



Building an online learning community: reframing open educational practice grants as supported professional learning

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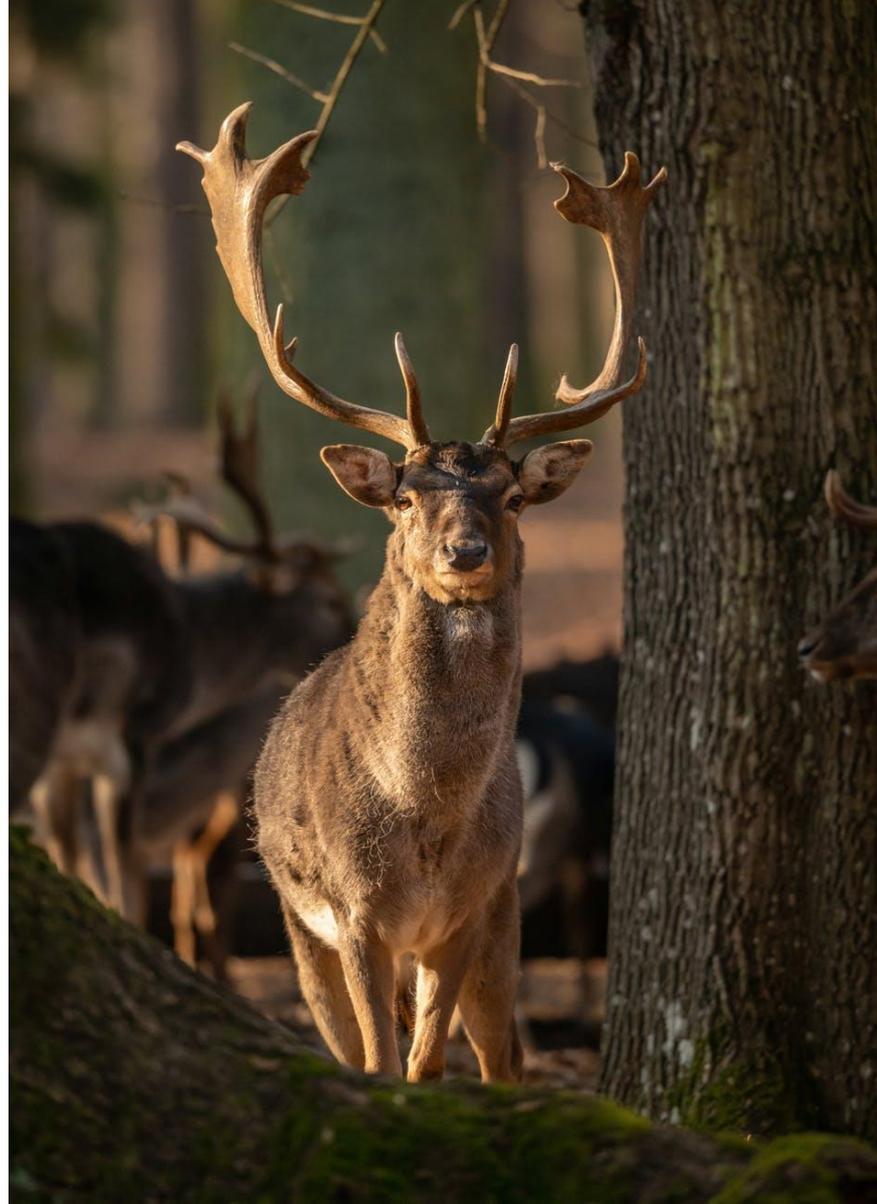
A brief professional and ideological introduction

Confirmed PhD candidate (University of Tasmania)

Librarian, learning technologist, online learning designer, open culture advocate, collector of obscure words, and adherent of the Oxford comma.

(Co-convenor) ASCILITE Australasian Open Educational Practice SIG

Research interests: Open education, the role of the university in democracy



Yes, We're

Open



“Open means anyone can freely access, use, modify, and share for any purpose (subject, at most, to requirements that preserve provenance and openness).”¹

Openness is about freedom, and is *never* a neutral activity because it questions and repositions ownership, sharing, and access, and remains a contested and evolving space that is sometimes appropriated (*fauxpen, open-washing*)

¹Open Knowledge Foundation, *The open definition*, <https://opendefinition.org>



Why are we here?



A decent society wouldn't push millions of students into debt. It would recognise that higher education isn't mainly a personal investment... It's a public good.

Robert Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley

Starved of opportunity: young people's experience of Youth Allowance and Newstart¹

51.1% have experienced housing insecurity or homelessness

89.9% skip at least one meal per week

21.8% skip one meal per day

80.1% have struggled with essential course material fees

90.7% state this has negatively impacted their mental health

35.2% have withdrawn from study due to the cost



¹ <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Starved-Of-Opportunity-Young-Peoples-Experience-Of-Youth-Allowance-An....pdf>

Starved of opportunity: young people's experience of Youth Allowance and Newstart¹

Sometimes I can't focus due to hunger, because travelling to class used money I needed for groceries
23-year-old respondent

I was forced to withdraw from a course due to lack of money to get to and from a work placement
21-year-old respondent



¹ <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Starved-Of-Opportunity-Young-Peoples-Experience-Of-Youth-Allowance-An....pdf>

Students in an open knowledge system

- a) are relieved of a major financial burden of study,
- b) equitably access learning resources on the first day of semester,
- c) can experience lower stress
- d) retain access at the end of semester
- e) can be engaged as co-creators of knowledge that benefits society

Academic staff engaging with open knowledge systems

- a) have the freedom to localise and contextualise resources,
 - b) can readily set diverse resources without financial cost to students,
 - c) can build a reputation by addressing a content gap,
 - d) explore opportunities for authentic, collaborative assessment practices, and
 - e) can enhance their research reputation through broader readership.
- 

see

the

good

Nearly **65%** of all our students are online

60% are 'first-in-family'

40% are located in a regional or rural/remote environment

24% are identified as being from a low socio-economic status (determined by *Australian Bureau of Statistics* measures)

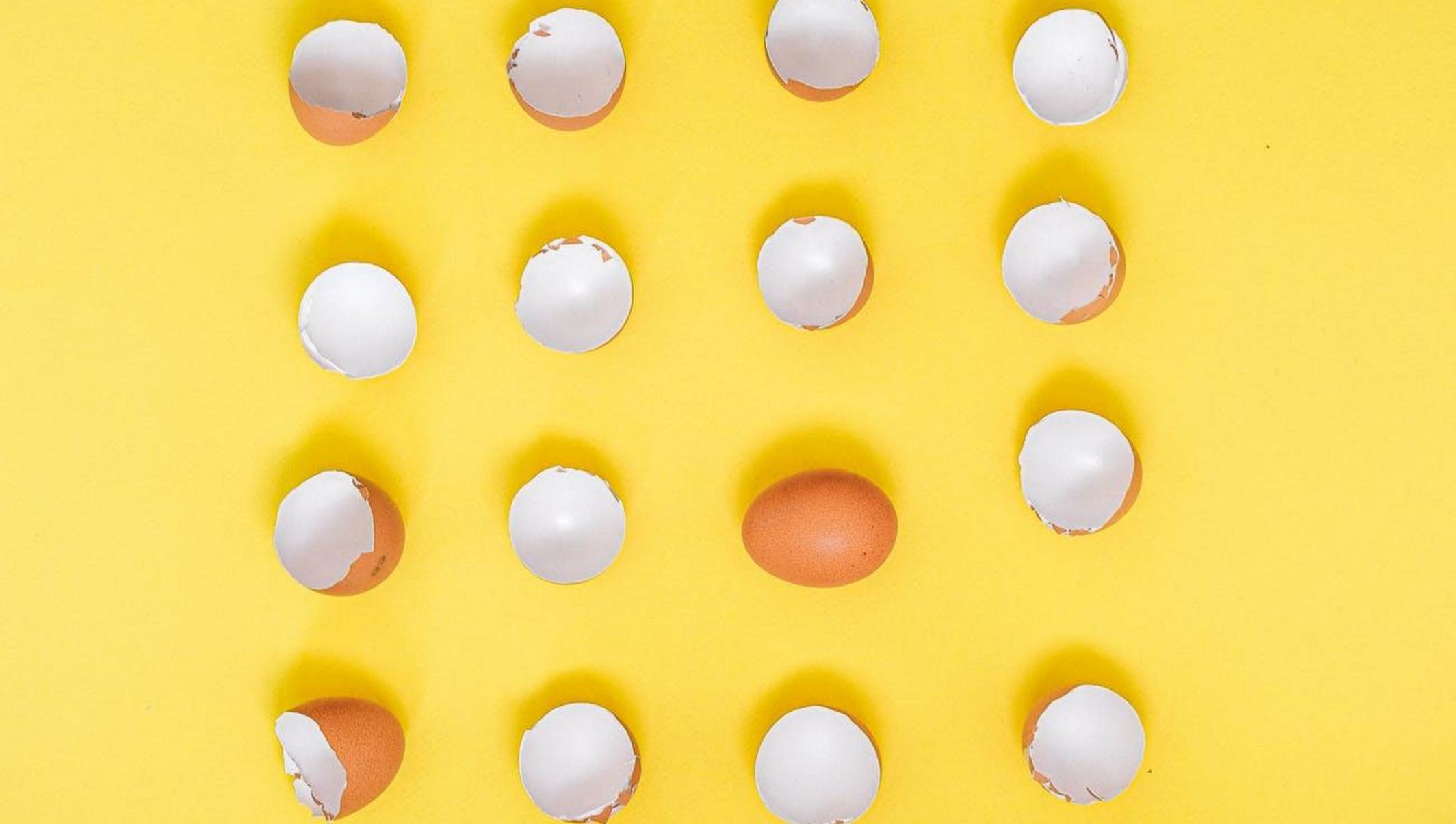
As a *student-focused strategy*, openness makes sense to *improve access, and reduce barriers* to a university education.



Give me one reason why grant schemes are bad for encouraging educational transformation.









Educational darkness

“In any teaching context, no matter how aligned to learning outcomes, and no matter how much evidence there is for certain methods, teaching in higher education could always be different, other choices could have been made, which maintain the possibility of a different form of student growth or hindrance for growth.

However, this hole in the being of the teaching practice is also where the darkness gets in, forcing you as a teacher to deal and cope with chance, luck, bad luck and sometimes what seem like, in the situation at least, impossible choices.¹”

¹Bengtson, S., & Barnett, R. (2017). Confronting the dark side of higher education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 51*(1), 114-131.



Theory of Human Development¹

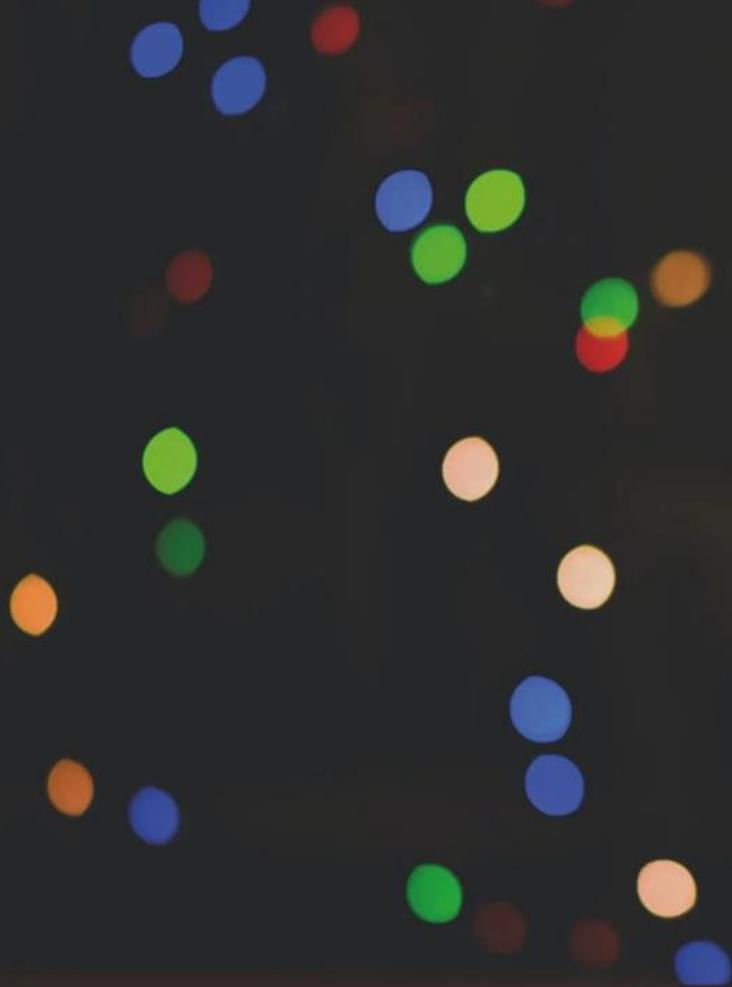
Engaging in any type of development is predicated on seeing (and buying into) the type of transformation desired. If the endpoint of the transformation is too difficult to imagine, it becomes a 'radical reality'.

¹Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard university press.

TIME

FOR

CHANGE



Fullan and Stiegelbauer's *Theory of Educational Change*¹

- (i) Staff need to actively participate in change seeking behaviour, usually starting in small groups and building in scope;*
- (ii) pressure exists for change, and that support exists to facilitate and navigate change;*
- (iii) successful change requires attitudinal and behavioural change; and*
- (iv) participants take ownership of the process as their confidence increases*

¹Fullan, M., & Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.







Make time to build community

“I need a coffee”

*“this is the first time I have sat
down today...”*

“this stays in the room, right?”

*“I’m sorry, I just needed to get
this off my chest”*



Keep it simple: 3 questions

“What have you achieved?”
[Celebrate]

“What do you need to know?
(and who can help?)”
[Learn]

“Where will you be next
month?”
[Plan]



Further support

Financial, administrative, research, content creation, learning design, information resources, open educational practices, connecting to other practitioners, Coffee Course, forum, monthly meetings, layered participation cycles...

“the people I have worked with don’t just do this as ‘a job’, they are what I’d call ‘true believers’. They love the field, and spend time working out how to make it better”

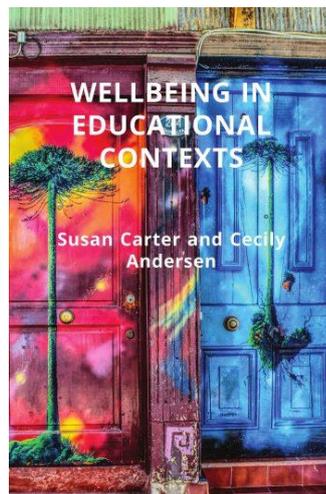


What happens when this is blended together (*and – to stretch the analogy – does it taste any good*)?

International
review and
adoption of the
text

UNESCO
international
summit speaker
invitation

Non-tradition
impact metrics
for promotion



Research
invitation
(United
Kingdom)

Local offer of
consultancy

“As a Social Work professor, I am excited to use this text both in my courses as well as for my professional development workshops.

The content could easily be utilized to create projects, discussion questions and testing materials to deepen the students’ engagement with the concepts in the text.”¹

¹<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/wellbeingineducationalcontexts/>

²<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/openingeyes/>

Inclusion as
Meet-Up BAU

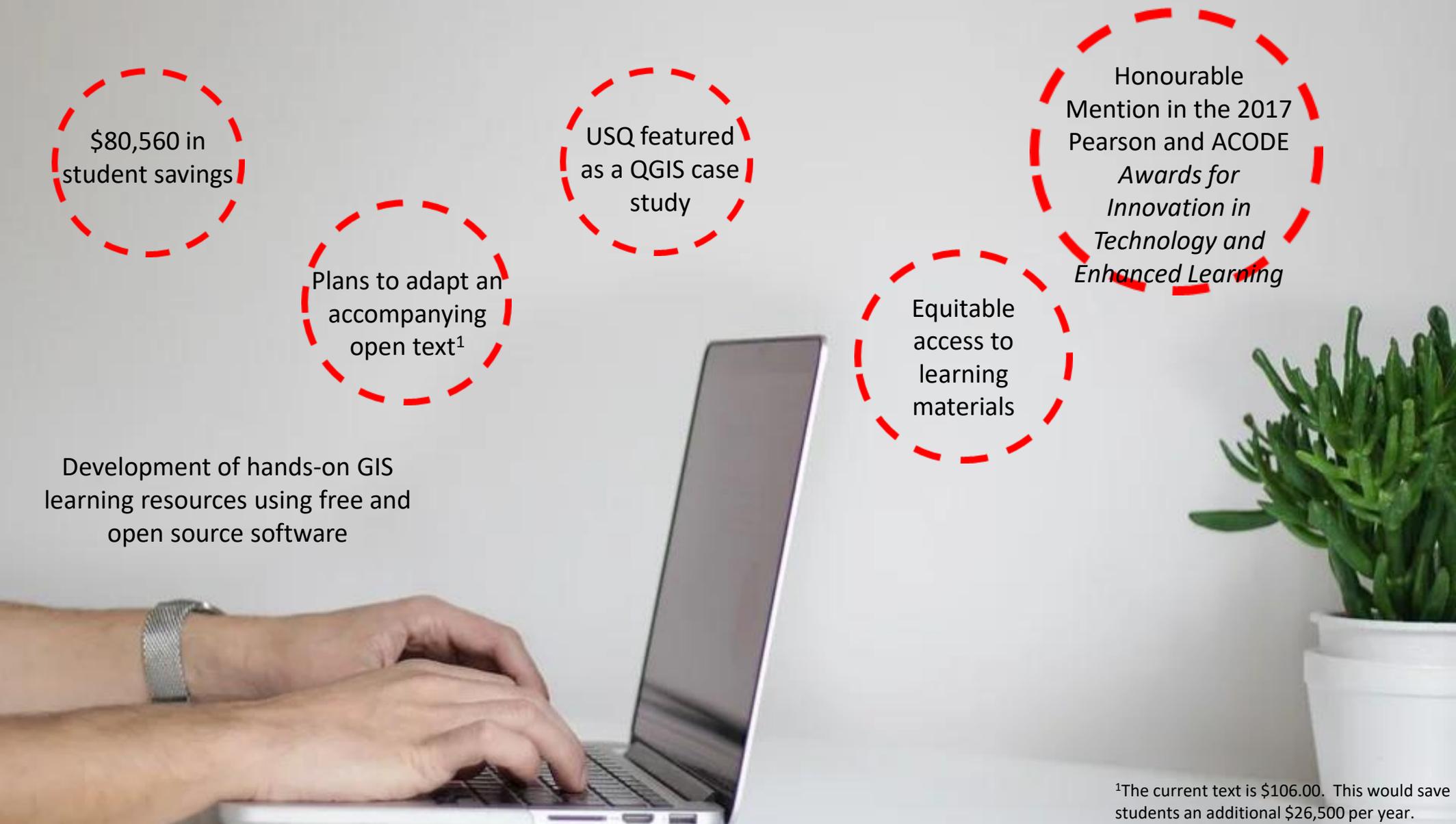
Student co-
creation models

International
conference
papers



Autism Co-
operative
Research
Centre status
(20K)

Adopted at 9
institutions
(including
internationally)



\$80,560 in student savings

USQ featured as a QGIS case study

Honourable Mention in the 2017 Pearson and ACODE Awards for Innovation in Technology and Enhanced Learning

Plans to adapt an accompanying open text¹

Equitable access to learning materials

Development of hands-on GIS learning resources using free and open source software

¹The current text is \$106.00. This would save students an additional \$26,500 per year.

Students
positioned as
future
colleagues and
emerging
professionals

Normalises
collaboration
and knowledge
sharing

Immediate
impact on
society

GEMS & NUGGETS

Multicultural education for young children



Edited by
E. Tualaulelei
and K. Hawkins

The profession
as stakeholder
in student
learning

Student
portfolios and
employability

“Closing the
loop” with
industry

6 OPEN TEXTS in production
by USQ in 2020



\$277 153

**Estimated current
SAVINGS TO STUDENTS** by using OER
(to Jan 2020)



7878

**Students positively
impacted by OPEN RESOURCES** in 2020



5 OPEN TEXTS published
by USQ since 2019



44 staff from **11**
DISCIPLINES have engaged
with OEP GRANTS since 2015



**20 journal and
conference
publications**



**75% of outputs
are sustained
beyond the
funded period**

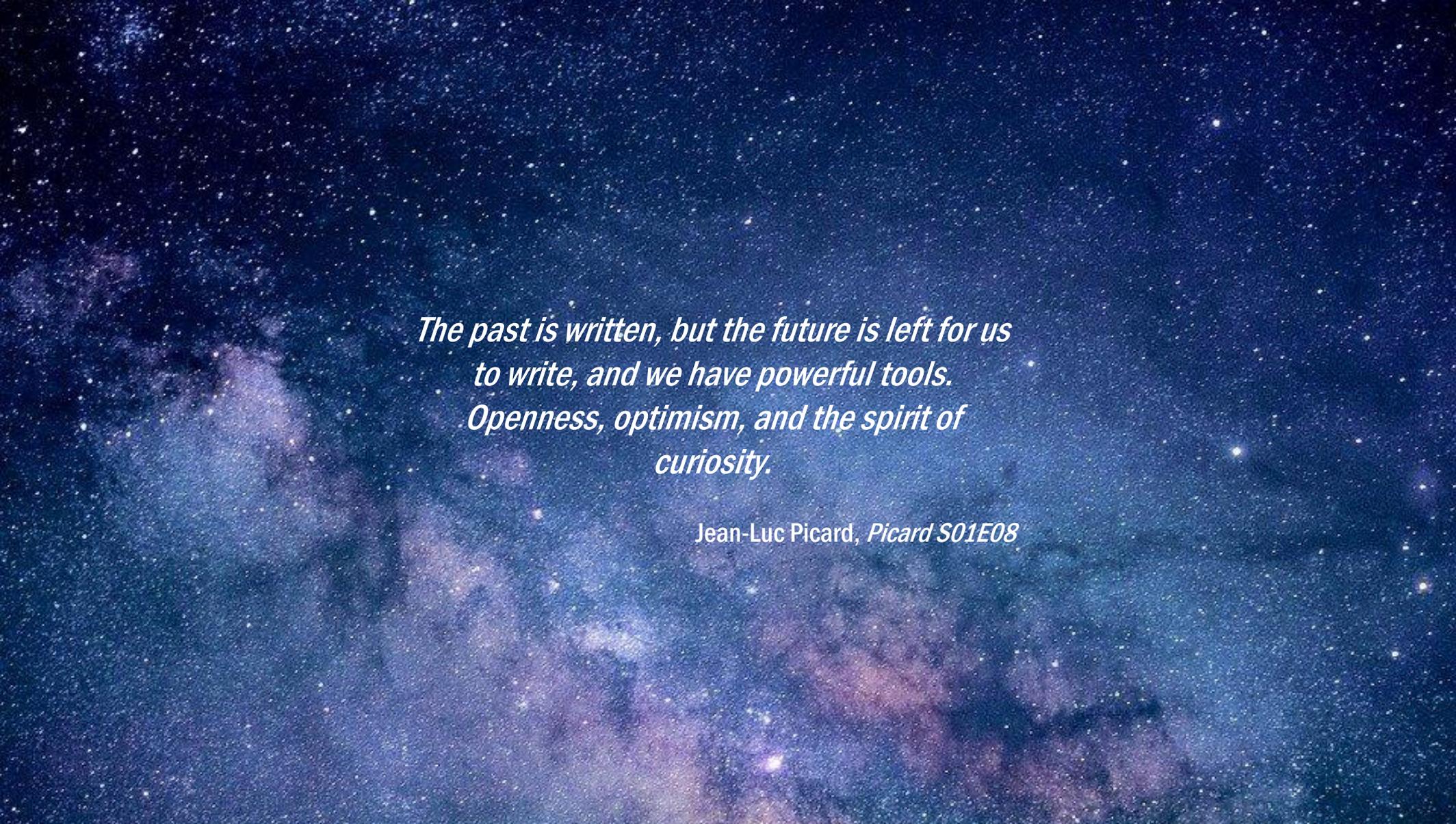
“As grant participants, the grant organisers were very... encouraging of us. I never felt as if we were being judged or pushed. We were being enabled and, you know, for me and my group that really felt great.” (P2)

*“I think when you work with other people
and it helps you to re-think what open
education means.” (P3)*

“Listening to the other people, when we go to ...meetings... there are other people doing their own projects and the way they were doing them, was a real eye-opener. It was something that gave me ideas, things to aspire to.” (P1)

“... sometimes they [other grant participants] ask the question, maybe I know something and then I can also use my knowledge and help others...” (P2)





*The past is written, but the future is left for us
to write, and we have powerful tools.
Openness, optimism, and the spirit of
curiosity.*

Jean-Luc Picard, *Picard S01E08*



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