

Each time uni vows to 'do better' things

I WRITE in response to David Clerk and Professor Natalie Brown's letter titled 'Correcting claims' (Letters, the Mercury, September 3).

They write there has been a false assertion that nearly everything will be moved online. I am not arguing this. Given that the city move will significantly downsize the institution, it is inevitable that teaching will increasingly be delivered online. This situation will be borne out of necessity. For example, the

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law faculty in Sandy Bay currently has five seminar rooms and two lecture theatres. For the entirety of the business, economics, and law faculties there will be just 10 seminar rooms and no lecture theatres for 3000

students in the new city campus. Cramping us all into spaces that I believe are not fit-for-purpose, will simply not work.

The lack of learning spaces will also create a timetabling nightmare which the

university does not seem to acknowledge. More students than ever before will have to race across the different city "campuses" to get to their classes since there will not be enough spaces within their own faculties.

The city move is premised on the idea that lectures are bad and we are building spaces to suit. The university is doing the opposite of "future proofing" by hedging our bets on one pedagogical model which has been decided in a

top-down way without meaningful consultation with staff or students. This is while many institutions have moved back to in-person lectures after having shifted them online at the start of the pandemic.

To say that claims of lowering standards are false shows how out-of-touch the university is. It is particularly concerning given that Professor Brown, as Chair of Academic Senate, is aware of issues facing a number of

faculties this year to the detriment of learning and teaching. I stress that this is not because of the academics who teach us. They are trying their best in very difficult circumstances. It is the management of the university which makes decision after decision without consultation which worsens the students' learning experience.

Rankings are certainly one thing, but the actual lived student experience is another. Perhaps they should consider

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worsen for those affected

these experiences (and the concerns which are consistently raised) rather than the obsessive pursuit of rankings. But if they wish to discuss rankings, the most recent student experience survey shows students rank UTAS lower than the national average for skills development, learning resources, and student engagement. It is also now closer to the national average for overall student experience than previously. As more of the university

management's new plan is put in place, the results seem to drop.

It is great that they recognise they can do better because they absolutely can. But historically their work tends to worsen the student and staff experience. UTAS has already demonstrated it cannot listen and meaningfully address student and staff concerns. Forcing staff and postgraduate students into open-plan offices against their wishes, the

complete absence of lecture theatres in the proposed developments (how is everyone in business, economics, law, and medicine supposed to use the two lecture theatres at Menzies as we have been told?), the downsizing of our faculties to cut costs and the damage this does to the university community are just some of the issues they are unable to address.

It would be better if we stopped this debacle all

together. Students are sick and tired of hearing the university will work to do better. Every time UTAS tries to "do better" another thing goes wrong, or another decision is imposed on us by people not subject to those decisions to the detriment of our education and wellbeing.

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