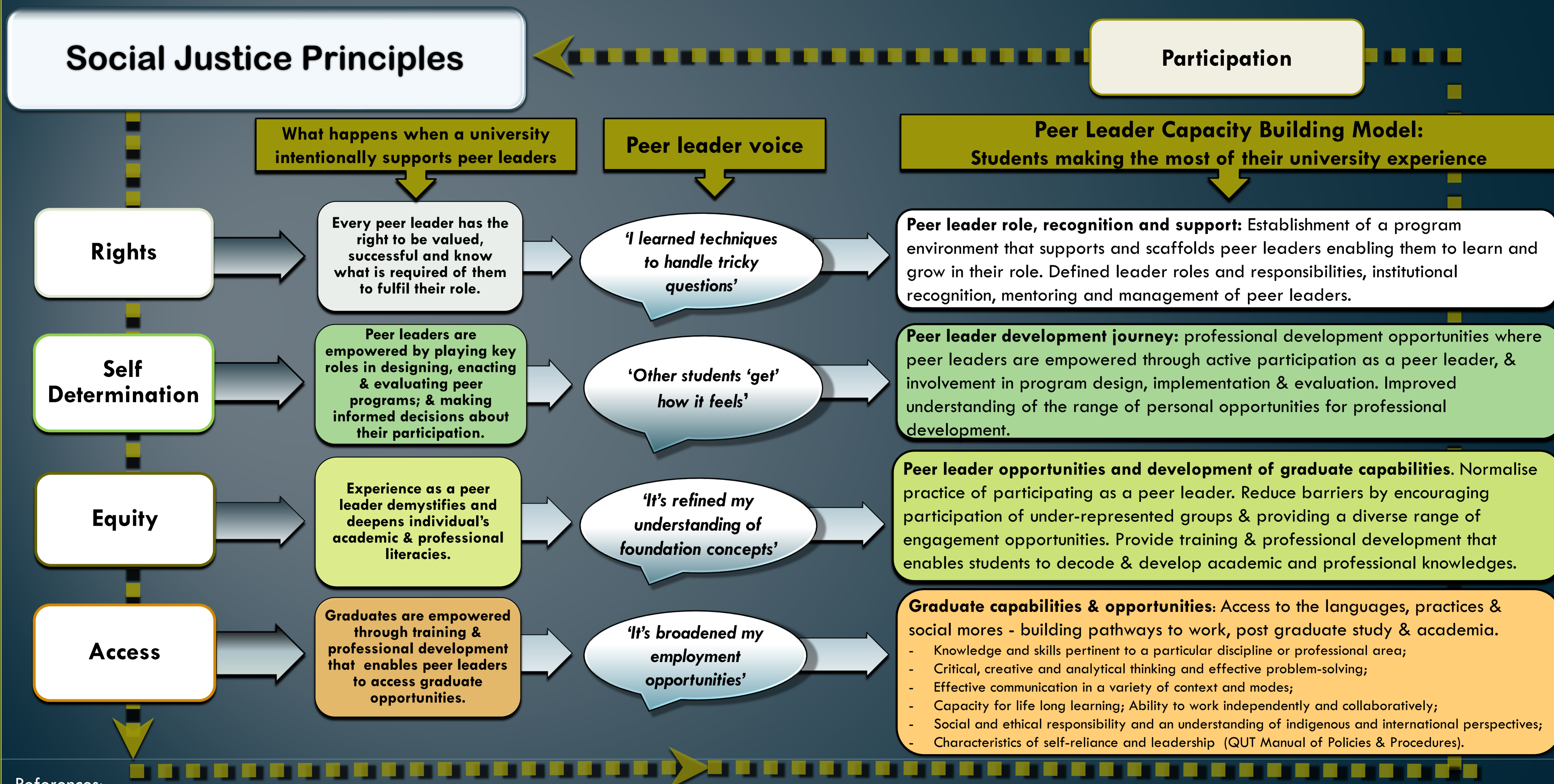# Journeys: Building Graduate Capabilities for Life Long Learning

Victoria Menzies, Pamela Weatherill, Karen Nelson & Tracy Creagh; Student Success and Retention, Learning and Teaching Unit, Queensland University of Technology

Abstract: *Students experience university as peers. Peer-to-peer interaction offers unique opportunities for fostering the academic, social and emotional wellbeing of students (Kuh, 2008). Peer programs provide a formalisation of this relationship enabling students to partake both as peer leaders and program participants. The success of such programs is reliant on the university having a reserve of motivated and trained peer leaders. From their initial experience of peer programs as participants in first year and their ongoing involvement as peer leaders, students grow their graduate capabilities and employability skills through scaffolded peer leadership and training opportunities. Universities aspire to produce graduates who are inspirational leaders, effective collaborators and competent professionals ready to participate in the global community (DEEWR, 2012; Shook & Keup, 2012). This poster describes a model which scaffolds the development of peer leaders' graduate capabilities using a university-wide supporting framework to grow a range of peer-to-peer initiatives across a variety of coordinated peer programs underpinned by a social justice framework (Gidley, Hampson, Wheller & Bereded-Samuel, 2010; Nelson & Creagh, 2012).*

Social Justice Principles

Participation

What happens when a university intentionally supports peer leaders

Peer leader voice

Peer Leader Capacity Building Model: Students making the most of their university experience

Rights

Every peer leader has the right to be valued, successful and know what is required of them to fulfil their role.

'I learned techniques to handle tricky questions'

Peer leader role, recognition and support: Establishment of a program environment that supports and scaffolds peer leaders enabling them to learn and grow in their role. Defined leader roles and responsibilities, institutional recognition, mentoring and management of peer leaders.

Self Determination

Peer leaders are empowered by playing key roles in designing, enacting & evaluating peer programs; & making informed decisions about their participation.

'Other students 'get' how it feels'

Peer leader development journey: professional development opportunities where peer leaders are empowered through active participation as a peer leader, & involvement in program design, implementation & evaluation. Improved understanding of the range of personal opportunities for professional development.

Equity

Experience as a peer leader demystifies and deepens individual's academic & professional literacies.

'It's refined my understanding of foundation concepts'

Peer leader opportunities and development of graduate capabilities. Normalise practice of participating as a peer leader. Reduce barriers by encouraging participation of under-represented groups & providing a diverse range of engagement opportunities. Provide training & professional development that enables students to decode & develop academic and professional knowledges.

Access

Graduates are empowered through training & professional development that enables peer leaders to access graduate opportunities.

'It's broadened my employment opportunities'

Graduate capabilities & opportunities: Access to the languages, practices & social mores - building pathways to work, post graduate study & academia.
- Knowledge and skills pertinent to a particular discipline or professional area;
- Critical, creative and analytical thinking and effective problem-solving;
- Effective communication in a variety of context and modes;
- Capacity for life long learning; Ability to work independently and collaboratively;
- Social and ethical responsibility and an understanding of indigenous and international perspectives;
- Characteristics of self-reliance and leadership (QUT Manual of Policies & Procedures).

References:

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2012). *Employability Skills Framework Stage 1: Final Report.* Report produced for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, ACT. Retrieved from http://deewr.gov.au/employability-skills.
Gidley, J., Hampson, G., Wheeler, L. & Bereded-Samuel, E. (2010). From access to success: an integrated approach to quality Higher Education informed by social inclusion theory and practice. *Higher Education Policy, 23* (123-147).
Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Retrieved from: http://www.neasc.org/downloads/aacu_high_impact_2008_final.pdf
Nelson, K. & Creagh, T. (2012). *Social Justice Framework: Safeguarding student learning engagement.* Retrieved from https://safeguardingstudentlearning.net/?page_id=39.
Shook, J. L., & Keup, J. R. (2012). The Benefits of Peer Leader Programs: An Overview from the Literature. *In New Directions for Higher Education. Special Issue: Peer Leadership in Higher Education. 157,* Spring (5-16).

QUT