

Business faculties stretched to the limit

STEPHEN MATCHETT From: The Australian May 08, 2013 12:00AM

FOREIGN business students are keeping Australian universities afloat, with their fees cross-subsidising other faculties. The result is an unsustainable model that is stretching business faculties "to the limit", according to professors of strategy Timothy Devinney and Grahame Dowling.

Business faculties specifically suffer from "decreasing academic quality brought on by large class sizes, a greater number of casual lecturers and decreasing intellectual quality", the University of Technology, Sydney academics warn in *The Australian* today.

They also argue that plans to increase international student numbers would mean doubling business faculties, if existing enrolment patterns continue.

"What is clear to us is that doubling an already crowded system, staffed by an ageing workforce, which is underperforming intellectually by world standards, is a recipe for organisational disaster and intellectual and pedagogical mediocrity," they write.

And they warn that the existing situation inevitably will affect international enrolments as "the best students are increasingly attracted to better-capitalised overseas institutions that are unlikely to tax their business faculties at anywhere near the rate seen in Australia".

To address the present crisis, Devinney and Dowling propose a "professions-only university" funded by government and business to teach management disciplines, plus economics, accounting and law. This "national icon" would have campuses in Sydney and Melbourne and be based on a \$400 million endowment built across a decade.

Devinney and Dowling point to a range of national business schools, including the Singapore Management University, as examples of how their proposal can work and suggest "it would serve to reduce the undue stress being placed on our existing university structure" and better connect management education with business. "Australian business schools have very little interaction with the business community and are generally ignored by the big end of town," they say.