

Griffith Science Education Alliance

A model for science education across Queensland's education regions

The Griffith Science Education Alliance (GSEA) is a collaborative initiative between Griffith University, Education Queensland, the Department of Education and Training (DET), Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) and the Science Teacher's Association of Queensland (STAQ). It provides a coordinated, region-wide approach to science education in the South East Region. Griffith plays an active role at all levels by providing a range of teacher professional development programs, enhanced student learning opportunities and curriculum development initiatives. The GSEA employs Griffith University's science outreach program, **Science on the GO!**, to take resources, infrastructure and expertise from Griffith University directly to Gold Coast classrooms to assist teachers and students in all aspects of science education.

The major goals of the Griffith Science Education Alliance are three-fold:

- 1) to raise general awareness and interest in science and science studies leading to increased enrolments at senior secondary and tertiary levels
- 2) to assist individual teachers (who are sometimes out of their depth) and school cluster groups to develop common programs, with a prescribed quality, that could be used at a number (if not all) schools across the Griffith corridor
- 3) to provide a coordinated region-wide approach to science education with visible Griffith involvement in the development and delivery of these programs, thus establishing a clear link (and pathway!) between school science studies and tertiary science studies

An overview of the structure and activities of the GSEA is shown over page. To our knowledge no other similar structure or program exists for school engagement in science education. The Science Teachers Association of Qld (STAQ) has described it as a model for regional science education that "has become the recommended pattern for all regions" across the state.

Achievements to date: Over the past six years the GSEA has gained financial support and seconded personnel from its partner organisations to host a range of initiatives and programs. Some of these include: the Science Education Partnership (funded from the Spotlight on Science program); the Southern Science Centre for Innovation and Professional Practice (funded from the 2006-2009 Qld Govt Science Strategy); the Connecting with Science program (funded by DET); the Science Spark program (funded by the 2010-2012 Qld Govt Science Strategy) and the Make your Watermark program (funded by GCCC). In total the GSEA has delivered \$4.2 million of science education programs to Gold Coast teachers and students including cutting edge teacher professional development programs and a range of enhanced learning opportunities for students.

Engagement and Impact: In excess of 130 000 students, teachers and members of the Gold Coast public have engaged in GSEA activities over the past five years. This includes more than 5600 hands-on teacher professional development engagements. The demand for SEET places (1st preferences) at the Gold Coast campus has risen 51% since 2006 (compared with a 13% increase across the entire University, 29% for the Gold Coast Campus and 9.4% for SEET programs at Nathan). 52% of 1st year undergraduate SEET students surveyed at the Gold Coast campus experienced GSEA/SOTG activities during high school; 68% of these students indicated that these experiences influenced their decision to enrol at Griffith.

The quality of the GSEA and its people have been recognised nationally and internationally with a host of awards including: Australia's Entrepreneurial Educator of the Year (2011); Best Higher Education Community Partnership (2011); 2007 Queensland-Smithsonian Fellowship (2007); the Australian Science Teachers' Association Award for Excellence in Science Education (2009); the Peter Doherty (Institute) Award for Excellence in Science Education (2008); the STAQ Medal for Excellence in Science Education (2006); the RACI Award for Excellence in Chemistry Education (2008) and an Education Queensland Showcase Award (Academic Excellence) (2010).

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