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New President Australian Council of Deans of ICT to improve graduate outcomes

Professor Iwona Miliszewska from the University of Canberra became the new President of the Australian Council of Deans of ICT (ACDICT) at the recent Annual Council Meeting held at UNSW, Sydney.

Council determined that strengthening relations between academia and industry was a high priority and that improved workplace experience of students was a way of achieving this. “Work integrated learning (WIL) is a means of bringing academia and industry closer together, and providing students with opportunities for enhanced learning outcomes” said Professor Miliszewska.

“Most university teaching in the rapidly evolving discipline of ICT is concerned with giving students a sound theoretical basis, so that they can apply their knowledge and adapt it to current industry needs” said Professor Miliszewska. Previous research, as well as anecdotal evidence, has shown that WIL gives students a better insight into workplace practices and helps them relate theoretical academic studies to those practices. And in turn, academia becomes better informed of industry needs and practices, through collaborative WIL projects carried out by the student.

“Another way of improving graduate outcomes” said Professor Miliszewska “is through universities comparing their assessment practices to ensure that, for example, an assessment worth a ‘credit’ mark in one university ICT course would score the same in other universities.” She pointed out that ACDICT, through its Learning and Teaching Academy, would be pursuing standardisation of the assessment of learning outcomes across the sector.

The ACS President, Brenda Aynsley, who participated in the ACDICT Annual Council Meeting, agreed with the goal to improve professional skills in ICT students. She also pointed out the need to articulate better what the ‘ICT Profession’ entails and what an ICT Professional actually does.

National Manager of Digital Careers initiative, Dr Karsten Schulz, spoke about its role in attracting school students to ICT through a variety of national activities ranging from raising ICT awareness in young primary school students, through competitive student-led ICT projects, to ICT careers conferences for high school students.

ACDICT is also working towards improving ICT capabilities of teachers to help ensure the successful implementation of the new Digital Technologies Curriculum. To this end, ACDICT supports the efforts of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority in collaboration with the ACS Foundation, Digital Careers, and CSIRO. “It is through collaboration on common goals that ACDICT will be able to maximise the outcomes for our students and Australia in general” Professor Miliszewska concluded.
Contacts
Professor Iwona Miliszewska, ACDICT President
Iwona.Miliszewska@canberra.edu.au 0490 196 325
Dr Tony Koppi, ACDICT Executive Officer
EO@acdict.edu.au 0414 427 543