at members of the FIG Commission 2 to offer some insight and strategies to support this advocacy.