Southern Cross Program
Case Study

School Expansion

Ilim College of Australian Inc
Expanding to a Second Campus

School Description

Ilim College of Australia is a Prep to Year 12 coeducational Islamic school established in 1995 in Dallas, in Melbourne's northern suburbs. The school's 1160 students are mostly based at the Dallas campus. In 2013, Ilim College of Australia opened a campus at Glenroy for 180 of its students. The school focuses on students' personal, academic and spiritual development, enabling students to become life-long learners who are responsible for their community, nation and the global world. It provides intensive intervention programs to support students’ individual needs.

Project

Ilim College of Australia has long-known it needed a second campus, and in June 2012, purchased a former individual needs school in Glenroy, 10 kilometres from Dallas. But who would study there? Would the Glenroy campus become a campus for, say, the girls of the secondary school, in line with the segregated secondary schooling of many Islamic schools? Or would the Glenroy campus become a home for the school's primary students? The issues focussed on teaching, curriculum and resources, as well as on the school's demographics, waiting lists and shifting populations. The questions were philosophical as much as they were logistical and the answer would be crucial to the future direction of a school that was, said Ilim College of Australia Principal Aynur Simsirel, ‘bursting at the seams’.

Process

Ms Simsirel and six senior colleagues attended the Southern Cross training: the primary school Vice Principal, the primary school Curriculum Coordinator, the secondary school Teaching and Learning Coordinator, the secondary school Students Services Manager, the college accountant, and a board member. ‘It was a good mixture,’ said Ms Simsirel. ‘We differed in our opinions and had some lively debates.’

The team spent four days away from school, giving them the opportunity to focus solely on the new campus issue, and to appreciate more of each other’s roles in the school.

Ms Simsirel said that learning about the importance of ‘the voice of the customer’ was ‘a real eye-opener’. The Ilim College of Australia Southern Cross team realised the need for focus groups and surveys of the school’s teachers, students and parents. ‘There was plenty of anecdotal evidence about people’s thoughts on who should be part of the new campus but we needed to capture that information in an organised way. That process ultimately settles everyone down.’
The Southern Cross training also showed Ilim College of Australia the tools to implementing a plan once a decision had been made. Ms Simsirel displayed an implementation plan poster not just in her office but in the staffroom, so that people could see, at a glance, how the school was heading towards the first day of classes at the Glenroy campus. ‘The implementation plan poster made things a lot less overwhelming. Often all you had to do was add a post-it note to show we had progressed another step,’ she said.

Use of many graphic organisers, such as the Fishbone diagram, was also a key part to Ilim College of Australia developing an understanding of process performance management to sift through the issues of opening a new campus.

**Results**

The Southern Cross training gave Ilim College of Australia the momentum to make its crucial decision about the Glenroy campus. ‘It was time to throw ourselves into existence, to open the campus. We didn’t want to delay it any longer.’ said Ms Simsirel.

After the Southern Cross training, the College ran an extensive consultation with the school community, and in September 2012, decided that the Glenroy campus will begin as a Prep to Year 6 school in January 2013. One hundred and eighty students were accepted in addition to its existing 580 students from the Dallas campus.

‘The decision has helped clarify and shape our identity. It has made us think about the philosophy of the school, about it being a progressive Islamic school.’ Ms Simsirel said there were no major objections or backlash to the decision, despite there being, for some years, an assumption that a new campus would be either a boys’ or a girls’ secondary school.

Ms Simsirel was high in her praise of the Southern Cross training and ‘absolutely’ recommends it to other schools. (The training in 2012 was the second time that Ilim College of Australia had taken part in the Southern Cross program. During the first training session, the school looked at the issue of communication processes in administration.)

‘I think the training is amazing. It’s a real eye-opener in so many ways. You become a lot more systematic in managing. It allows you to see things a lot more clearly.’ said Ms Simsirel.

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