Fellow Profile

Associate Professor Anne Gardner
University of Technology Sydney

Anne Gardner

Fellowship title: Professional identity and agency: changing the way STEM students think about their learning and development

Year completed: 2017

Expertise key words: academic identity, learning frameworks, professional development

What did you achieve?: Workshops and other learning activities with engineering students helped them develop a language to apply to their learning. Having a framework to describe different aptitudes or dispositions for effective learning facilitated their ability to think about how they currently approach their studies and what changes they can enact that might improve their ability to learn. I developed a series of engineering student personas for use in student workshops. The aim of using personas was that students would be able to identify with the different narratives and assess the impact of various characteristics on the developmental trajectory of each persona. This allows students to safely discuss and reflect on profiles that are similar to their own, and identify strategies for their own development, without needing to reveal their own profile or feel apprehensive that if they discussed themselves they may appear foolish or will be judged harshly by their peers. Although fictional the personas reflect authentic characteristics of real students. I also used the personas to illustrate the diverse range of people that can be successful in, ‘belong’ in, engineering. The group of engineering student personas has been used by academics at other universities as resource material in professional development workshops with their academic staff. I have also used a particular learning framework (CLARA) in workshops with engineering academics and postgraduate students. In these contexts I adopted coaching groups of three participants to provide them with practice in peer coaching in addition to becoming familiar with the learning framework and their particular profile. In the future I am planning to include this learning framework in the Professional Practice Program in the Faculty of Engineering & IT at UTS.

What does the sector need now?: The scholarship of teaching and learning and educational research are still not regarded as valuable activity in most engineering departments/faculties across the country – they need sector support.