

University talent: it's not just academic!

Rohan Carr, IRC Australia | June 26, 2016

So called non-academic roles make up around 50% of total University employees. This figure has remained stable over the past ten years, however their roles and functions have changed considerably and they have become more critical to the successful functioning of education institutions. As Australian higher education has become more complex, grown in size and faced greater competition and other challenges, the role of those that manage the institutions and provide specialist expertise has become even more important. As a result the demand for such talent, skills and experience has significantly increased.

According to ABS statistics, growth in university professional positions since 2000 has been greatest in areas of information technology, marketing and student recruitment, research support, compliance and advancement (including fundraising and external engagement). The nature of roles has also evolved and changed and indeed many of today's functions did not exist a decade ago. A number of our senior leadership appointments in areas of digital technology, commercialisation and industry engagement have required skills sets and experience which would have been unheard of more than a few years ago.



As the demand for such skills has increased and the nature of these roles become more complex, education providers are using global search capabilities to recruit; an activity once limited to only senior academic positions. Universities are looking to countries such as the US and UK, and the European and Asian regions for executives with best practice experience in the area of fundraising, digital learning, the management of facilities and services and information management. The remuneration and career structures are also now more attractive for senior university specialists and leaders. The size, complexity and diversity of the education and research sector also provides incredible challenges for individuals. Furthermore, the changing nature of the sector means that there is now a much greater flow of talent into education institutions from other industries.

As executive search professionals we work across the breadth of the education sector. It is not uncommon for some of our most complex and challenging searches to be for talent outside academia. These searches are not confined to other education or research institutions alone but we seek to identify appropriate talent in other public institutions, commercial organisations and also offshore. How times have changed - and continue to do so!