Practice to academy transitions

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Macquarie Lighthouse was the first marine lighthouse built in Australia. Following the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the Macquarie flagstaff was erected to signal the approach of supply ships destined for Sydney Cove. Through the fog of an aging workforce, increased casualisation, student diversity and changes to modes, methods and media in teaching and learning, universities have been compelled to look elsewhere to recruit a substantial portion of their academic staff. In short, the demand for academics and academic capability is far exceeding supply. The sirens call radiating from universities promises new recruits greater work/life balance, increased flexibility and intellectual prestige. While affecting all disciplines, these broader sectoral trends directly affect the capacity of universities to provide quality teaching and learning; in particular, for undergraduate mathematics and statistics education. For many industry-practitioners, the above reasons are sufficient to compel them to ‘make the move’ from industry to academia. However, the everyday realities of life in higher education institutions come with a series of significant and unexpected challenges. Drawing on qualitative interview data with transitioned ‘pracademics’, this presentation explores the teaching and learning implications of these transitions and the personal/professional challenges experienced by these individuals.