**Vice-Chancellor’s Welcome to New Students – 2014**

Hello, my name is John Dewar and as Vice-Chancellor I would like to welcome you and all new students to La Trobe University. For some of you it is the beginning of your academic journey and an exciting new stage in your life. Others may be part way through that journey, having chosen La Trobe for your postgraduate study. You have all chosen a university committed to your academic success and able to prepare you for the future.

La Trobe is a great university. We began life back in the 1960s, more than 45 years ago, with a mandate to be complementary to, but different from, the other large Victorian universities. Since the beginning we have pushed the envelope; been slightly edgier, more “radical” even than many other Australian universities.

La Trobe was then, as it is now, a university deeply committed to making a difference to the world around us. We have a proud history of public engagement and social change and we are known for our world view, our independent thinking, and our creativity and innovation. Our alumni are some of the most influential people their generations have produced.

These are exciting times at La Trobe as we implement our strategic plan, *Future Ready*, which will see the University build on its strong reputation for high quality teaching and an engaging student experience. We’ve identified three vital areas of learning to prepare you to be future ready - global citizenship, innovation and entrepreneurship and sustainability thinking, collectively known as ‘the essentials’. Engagement with the essentials will enable students to make a meaningful contribution to the debate and decision-making needed in our rapidly changing global environment. Your learning experiences will also be enriched by our ‘Radical Learning Project’ which will see an increased use of technology and online learning, blended with more traditional face-to-face learning.

For most new students, your academic year commences in late February with Orientation Week, the theme for which is ‘connecting for your academic success’. Orientation Week is when you will meet other students with whom you will be studying and the academic staff who will be teaching you, and when you will become more familiar with your campus and the systems that you will interact with over the coming years. Be sure to sign up during Orientation for a mentor and keep in contact with your mentor during the first six weeks of semester – they are there to assist you with your transition to La Trobe and to ensure your academic year gets off to a strong start.

In fact, there are many services committed to supporting students; not just in your academic endeavours but in your general health and wellbeing. These services are confidential and easy to access, and you’ll learn more about them during Orientation and over the first six weeks of semester.

In concluding, there is one piece of advice I would like to share with all new students at the start of the academic year - the key to your success is to get involved. We know from years of research that the students most likely to succeed are those who get fully involved in their university experience. Get involved in your classes, engage with your teachers, make connections with fellow students, and participate as fully as possible in your learning. Equally important to your success will be the co-curricular opportunities you pursue – there are clubs and societies for an amazing range of interests and hobbies, there are sporting teams to join, volunteering experiences to be rewarded for, and leadership opportunities to assist you in becoming future ready. Make the most of these opportunities and enjoy your time as a valued member of the La Trobe University community.