Good evening Vice Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis, fellow Principals, students and University staff.

I have been asked to speak briefly tonight about the relationship my school, and many other schools have with Melbourne University and the benefits derived from this relationship.

As a 'base school' supporting the delivery of the Melbourne University Master of Teaching Course, we host teacher candidates on placement for two days per week and block rounds each semester. Teacher candidates are assigned a mentor teacher and are supported by a teaching fellow drawn from the base school staff and a clinical specialist from the University.

Academic seminars are also delivered from time to time at the base school.

Since the inception of the Master of Teaching clinical practice approach to pre-service teacher training in 2008, Koonung has hosted approximately 180 students with a further 360 hosted in our partnering schools. This year 26 students will complete their placement at Koonung and another 50 in our partnering schools, Box Hill High School, Avila College and Mount Waverley Secondary College.

Currently 17 members of Koonung’s ongoing teaching staff are MTeach graduates in subject areas including mathematics, science, English, Physical Education, History, Art, English as an Alternate Language and Geography.

In 2011/12 the Koonung schools as Centres for Teaching Excellence cluster was formed. Melbourne University was the key tertiary partner and partner schools, Mount Waverley SC, Box Hill HS, Ringwood Heights Primary, Mont Albert Primary, Greythorn Primary and Box Hill North Primary.

This was a federally funded initiative with a focus on investigating ways in which the delivery of pre-service teacher training could be enhanced at both University and school level.

A key finding was that the quality of the supervising teacher as a mentor is significant. Thirty teachers from the 6 cluster schools undertook ‘the specialist Certificate in Education – Clinical Teaching’ developed by Melbourne University in response to the identified need to improve practising teacher understanding of mentoring.

A further 5 pilot groups have been funded for 2014/15 and the concept of a Mentor training unit developed by Melbourne University has been adopted by other Universities involved in these pilot programs.

The impact on the ground at my school and others involved in delivering the MTeach model, was to open the door to classrooms, where team teaching, observations and visiting neighbouring classrooms and indeed neighbouring school classrooms is now commonplace.

Experienced and graduate teachers sharing ideas, lesson plans, strategies and techniques used in the classroom are the norm and collegiality is powerful.

In the last few days I have been signing year 11 students’ applications to access the 2014 Melbourne University extension program for highly able students. Subjects on offer range from Accounting to Earth Sciences and History to Mathematics – 20 subjects in total. This is another example of the partnership we have and indeed all schools can have with Melbourne University.

In closing I wish to read the text of a thank you card received from the semester 1 2013 intake of MTeach students at Koonung.

“To Peter and the staff at Koonung Secondary College,

Thank you so much for all the support and time you have dedicated to the Master of Teaching students over the past term. This has been a wonderful school environment to be part of and I will be sad to say goodbye. Thank you for the opportunities that were provided to us, it has been fantastic. Thank you once again.