Forging partnerships and reimaging approaches for teaching, learning and support

Forging partnerships across the university with a vision to improve retention, progression and completion rates can be a daunting task, given the silos we built around our work. The 2007 work by Scott et al provided overwhelming evidence for the need to focus on how to improve 'the rates' and avoid wastage in its various forms, including the wastage of talent and resources. Numerous projects on improving teaching and learning, curriculum renewal, curriculum responsiveness, the extended curriculum and recently the decolonisation of the curriculum have been undertaken. Tinto's (2012) student success 'movement', Kuh's (2003) student engagement 'wave' and 'the Achieving the dream' focus on student success are among some of the influencers on the design of interventions to improve 'the rates' in higher education. Advances in technology have also brought about several waves of interventions. Throughout all these efforts, an ongoing observation reveals that some of the persisting and pervasive factors that undermine progress include the siloed approaches across the various structures in universities. With the advanced information management systems that are available we tend to strengthen and fortify information silos instead of breaking them. Case studies on learning analytics tend to focus on the learning management system (LMS) activity and a few other pieces of data perceived as 'academic', to build 'a true picture of student engagement' (Linden, Hicks and Teakel, 2022). It is questionable how true a picture this will be when the focus is only on the 'academic'. A recent report from the Chronicle of Higher Education (2022) argues that "(A)s more colleges seek to raise graduation and retention rates, it has become clear that to make meaningful strides in student success, they must look at the whole student." The notion of looking at 'the whole student' provides a critique of the 'single-axis framework' that dominates a lot of these student success interventions and the siloed approaches that accompany them.

The presentation will reflect on current attempts to redesign and reimagine programmes for the First Year Experience (FYX) and the Postgraduate Experience (PGX).