

## EduCon 2018



**Karena Waller**  
ASM Ed SIG Chair



This year's ASM EduCon was held on Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 July 2018 in Brisbane at the Mantra South Bank Hotel. It was a fabulous meeting, attended by 28 registrants from around the nation in the fields of microbiology education, and education more broadly. Over the 2-day program, registrants enjoyed a diverse program of engaging presentations on teaching and learning, and issues in higher education while enjoying the plentiful and tasty catering supplied by the venue.

The meeting commenced with Associate Professor Tracey Bretag, from the University of South Australia, delivering an engaging and enlightening, yet very sobering, presentation on *Contract cheating in Australian higher education: Results from a nation-wide survey of students and staff*. Tracey presented her research findings (funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training) regarding the nature, extent and motivations for student engagement in contract cheating within the context of the Australian higher education environment.

Dr Terrence Mulhern, from The University of Melbourne, summarised his work on student misconceptions in a presentation titled *Learn from your mistakes. How to use misconceptions to trigger student learning*. In his presentation, Terry explained what misconceptions are, where they come from, and some

handy strategies of identify and overcoming them in the context of large STEM classes.

Thursday's program commenced with Dr Raina Mason, from Southern Cross University (Gold Coast) delivering a thought provoking presentation, titled *'This assessment makes my brain hurt!' – accounting for cognitive load in assessment*. Raina's presentation succinctly summarised cognitive load theory, and how learning can be negatively impacted when the cognitive load of a student is exceeded. Raina also detailed some examples from her own teaching and research outcomes, aimed at identifying and avoiding cognitive overload in student assessment tasks.

Dr Karena Waller, recipient of the 2017 ASM David White Excellence in Teaching Award, delivered a presentation titled *Reaching out in Microbiology*, describing her passion for developing and delivering laboratory-based outreach activities for local and international high school student programs visiting the microbiology labs at The University of Melbourne.

Associate Professor Kelly Matthews, from the University of Queensland, presented her research findings regarding engaging students as partners in their learning. Kelly's presentation, titled *Challenging and expanding our beliefs about the role of students in scholarly learning and teaching practices*, described some practical examples of engaging students as partners in their learning, and the positive outcomes for students within STEM disciplines.

The program concluded with Ms Lyris Snowden, from the University of the Sunshine Coast, delivering a presentation titled *The pros, cons and diversity of Work Integrated Learning (WIL): the experience of putting WIL into practice*. Lyris provided great insight into the potential trials, tribulations and incredible benefits of incorporating WIL opportunities into teaching and learning programs in higher education.

Our meeting was very proudly sponsored by McGrawHill Education, Monash University and The University of Melbourne. We are extremely grateful for their very generous support. Given the huge success of EduCon this year, in addition to the many wonderful conversations and networking opportunities it provided, I am already looking forward to seeing you all at the next ASM EduCon, to be held in Adelaide in July 2019.

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