

Science students' engagement with Work-integrated Learning

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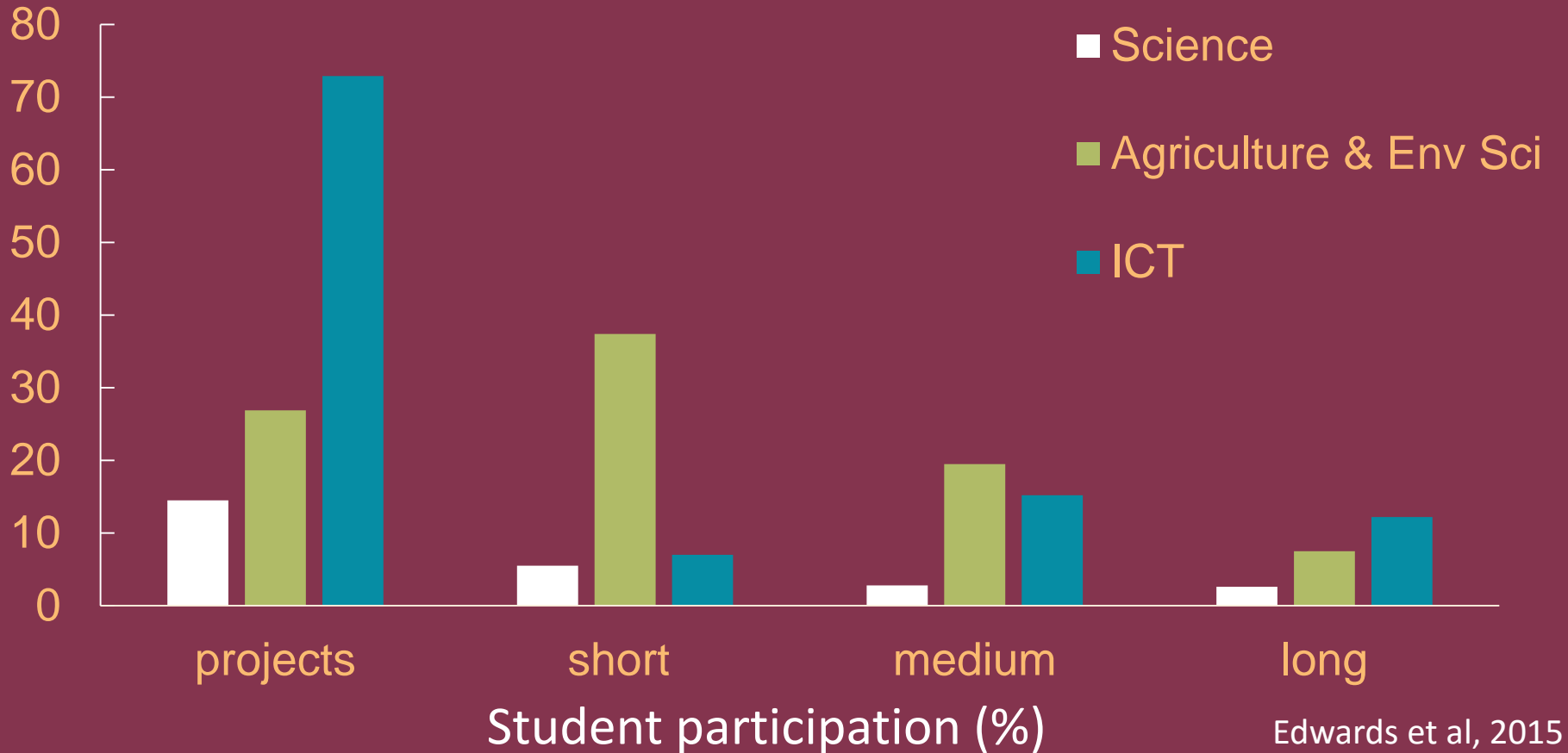
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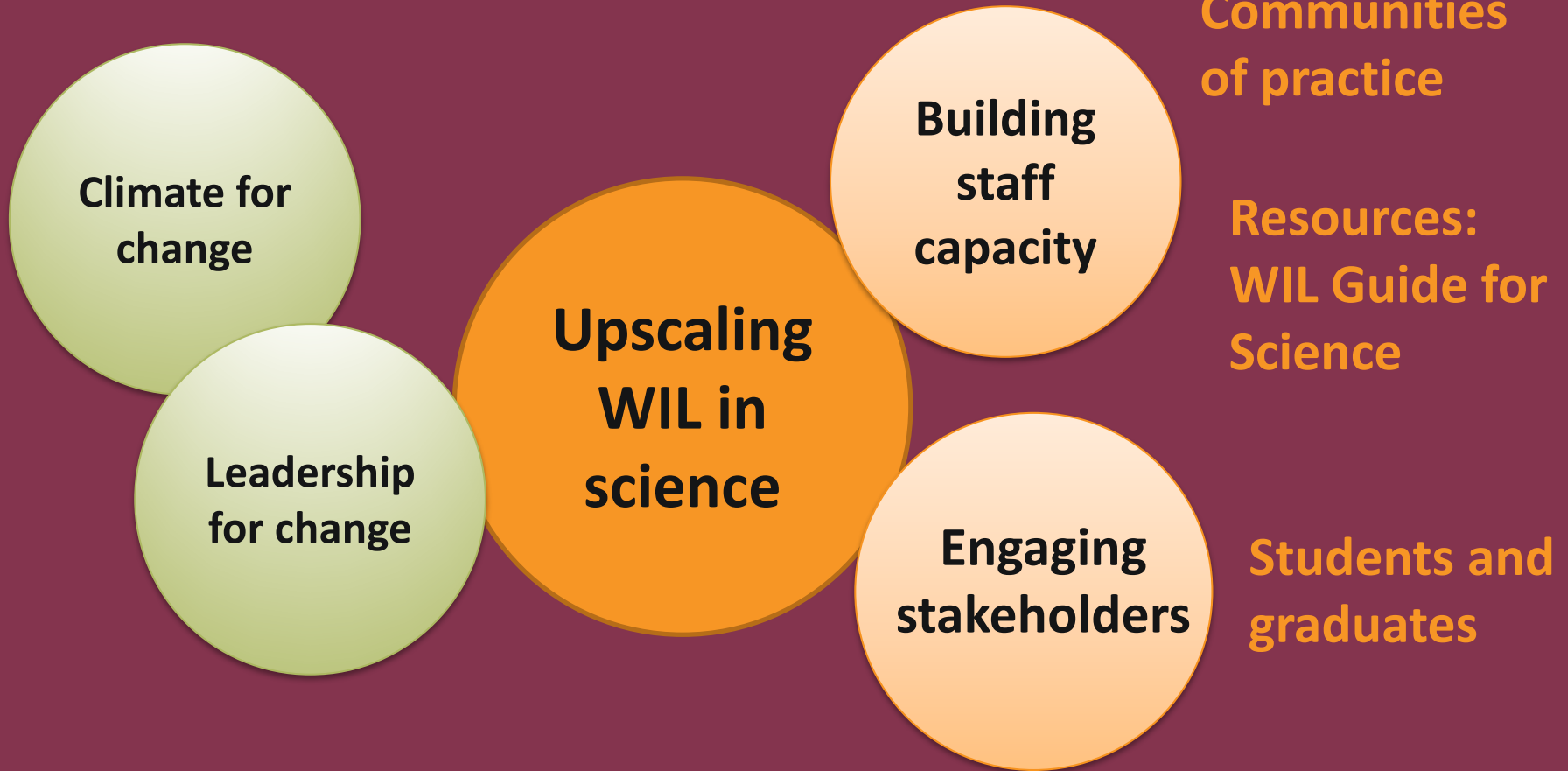


DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY

Work-integrated learning



Successful WIL in Science



What teachers say about student engagement

Research questions

- How and why science students **engage** with WIL opportunities
- Strategies for **communicating and motivating** science students to engage with WIL
- Strategies for making WIL experiences **meaningful** to science students

Who we spoke to

- N = 23 (13 universities)

Roles included:

- **Teaching** a WIL unit or program
- **Developing** or growing WIL within their faculty
- **Supporting** WIL
- **Engaging industry**
- **Championing** WIL

1. WIL specialists think science students are very interested in WIL

*“They’re **dead keen** for employment-related opportunity, so we don’t have too much trouble attracting students.”*

... But which students?

*“The small number that I have talked to one-on-one or who have come to events... are probably the more engaged... **the top 10%**”*

2. WIL should be visible and accessible...

*“They know at some point that they’re going to have to do some sort of placement ... **When they see** that as part of their course map they tend to at least get engaged with ‘What is this? What do I need to do?’”*

*“I think we need to make room for it in the curriculum if we’re serious about it and then it **makes it easier** for students to engage with it.”*

... but discipline and student-specific factors affect engagement too.

“It’s just like pulling teeth to get [IT students] to even think about going out on a placement... Whereas, the flipside of that is our [life sciences] students... There’s high demand from students in [life sciences].”

“It all comes back down to what the motivation to come to university is all about for those students. I think it's not a one size fits all, it's not ‘Well we'll just do this and they'll be more interested in it.’”

3. Explicit, repeated communication is important...

*“We know that the content’s already there, it’s just **pointing out** that this is something that contributes to your employability... It’s just changing a few words here and there.”*

... but not all staff who should communicate do so

*“It’s a bit tricky as well getting the **academics on board**... getting them to recognise that maybe half of the student base, if not more, are not on a research track.”*

*“We gave them some **language** to try and make WIL more explicit, because we had a lot of academics that knew why they were doing what they were doing in class... but they weren’t making it clear to the students.”*

4. To motivate students, show them the relevance of WIL and build their confidence

*“Make all of our intentions explicit ...what’s the purpose of this particular piece of assessment for you, for your future... Once we give them that **context** they’re really starting to see some shifts and engaging in their learning.”*

“The science students don’t necessarily think that their general skills are going to be of value. They keep thinking ‘I don’t really know enough. I don’t really know enough about anything.’... It’s about building their confidence around those generic type skills and how to apply them.”

5. WIL specialists make WIL meaningful through assessment and reflection...

*“Because you are assessing the WIL experience you are kind of forcing them to reflect on what the **value** of that experience was. I think if there is no assessment built in... maybe they just do it and they don’t reflect on it.”*

... and think WIL makes other learning more meaningful.

“It seemed like they were able to recognise some of the things that perhaps they’ve experienced in their units that they didn’t think were applicable to them, that they see ‘Actually, I am going to need this. I do need to know how to write a report or something like that – in order to be successful in the workplace.’”

More WIL is not enough...

- We think students need:
 - Consistent, repeated and explicit communication
 - Assessment that links learning to the course and employment
- Activities that help them:
 - make meaning through reflection
 - articulate and evidence their learning

But what do the students say?

Want to know more?

www.acds-tlcc.edu.au/



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