Articulating from NSW TAFE to University and Professional Registration as a Land Surveyor

Introduction

The shortage of trained professionals and tradesman across a wide range of occupations in Australia is widely acknowledged, the surveying profession is just one of those identified by the federal government. Consequently, enrolment in surveying programs at USQ has been strong in the distance education external mode of study with approximately a fourfold increase in external enrolments from 2003 to 2008. Many of these are NSW TAFE surveying diploma students seeking to upgrade their TAFE diploma to a tertiary degree. However, the current financial uncertainty will have an impact upon enrolments with the likelihood of a substantial drop in enrolment across surveying programs in 2009. This article will examine and comment on the implications for intending students in 2009.

Global financial impact

The impact on the demand for surveyors in 2009 due to the current global financial turmoil remains to be seen. Outside of examining job vacancies through on-line employment vacancy companies or through the weekend newspaper career/employment sections anecdotal evidence will be available with the participation and demand by resource companies for surveying professionals through scholarship/graduate recruitment programs at career fairs nationally around university campuses in 2009. Emma Thelwell of ninemsn Money quoting figures from an ANZ study stated that the number of job advertisements in major metropolitan newspapers and the internet fell 9.7 per cent in December.

Commodity prices are sharply lower and the demand for commodities is weaker. For example, Scotiabank's commodity All Items Index has plunged 35 per cent from July through to November 2008 and in their global economic research letter stated that steel production in China was down 17 per cent for October 2008 alone. Andrew Fraser of The Australian quoted Queensland resources council chief Michael Roche as stating coking coal demand from European customers was down 20 per cent and from Asia 10 per cent. The immediate response by resource companies world-wide has been a review of their operations.

In an article by James McCullough of the Courier Mail the impact on resource companies has been reflected in publicised employment job losses at mine operations involving resource companies of the size and magnitude of Rio Tinto, Macarthur Coal and OZ Minerals. The Australian Bureau of Statistics released data for December announcing that the unemployment rate rose to 4.5 per cent as a result of the loss of 44,000 full-time jobs for December. In the property sector there was a seasonally adjusted 1.4 per cent increase in the number of home loan approvals in November offset by a 13 per cent decrease in the number of homes approved for construction. The increase in home loan approvals is primarily attributed to first home buyers being attracted into the market after an increase in the first home buyers grant, a succession of interest rate cuts and a contraction in property prices to more affordable levels. The general consensus figure is around 6 per cent for the unemployment rate for 2009. Chris Zappone of the Sydney Morning Herald quoted ANZ economist Alex Joiner as stating, “confidence in the property is still shaky and economic uncertainty is high, the prospect of a climbing...
unemployment rate throughout 2009 in particular poses a real risk to any significant recovery in the sector.” Thelwell ended her article stating “analysts said the figures were consistent with a looming recession.”

The prospects for 2009 appear more annus horribilis than annus mirabilis, personally I am not as pessimistic as many of the economic pundits. Given a scenario that is less than optimal for economic growth in 2009, what’s an employee to do?

Articulation of NSW TAFE diploma surveying students to USQ surveying degree program

A curious side-effect of a rise in unemployment is that employees turn towards increasing their employability by studying and training to achieve a qualification.

Many employees have studied in the well regarded NSW TAFE system and have either gained qualifications in surveying or the variations that have existed over the years. This provides a solid grounding for an articulated pathway to tertiary programs that will lead to registration as a land or mine surveyor. The conferral of a degree by articulated progression of TAFE to tertiary studies from the vocational to higher education sector is based on seamless transition guidelines established by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) in 1995. The aim of the AQF was to promulgate credit transfer guidelines by recognising prior learning and establishing linkages and guidelines for both qualifications and credit between institutions in the vocational and higher education sector.

At the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), the NSW TAFE graduates/students represent a significant proportion of the students studying surveying. USQ has had some very good students and valuable members of the profession in the past including Adam Clerke and Wayne Stoeckl whom have articulated from NSW TAFE. For NSW TAFE students, USQ has well identified articulation pathways, for example the 2 year Advanced Diploma in Technology (3 year program, BSST) to a full Bachelor Spatial Science Degree (4 year program, BSPS). The programs range from an Associate Degree in Spatial Science Surveying and Geographic Information Systems. These programs from an Associate Degree in Spatial Science (2 year program, ADSS) to a Bachelor Spatial Science Technology (3 year program, BSST) to a full Bachelor Spatial Science Degree (4 year program, BSPS). The programs are articulated, resulting in seamless transition from one program to another with full credit for studies completed between programs within the same major.

The program that best suits a NSW TAFE surveying diploma student is the Bachelor of Spatial Science (surveying major). For information on our programs of study you can visit our web address:

Table 1: USQ Academic and practice course guide for NSW TAFE students for the Bachelor of Spatial Science (surveying major)

Surveying and Geographic Information Systems. These programs range from an Associate Degree in Spatial Science (2 year program, ADSS) to a Bachelor Spatial Science Technology (3 year program, BSST) to a full Bachelor Spatial Science Degree (4 year program, BSPS). The programs are articulated, resulting in seamless transition from one program to another with full credit for studies completed between programs within the same major.

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Conclusion

Despite the expected rise in the unemployment rate and reduced prospects for economic growth in 2009, the employee should take the opportunity to increase their employability and job prospects by studying to enhance their career prospects. An economic turnaround is always just around the corner and to be a vibrant and sustainable profession, bright enquiring minds are required in sufficient numbers to meet the demand for spatial services provided by registered land surveyors. NSW TAFE is a valued source to meet that demand through an articulated pathway. It’s head down for a head start to the future at USQ.

Shane Simmons
Associate Head of Surveying and Spatial Science
USQ - University of Southern Queensland