The Hefei Statement: 
What characterises a contemporary research university?

by Les Rymer
Policy Advisor, Graduate Education

A meeting of four of the world’s leading associations of research universities led on 10 October 2013 to the release of a joint statement which identifies the ten characteristics of contemporary research universities. These characteristics are the set of values, principles and operational features that together define a research university and which provide the necessary foundation for the important contributions research universities make to economic, social and cultural development.

In presenting these characteristics, the statement provides a framework for future cooperation between the universities but it also presents the case for continuing government support in forms which enhance and build on these essential attributes. The statement text also includes an explanation of why the associations felt that they need at this time to provide a clear articulation of what makes a research university, what they stand for and what they aspire to achieve.

The current signatories to the Hefei statement are:

- The Association of American Universities (AAU)
- The League of European Research Universities (LERU)
- The Consortium of China 9 Research Universities (C9)
- The Group of Eight Australia (Go8)

In total the members of these associations include nearly 100 of the world’s best, most prominent and most highly respected research universities in the US, Europe, Canada and Australia; and the four associations are now seeking to enlist the HK3, the Russell Group, Canada U15, and IARU as additional signatories to the statement. They will also enable other institutions to associate themselves as supporters of the statement and of the fundamental importance of the characteristics it identifies.

Each of the current signatories is sharing the statement documentation on the characteristics/indicators of research universities with all of its member universities and seeking their wide distribution within each university.

The signatory associations have also agreed that they will endeavour to arrange a meeting between themselves and the Global Research Council at its 2014 meeting in Beijing, to consider (a) open access to research publications, and (b) researcher career paths. In addition, they will continue to exchange information about group positions on issues of common interest.

To see the Hefei Statement, please click here.
Outcomes from the 2013 Australia-China Young Researchers Exchange Program (YREP)

by Martin Grabert
Director, International and Business Relations

YREP is an exchange scheme for young to mid-career Australian and Chinese researchers. In 2013 the program supported the exchange between the two countries of 16 Chinese participants and 16 Australian participants.

This program is a joint initiative funded by the former Australian Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). It is supported by the Australia-China Science and Research Fund. In Australia the program is managed by the Group of Eight (Go8) office. The Chinese managing institution is the China Science and Technology Exchange Center (CSTEC).

The Australia-China YREP aims to:

- Facilitate future long-term science and research collaboration between Australia and China by bringing together future research leaders from both countries in order to foster long-term relationships; and
- Develop early and mid-career Australian and Chinese researchers by increasing their understanding of the cultures and, particularly, the science and research practices and systems of the two countries, and developing their leadership skills as future “science ambassadors” for Australia and China.

This year, the Chinese delegation visited Australian Universities in the period from 24 June to 6 July. According to the participants, the exchange opened many new doors and enabled them to make new friends. Many a multitude of new ideas for joint research collaborations were born.

Let me briefly report from the debriefing session of the Chinese delegation in Sydney. Due to the limited space I can only report on two particular experiences – but they were all fascinating.

A/Prof Xueqian GUO, from the Biomedical Engineering School, Capital Medical University, Deputy Director Dr Bei TIAN from the Beijing Tongren Hospital, and Dr Shuangyun SHAO from the Beijing Jiaotong University, formed an interdisciplinary ‘eye-team’ looking at new ways of retina imaging. Dr Tian has a reputation as an experienced eye surgeon and Dr Shao has a track record in photoelectric sensors and signal processing.

Together, they travelled and developed many interdisciplinary ideas from their respective fields in clinical and bio-medical retina research, photo-electrical and information engineering with their Australian counterparts.

Their comments were clear: this kind of exploratory visits forms the foundation for progress in treatment of serious eye injuries and diseases. They agreed on several joint PhD programs and are optimistic they will continue the exchanges with their colleagues at the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne.

The two colleagues from the Beijing Institute Technology A/Prof Dr Daobin MU and A/Prof Dr Quian SONG are experts in electrical vehicle battery layout. They visited a number of institutes and will work together with colleagues from Swinburne University to develop an electrical F1 racing car. The project may take some years but the idea was born and, together with their colleagues from several Australian Universities, they are confident they will achieve this joint objective.

A/Prof Fei HAN from the North China University of Technology, focusing on automotive lightweight technologies, visited, amongst others, the Monash Manufacturing Centre and Bluescope Steel Ltd Company. He reached agreements on co-supervising an exchange of research students. A substantial
research project with Bluescope Steel Ltd was put on track and the relationship was strengthened by this visit.

Meanwhile, the Australian group went on their visit from 1 to 14 September 2013. Again, only a few outcomes can be reported here.

All Australian YREP participants were impressed by the cutting edge research and the state-of-the-art equipment at their host institutions.

Dr Luke Connal, Senior Lecturer at the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, University of Melbourne, had intensive discussions at Peking University and offered to analyse materials to perform some super-high resolution microscopy. This will be done at the University of Melbourne because the needed specialized equipment is not available in Beijing. Results could provide Dr Connal's counterparts new insights into their materials. This will certainly open up a door for another fruitful collaboration.

According to Dr Connal, “In 2014 Melbourne University will host, subject to funding, the second China-Australia polymer conference, with myself and Prof Greg Qiao (Melbourne University) to host a number of guests.”

“International collaboration in the field of satellite navigation is vital.” Dr. Suelynn Choy, lecturer at the School of Mathematical and Geospatial Sciences, RMIT, found the Chinese system BeiDou maturing into a functional regional satellite navigation system. It is planned to be fully operational by 2020.

The integration of BeiDou with current satellite navigation systems such as the American GPS is exciting as it has the potential to improve reliability and performance. Although funding for actual research with BeiDou is presently limited (most funding is currently directed towards special applications and purposes), it is envisaged that additional research funding will become available in the very near future to promote the utilisation and uptake of the system by civilian users. This might become an exciting field for cooperation.

Dr Andrew Fischer, Lecturer at the University of Tasmania – Australian Maritime College, also participated in a discussion between a Canadian delegation and Tongji University regarding the installation of a cabled ocean observing system in the East China Sea.

Dr. Fischer reports, “At East China Normal University I gave a presentation and participated in a round table discussion regarding collaborative opportunities. Throughout my visit I have formally developed collaborative research to continue in the future. At Tongji University we immediately began working on a manuscript regarding remote sensing of phytoplankton in the Southern Ocean. The research had been conducted, but we worked together to define the outcomes and improve the manuscript. We developed plans to coordinate with the Australian Maritime College to bring an autonomous underwater vehicle to the East China Sea to study coastal ocean processes and algal bloom development. Plans for this activity are currently being developed.”

Dr Fischer also took the opportunity to invite his host, Prof Huiping Xu, to visit the University of Tasmania. A joint project will apply a 3D estuarine hydrodynamic model to understand estuarine processes in the Tamar estuary (Tasmania). This will result in a joint publication between the Australian Maritime College and the East China Normal University.

The potential collaboration opportunities in the near future include student and staff exchanges with the support of the China-Council scholarship program, joint publications and joint research projects. Many agreements to develop a collaborative research proposal to apply for NSFC grants can be mentioned as a direct result of the YREP visits.

For most of the Australian YREPs this was their first visit to China and they described the experience as invaluable. The two weeks have helped enhance their understanding of Chinese culture, the structure and dynamics of Chinese professionals and social practices. Such experience is only possible through travelling and face-to-face meetings.

One suggestion for further improvement was to provide more information to the Australian Researcher on the opportunity of joint funding available for application in China.

All YREP participants deplored the short deadlines to establish contacts and plan their visits and would like to see more flexibility on both sides in this respect. There were suggestions made by the Chinese delegation to establish a dedicated fund to support YREP follow-up projects for three years. The results of this program should be evaluated by a joint committee.

The participants expressed their appreciation to the Australian and Chinese governments for making this exchange possible. The Group of Eight secretariat is grateful to be implementing this successful program.
When in 2009 the Go8 and the French embassy started discussing an internship program, nobody could have anticipated its spectacular success. The FCEP program promotes cross-cultural understanding between France and Australia. It enables Go8 students to work in French business environments and it enables French companies to develop a better understanding of education at Go8 universities.

The revised 2014 FCEP program was launched in Melbourne on 26 September 2013 with a ceremony at the Alliance Française. The French Ambassador HE Stephane Romatet highlighted the opportunities of the program to deepen the Australian-French business relations. This was confirmed by Bruno Gutton from the French Australian Chamber of Commerce stating that French companies will continue to invest in Australia, and to recruit their leading staff locally.

The FCEP contributes brilliantly to this objective by identifying the best candidates at an early stage and building the necessary trust during the internship in France. Prof Peter Coaldrake, ATN Chair, highlighted the importance of improving the industry-university interactions through programs like this. The ATN is the second university group partnering in the FCEP.

Meanwhile, at my turn to speak, I pointed out how this program widens the opportunity to strengthen the work experience in a broad university education (Law, Finance, Business Management, Commerce, Engineering, International Relations etc.). The excellent and widespread collaboration in research between Go8 universities and industry provides a solid basis for more internship programs.

The opportunities offered by the FCEP are generous, thanks to the exceptional engagement of the partner companies. In mutual interest, companies and students will benefit greatly from this program.

For details on the FCEP, please click here.
Reducing the risk, and costs, of fraud

Associate Professor Clinton Free

The University of New South Wales
Future Fellow 2011
Field of Research: Accounting, Auditing and Accountability
Project Title: The ties that bind: fraudulent groups, collective action and fraud risk

While estimates of the cost of fraud are laden with under-reporting and measurement issues, it is clear that fraud imposes a large economic cost on Australian organisations and society.

ARC Future Fellow, Associate Professor Clinton Free, is researching the most effective controls and risk management approaches for addressing fraud risk and the impact of group membership and collective action on the commission of fraud.

“This research project will involve a multi-method approach including the use of surveys, industry-based focus groups, interviews and indepth qualitative fieldwork in both Australia and North America,” says Professor Free. This includes interviews with convicted fraud perpetrators to examine the opportunities, motivations and rationalisations of groups engaged in fraud.

“The most recent Australian Institute of Criminology study of the cost of crime estimates that the cost of fraud offences in Australia exceeds $8.5 billion per annum, representing approximately 40% of the total of all crime categories,” says Professor Free. Importantly, Professor Free’s research will offer insights to improve the detection and prevention of fraud in practice.

Professor Free’s longstanding interest in fraud is drawn from his professional stints at Allens Arthur Robinson, one of Australia’s largest law firms, and the Big-4 accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. Addressing issues of major interest, and import, to management accountants, auditors and criminologists, Professor Free’s background in law and accounting, combined with his interest in sociology and psychology, is ideally suited to integration across disciplines with a real-world focus.