VICTORIA UNIVERSITY IS A LEADER IN RECONCEPTUALISING TERTIARY EDUCATION
INTRODUCTION

Victoria University (VU) is in the midst of a major transformation to be an agile, dynamic, innovative and growing University of Opportunity and Success. The Strategic Plan, 2016-2020 identified three key inter-related elements of the University’s strategy. They were: to position ourselves as an open and excellent university; to pursue a transformational agenda; and to ensure financial sustainability. The purpose of this White Paper, is to define and elaborate on the second key element: the transformational agenda on which we have embarked.

First, the paper outlines the underpinning Big Ideas on which the transformation is based. Second, it describes and defines the Transformational Agenda. It outlines four key initiatives that are central to the transformation: a new First Year Model; two Interdisciplinary Flagships, College Clusters and VU Research; the Polytechnic and Cross-University Programs and Schools; and VU Online.

It then details a number of other key initiatives in the transformation, and the associated key enablers to our transformation (our staff, our campuses, our digital technologies and our partnerships). The paper identifies the employee value proposition as critical to ensuring that the transformation succeeds. That is, Victoria University needs to be a great place to work. Finally, it goes on to describe the developing VU Ecosystem which this transformation is re-shaping and the long term objectives that VU can achieve by 2030.
Tertiary education has a much bigger role to play in the 21st century than it did in the 20th century. And the changes in the environment in which it operates, require a fundamental rethink about the nature and purpose of tertiary education, and how it needs to be delivered.

VU, as a dual sector university based in the west of Melbourne, is well placed to play a leadership role in reconceptualising tertiary education to meet emerging and future needs. It is already making great progress in implementing a significant Transformational Agenda. VU is the University for its region with a focus on transforming the lives of its students and its communities. It is an institution with an unwavering commitment to the growth and development of the west of Melbourne and to being a key partner in this development.

There are four Big Ideas which underpin the Transformational Agenda. Between them they capture the essence of VU’s Vision and Mission. They also recognise the rapidly changing environment within which the University is operating. These ideas will underpin the shape, strategy and trajectory of the University as we become an increasingly agile, dynamic, and innovative University of Opportunity and Success.

- **Our Vision:**
  As the University of Opportunity and Success, we will be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background and uplifting the communities in which we operate.

- **Our Mission:**
  We will achieve this vision by:

  **Education**
  Providing high quality, engaging career-based tertiary education at all levels of vocational and higher education with flexible entry and exit points, appropriate pathways, engaging and rigorous curriculum and contemporary delivery; while maintaining rigorous standards and ensuring that all students are supported to meet those standards.

  **Research and Engagement**
  Undertaking high quality and innovative applied and translational research which results in healthier, smarter and sustainable communities in the West of Melbourne and beyond, and connecting deeply with industry and the community, in turn enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

**FOUR BIG IDEAS**

1. **The Moral Purpose**
2. **Reconceptualising Tertiary Education**
4. **Agility, Productivity and Growth**
THE FOUR BIG IDEAS

1 THE MORAL PURPOSE Transforming Lives and Transforming Communities - A University Focused on its Students and its Communities
VU aims to provide outstanding opportunities to any student from any background and to uplift the communities in which we operate, most especially the west of Melbourne. VU has a strong tradition of providing outstanding opportunities to students from diverse backgrounds and contributing to its local communities. We now seek to take this to the next level.

2 RECONCEPTUALISING TERTIARY EDUCATION: A University without Boundaries
As a university committed to supporting any student from any background, VU has made a fundamental commitment to there being no boundaries around the students we support. We also seek to break down a number of other boundaries. For example, as a dual-sector university we will diminish the boundaries between vocational education and higher education. Many students will benefit from a combination of vocational education and higher education, either simultaneously or at different times, sometimes doing vocational education first, sometimes higher education first. With one of the most culturally diverse student populations of any Australian university, another example is that VU also strives to join up cultures and countries. VU will also be deeply connected with schools, with industry and with the community.

3 DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND CONFRONTING 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES: A Contemporary and Future Focussed University
Developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, curiosity, interpersonal and communication skills, self-regulation, grit, entrepreneurial mindset, teamwork and digital literacy, is crucial. We will also focus on confronting 21st century challenges important to our local communities as well as those of global significance, through our research, innovation focus and the development of our curriculum. This will be through two flagship interdisciplinary themes: Health, Sport and Active Living; and Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities.

4 AGILITY, PRODUCTIVITY AND GROWTH: An Agile, Dynamic, Innovative, and Growing University
In the demand driven market based system of tertiary education, VU needs to be agile, dynamic and innovative in meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and its partners in industry and the community. The University needs to grow its revenue and increase productivity in order to be long term financially sustainable, and be able to continually re-invest in the core business and in innovative opportunities. VU’s investment in learning and teaching, for example in its Polytechnic and its First Year College, its investment in digital technology, and its creation of a new online education offer, represent major steps in setting the University on this trajectory.
THE TRANSFORMATION TO BECOME AN AGILE, INNOVATIVE, DYNAMIC AND GROWING UNIVERSITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS IS WELL UNDERWAY

FOUR KEY TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES

1. THE VU FIRST YEAR MODEL
2. VU INTERDISCIPLINARY FLAGSHIPS, COLLEGE CLUSTERS AND VU RESEARCH
3. VICTORIA UNIVERSITY’S POLYTECHNIC AND CROSS-UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS
4. VU ONLINE
Victoria University’s **First Year Model**, an Australian first, will be introduced in 2018 by the new **First Year College**. Instead of insisting students engage with four units of study concurrently, the **First Year College** will offer students the ability to study their chosen degree course in *sequential blocks*; completing one unit and its assessment at a time, over three to four weeks, before moving to the next. Students will be able to focus on a single subject in depth rather than juggling multiple units with competing demands and deadlines; immerse themselves in each unit, learning through discussion and group interaction; form strong and lasting peer connections formed through close contact with one group at a time; get to know and be known by their educators; receive timely and targeted support; and, crucially, they can achieve success early to build confidence and motivation. The **block model** is ideally suited to ensuring a sense of belonging, learner sophistication and the other known predictors of learning gain.

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**1: THE NEW VU FIRST YEAR MODEL**

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**THE VU FIRST YEAR MODEL**

- VU First Year Model explained in 60 seconds
  
  ![Watch](source)

- Watch Professor Sally Kift (Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow) and Professor Ian Solomonides (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Innovation & Quality) introduce VU’s First Year Model.
  
  ![Watch](source)

- Learn more about the First Year College from Alan McWilliams (Lecturer and First Year Coordinator) and Meagan McInness (Lecturer, First Year College).
  
  ![Watch](source)

- 21st Century Skills - The workers of the future will need to use new foundational skills in increasingly enterprising and creative ways, by applying them across diverse environments.
  
  ![Read](source)
2: VU INTERDISCIPLINARY FLAGSHIPS, COLLEGE CLUSTERS AND VU RESEARCH

The VU discipline-based higher education Colleges will form two clusters relating to VU’s two flagships: Health, Sport and Active Living and Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities. The College of Health and Biomedicine and the College of Sport and Exercise Science represent the Health, Sport and Active Living Cluster. The College of Arts and Education, College of Business, College of Engineering and Science, and College of Law and Justice will form the Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities Cluster.

A new entity, VU Research, will be established to lead, manage and administer the University’s research and research training programs. VU has defined areas of research focus that build on well-established capability and disciplinary expertise, and align with the University’s flagship areas of strength and its College Clusters. Designed to be interdisciplinary, our areas of research focus will create opportunities for collaboration and growth and enable innovative solutions to immediate and pressing issues of the day. To deliver on this two Institutes will be established – the Institute of Health, Sport, Exercise and Active Living (ISEAL) and the Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities (ISILC). By configuring our College Clusters and VU Research in accordance with our interdisciplinary flagship themes, will provide the opportunity for a close connection between our research agenda and our learning and teaching.

VU is also building a significant profile in developing robust evidence-based policy and in advocating for best practice policy development and implementation at both State and National levels. Alongside VU Research, which includes some strong policy research centres (e.g. Centre of Policy Studies, Centre for International Research on Education Systems) we are fostering a policy and translation capability through the Mitchell Institute, the Australian Health Policy Collaboration, and the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre.

1 Currently the Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living but the name is under review because of the integration of our health research with our sport research.

VU RESEARCH

Professor Warren Payne (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Research Training) discusses how the VU Research Model will put the VU Research Plan into action by investing in measurable high impact and high yield research while promoting increased productivity by strategically redirecting VU’s human, physical and financial resources towards prioritised Areas of Research Focus and Fields of Research.
The establishment of Victoria University’s Polytechnic\(^2\) in 2016, was the first big step in our Transformational Agenda. The Polytechnic offers contemporary vocational education and applied industry relevant programs. It works collaboratively across the University to ensure strong pathways from vocational to higher education and vice versa, as well as offering a wide range of vocational programs which students take in their own right as a route to skilled occupations. Its programs are organised into three delivery centres covering: Health and Wellbeing; Manufacturing, Technology and Trades; and Service Industries and Transition Education. As such its focus is aligned with our two flagship themes of Health, Sport and Active Living and Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities.

As a dual-sector university, VU is especially well placed to run industry focussed programs that reflect our vocational and higher education capabilities relevant to particular industries, run jointly by the Polytechnic and our discipline-based higher education Colleges. Two outstanding examples are in Nursing and in Tourism and Hospitality, or The School for the Visitor Economy, where we will run a cross-university program and cross-university school respectively, drawing our higher education and vocational offers in a joined-up way.

\(^2\) Current brand name is Victoria Polytechnic but this is under review to ensure that it is recognised as part of Victoria University.
4. VU ONLINE

*VU Online* is an initiative to extend higher educational opportunities and success to a broad audience in the west of Melbourne and beyond through an attractive **fully online model**. It will develop, market and deliver high quality, well-supported courses aimed principally at mature age students undertaking study for employment reasons. *VU Online* will commence courses in the latter half of 2018, and will be operated through a partnership with an experienced online education partner, via a subsidiary wholly owned by the University. Growth will be achieved by offering in-demand undergraduate and post-graduate courses through a compelling student value proposition built on work relevance, recognition of prior learning, significant student support and delivery that balances study with busy work and home lives.
OTHER KEY INITIATIVES IN THE TRANSFORMATION

⇒ **VU Academy for Social Change and Leadership** which will challenge high-achieving and highly capable students by supporting them to develop and demonstrate their capacity to make positive social impacts in the community and the environment.

⇒ **VU Innovations and the VU Hanger** which will foster innovation and entrepreneurship across the university, for staff, students and the organisation as a whole.

⇒ **VU Employability Strategy and Graduate Success** which will deliver a range of employment services for both current students and graduates. This will include the new ‘Talent Connect’ program which supports students in their final semester through to six months after they graduate with a combination of career coaching, recruitment masterclasses, and industry mentoring.

⇒ **Bathelmun Yalingwa (Shine Bright)** our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy builds on our concept of a university without boundaries, an open and inclusive university. This strategy is intended to promote Aboriginal culture and learning and to foster increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff at VU.
WE NEED TO **INVEST** IN OUR STAFF, OUR CAMPUSES, OUR DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND OUR PARTNERSHIPS
Key enablers in which we need to invest are: **our staff; campuses, digital technologies and partnerships.**

A powerful employee value proposition is viewed as being a crucial priority for the transformation to be successful. That is, VU needs to be a **great place to work.**

**The VU Operating Model** is the way we put together the range of entities that have front-line or enabling roles across the university. It is focussed on meeting the needs of our students, industry and the community, with our client facing entities at the centre supported by a range of enabling services. Flexibility and collaboration between the different parts of the operating model is critically important, to ensure an agile, innovative and dynamic organisation. In a university without boundaries, it is also important to view the internal components of the University as part of a broader **VU Ecosystem,** in which we are deeply connected with community and industry, locally and across the state, the nation and globally.

Our campuses will be great places to study and work. Distinct from the historical tendency towards insular, inward-looking campus plans, VU will be integrated into Melbourne’s west and will have a strong presence on the western fringe of the CBD. Our footprint will be a network of highly accessible and engaging campuses, which will enable the University to be inclusive rather than exclusive, welcoming the community to be part of a relevant, connected, vibrant and creative cultural campus experience. They will showcase the diversity and activities within, providing a welcoming and enabling environment for collaboration and engagement with the people, institutions and enterprises of the west, as well as with the staff and students of the University. **Footscray University Town,** the **Wyndham Tech School** at our Werribee campus and the **Sunshine Innovation Hub** at our TAFE campus, are all exemplars of this outward-looking, connected and collaborative approach.

Importantly, our IT infrastructure will also be best of breed and will enable us to reach out beyond the physical boundaries of our campuses and be successful in a digital world.
VU IN 2030

VU can aim to be at least in the top quartile of Australian universities and public vocational education providers in student satisfaction by 2030. Its graduates should be clearly demonstrating 21st century skills which ensure their success as employees and entrepreneurs. VU will have increasingly world class staff, campuses, digital technologies and partnerships. At the same time the University will continue to rise up the world university rankings. VU can realistically aim to play a key transformational role in its region of the west of Melbourne, impacting on industry and community to foster sustainable industries, liveable cities, and healthier and more prosperous communities. It can also aim to play an increasingly influential role nationally and internationally.

By pursuing this Transformational Agenda, VU can also realistically aim to be increasingly financially sustainable, grow its revenue substantially, increase productivity, and on all the key financial performance metrics, be a strong performer, relative to its competitors, enabling re-investment in the core business and in other innovative opportunities.

At the same time, VU should be increasingly seen as a great place to work, for a range of important reasons. As we look forward towards the mid-21st century, we believe that Victoria University, The University of Opportunity and Success, can be a leader in reconceptualising tertiary education, and in so doing become a truly great university.

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