



**Dr Sarah O'Shea: University of Wollongong, Australia**

*Australian first-in-family learners*

This presentation draws upon various research studies conducted with Australian first-in-family learners studying in both on-campus and online modes. Using in-depth surveys and narrative biographical interviews, the study encouraged learners and their families to deeply reflect upon higher education participation both individually and collectively. Within Australia, statistics indicate that this cohort is a growing student population but have a greater risk of attrition. In recognition of this, this project sought to deeply examine the experiences of moving into the higher education environment in order to explore approaches to engaging and retaining this cohort. This presentation will focus on the following broad areas:

- First-in-family learners' expectations about higher education environments
- The ways in which HE participation was translated and understood by family members
- Strategies employed by first in family students to navigate the university environment, particularly given the lack of a 'knowledgeable other' within the family.

The workshop also aims to open up 'collegial conversations' with participants in order to explore how this study's findings reflect UK institutional contexts and responses to student diversity. Participants are invited to provide details of strategies designed to connect with the families and community of first in family learners that they are familiar with or are involved in.

**Dr Margaret Henley: University of Auckland, New Zealand**

*First in Family students and the First Year Experience*

Margaret Henley is the academic Director of the First Year Experience (FYE) Programme, Faculty of Arts University of Auckland and has just completed a 5 year term as Associate Dean Equity within the faculty. She is engaged in admission, retention and completion strategies for Maori and Pasifika students, students with disabilities, those from low SES and refugee backgrounds and wider issues governing staff and student equity. As the founder and director of the FYE programme she has developed teaching and learning strategies for all first year students as well as specific programmes for Maori and Pacific students, first in family, students returning from suspension and mature students. She has conducted longitudinal studies of undergraduate student experience, presented



conference papers and published on aspects of teaching and learning and FYE initiatives to enhance student success in their first year of tertiary study.

**Sam Broadhead: Leeds College of Art**

*Studio practice and first in family students*

The impact of what Basil Bernstein called visible and invisible pedagogies on 'first in family' art and design higher education students, is explored. Comments from students who have working-class backgrounds and are studying on an art and design degree are analysed using Bernstein's concepts. It is argued that art and design education uses a 'signature pedagogy' known as studio practice which privileges certain groups of students above others. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, students require confidence in different modes verbal and written communication in order to flourish in the studio. Secondly, tutors engage in surveillance within the studio space and this can lead to them sometimes misreading the behaviour of 'non-traditional' students. Finally students coming to art and design education without previous exposure to its signature pedagogy can become confused and frustrated whilst at the same time not understanding the significance of studio space and time. Those students who have been able to develop the linguistic skills within the family and may have had parents or siblings who have previously received an art and design education are more able to thrive within the art school and particularly learn well within a studio context. Interventions designed by the art schools to prepare 'first in family' students for learning in art and design higher education are evaluated.

**Professor Jacqueline Stevenson: Sheffield Institute of Education**

*Rethinking 'first in family': using community cultural wealth as a route to student success*

Access and participation rates are highly inequitable for certain groups of students in UK higher education, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds, students from particular ethnic groups, mature learners and first in family (FiF) students - who may, of course, be representative of all those other groups. The concept of FiF has, historically, been used as a binary divide to think about ways of supporting students, with those who are not FiF assumed to have the requisite social and cultural capital, academic skills and financial resources needed to be successful in HE, and those who are FiF, in general, assumed to be lacking them. Such approaches are problematic on two levels: first, they treat FiF students as a homogenous group when they are not; and second, institutional interventions invariably focus on rectifying these students' social and academic 'deficits'. In this



presentation I will draw on research with a range of FiF students (mature and young, from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds) to explore how reconceptualising FiF students as bringing with them extensive community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) can help rethink approaches to student retention and success.