

***For championing public health and health promotion in the tropics through authentic and networked leadership that inspires multi-disciplinary health professionals.***

#### OVERVIEW: SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTION AND CONTEXT

*“Sue Devine’s work quietly equips an entire generation of allied health professionals with the necessary language, knowledge and skills required to undertake often ignored prevention and promotion activities in health. I believe it will assist students in meeting the complex health and health care challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”* (Asha Kiran, former Director, Health Promotion, Townsville Health Service, 2015).

While diagnosing and managing disease is an important part of every health professional’s role, taking a proactive approach to preventing poor health can transform underlying patterns of disease and ensure future wellness. In 1992, after a decade of working in clinical practice I became frustrated with treating the outcomes of disease and was inspired to change direction and embrace a proactive disease prevention approach to my work. Realising I had significant knowledge gaps regarding preventive approaches I enrolled in a Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (MPH&TM) at James Cook University (JCU) which solidified my passion and commitment for public health and health promotion. After completing my Master’s degree, the program coordinator asked me to develop an external health promotion subject for the MPH&TM, which I then coordinated for four years as a consultant. And so began my career in academia. Fifteen years later, it is with a great sense of pride that I reflect on my success in inspiring a new generation of health professionals to be committed to integrating public health and health promotion into their practice. In 1999 I commenced fulltime work at JCU as a junior academic with a passion for building the capacity of future health professionals in public health and health promotion but with a lot to learn about best practice and excellence in student learning and engagement. Determined to develop my skills, I enrolled in a Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Teaching which cemented my commitment to learning and teaching.

My academic journey commenced with the responsibility of developing and coordinating postgraduate and undergraduate health promotion subjects. When I first developed and coordinated an undergraduate health promotion subject, I had 60 occupational therapy students. Today I teach this subject to more than 300 students from seven allied health disciplines. To engage these students, I have developed a deep understanding of the various disciplines in order to contextualise content to their specific fields of practice. In addition to this undergraduate load, I continue to coordinate the postgraduate subject I initially developed as a consultant, which has grown from 15 students to 118 in 2015 and is now a core subject for the MPH&TM and Master of Public Health (MPH). Since 1999 my role at JCU has evolved. I am now a senior public health academic, leader and champion both within my discipline and in learning and teaching at JCU, and in the broader public health/health promotion field in Australia. I have demonstrated innovation and leadership in my role at JCU, which has contributed to the success of leading one of the biggest public health programs in Australia and one of only two MPH&TMs in the world. My active engagement in public health and health promotion research and industry based initiatives at a local, state and national level, brings authenticity to my leadership within the university and to the subjects I teach. This citation **demonstrates my leadership** in championing public health and health promotion at JCU and my innovative approach to undergraduate and postgraduate public health and health promotion curricula.

#### CRITERION 4: INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP OR SCHOLARSHIP THAT HAS INFLUENCED AND ENHANCED LEARNING AND TEACHING AND/OR THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Building health professional capacity in public health and promotion is urgently required to cope with future health challenges and health system demands. Australia’s ageing population, combined with increases in chronic diseases necessitates significant health reform with a greater emphasis on public health and health promotion. To provide strong leadership in a university program it is essential to be engaged in and contribute to the field both within the university and more broadly. I am an Executive Member of the Australian Health Promotion Association and represent JCU on the Council of Academic Public Health Institutions Australia working group, which assesses core public health competencies in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. In 2009, I provided significant input into the development of

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Health Promotion Standards for Queensland Health and the National Core Competencies for Health Promotion<sup>1</sup>, which impacted on professionalising the health promotion industry. This engagement has actively influenced the direction of health promotion in Australia.

In my senior role at JCU I coordinate, manage and lead the MPH and MPH&TM programs and ensure quality in student learning across all graduate certificate, diploma and Master level courses. I have been Academic Advisor for the postgraduate public health programs since 2009 and Acting Director, Public Health and Tropical Medicine, since 2013. In 2012, in response to the 2011 revision of the Australian Qualifications Framework I initiated a comprehensive review of the postgraduate public health program. Collaboratively, our teaching team redefined course learning outcomes and refreshed course content. Postgraduate public health students at JCU come from both within Australia and internationally. The restructure took into account specific learning needs of this unique international student body and clearly aligned the course with the strategic intent of JCU – ‘Creating a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference’.

I am immersed in the teaching research nexus and actively engage in research in both my discipline area and pedagogy to inform my teaching practice. My sphere of influence in learning, teaching and research extends beyond the university. I am not only committed to ensuring that our graduates are equipped with state of the art knowledge and skills, but also to the ongoing professional development of the broader workforce. In 2007 I was funded by Queensland Health to develop a five day short course in health promotion aimed at building health professional capacity in health promotion. This was delivered across North Queensland from 2007 to 2009. Evaluation research results published in 2009 showed participants gained knowledge, skills, confidence and enthusiasm to undertake health promotion work<sup>2</sup>. In 2010 I was part of a team awarded a Rural Health Continuing Education Grant to develop a course to build capacity of rural and remote allied health professionals to embrace preventive approaches in managing clinical caseloads. Evaluation research results presented at a national conference, demonstrated participants successfully modified their practice to incorporate learnings from the course<sup>3</sup>.

#### ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNING, TEACHING AND OVERALL STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH INNOVATION IN HEALTH PROMOTION CURRICULA

*“Sue is renowned amongst her colleagues and peers in the Townsville region for her passion of health promotion principles and practice... [B]ecause of her skills, she is requested to collaborate on partnerships, assist in research, planning and evaluation of local projects and programs and facilitate meetings and planning workshops. She transfers this enthusiasm and passion on to her students”* (Peer review, Alison Abbott, Health Promotion Coordinator, Tropical Public Health Unit, Townsville, 2012).

As highlighted in the above statement, I believe my passion, leadership and engagement with research, the university and industry pervades my classroom teaching and discipline leadership. This enhances learning and enriches student experience. Throughout my time at JCU I have championed the development of undergraduate and postgraduate health promotion curricula, successfully inspiring students to embrace health promotion as a core component of their professional identities. This is best exemplified in the core undergraduate subject and core postgraduate subject described above. While health promotion is acknowledged as a key public health approach to improving health outcomes in the population, teaching this topic to health professionals, who are focused on “discipline specific” content, can be challenging. Public health related subjects can be perceived as boring subjects<sup>4</sup> and my challenge is to make them as engaging and authentic as possible within the context of the disciplines being studied. Consistently, evaluations of these subjects demonstrate students engage with the content and develop a positive attitude regarding the subject relevance and importance; *“The way in which she taught was very enthusiastic which made going to both the tutorials and lectures more motivating and enjoyable. She always related what we were learning to identifiable examples which made understanding the content so much easier. She gave great feedback on questions and assessment items in a timely manner. Overall her teaching is of the highest quality and she should be commended on her work”* (Formal Teaching Evaluation, undergraduate student feedback, 2014).

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Brown et. al. state *“Learning methods that are embedded in authentic situations are not merely useful; they are essential”*<sup>5</sup>. This approach has been key to my success in teaching health promotion subjects. I embed my teaching in a **pedagogy of authenticity**<sup>6</sup> and **collegiality**<sup>7</sup>, which inspires and motivates student learning. I apply authentic pedagogy to ensure that learning and assessment tasks allow development of robust knowledge and skills that have application in real-world practice<sup>6</sup>. Collegiality refers to *“a relationship that embodies mutual learning and shifts the centre of attention from the teachers to the students and back again so that all can become members of a community of learners”*<sup>7</sup>. Applying a pedagogy of authenticity and collegiality is consistent with health promotion principles and theory that values ecological, collaborative approaches. In line with constructivist theory<sup>8</sup>, I ensure students are active participants in learning processes to allow deep understanding and application. I achieve this by designing authentic learning and assessment tasks that have real-life application; student feedback in formal university teaching evaluations confirmed, *“assessment was applicable to current clinical practice”* (undergraduate student, 2013) and that the *“best thing was the ability to apply assignment to my field of practice, profession and interest”* (postgraduate student, 2014). In undergraduate subjects, students work collaboratively on assessment tasks to construct knowledge. These activities build the skills necessary for the cooperative nature of successful health promotion that graduates will encounter.

To meet the needs of geographically dispersed postgraduate students, health promotion subject content has been revised in recent years and is now delivered entirely online with use of podcasts and discussion boards to engage students in the content. I make a concerted effort to evaluate and then utilize appropriate and relevant technological advancements allowing students to engage in materials in a way that meets their own learning needs. Discussion boards in the postgraduate subject foster collaborative learning via exposure to the diverse range of postgraduate student experiences; *“I really enjoyed the discussion topics and seeing different perspectives on the same topic by people from varying areas of health”* (Formal Teaching Evaluation, postgraduate student feedback, 2014). My impact on inspiring students’ interest in health promotion is evidenced by their ongoing engagement in public health study, with increasing numbers of undergraduate students enrolling in health promotion related Honours, MPH programs and PhDs.

#### **SUSTAINED RECOGNITION OF SUCCESS BY STUDENTS, JCU AND INDUSTRY PEERS.**

The sustained excellence of my teaching initiatives is reflected in student evaluations and peer reviews of teaching. My ability to inspire students, design contemporary and industry relevant curriculum, and utilise pedagogical techniques that engage and support students has gained recognition from students, peers and external stakeholders and in 2015 earned me a *JCU Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning*. In addition, out of the 12 awards presented, I received the prestigious *2015 Overall Best Citation*.

**Student feedback using standardizing university evaluation instruments** show sustained high levels of student satisfaction with both subjects. *“Sue Devine was an incredible lecturer. She acknowledges that everyone has a different learning technique and therefore ensured that the learning material was suitable for all students”*; *“Sue is a wonderful lecturer and tutor! I felt I learnt so much from her and was inspired by the content given. She made it easy to understand and I really enjoyed the subject as a whole”* (Formal Teaching Evaluations, undergraduate student feedback, 2014).

While overall feedback highlights student satisfaction with organisation, communication and teaching style, feedback on assessment specifically highlights the discipline specific relevance and authenticity of the tasks: *“I liked the ability to apply assignments to my field of practice, profession and interests. The second assignment in particular was great - it enabled me to learn and develop health promotion skills within my own field. I really enjoyed writing it”* (Formal Teaching Evaluation, postgraduate student feedback, 2013). Overall satisfaction both at a subject and teaching level is consistently well above JCU averages as is satisfaction with regards to assessment clarity for learning (Figure 1).

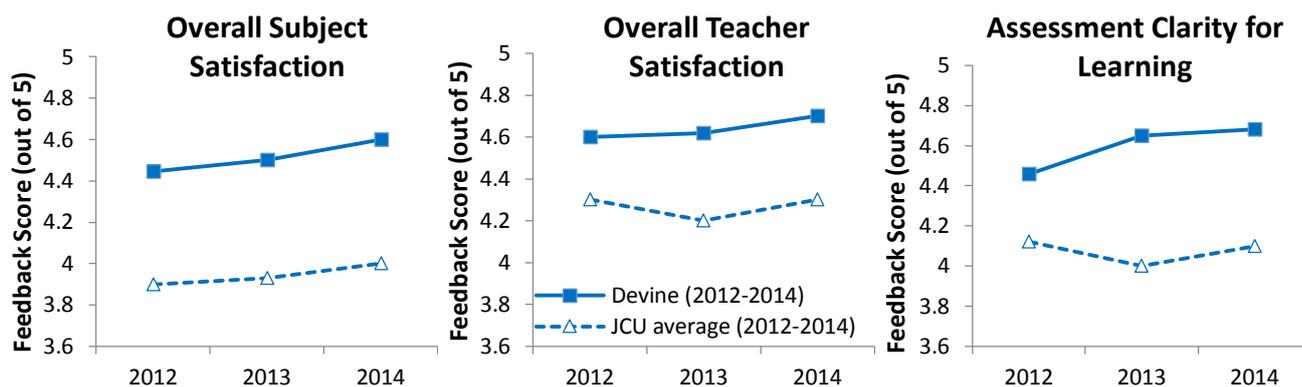


Fig 1: Student Feedback on overall subject and teaching satisfaction and assessment clarity for learning

**Peer review of health promotion subjects by peers and industry stakeholders** commend me on discipline relevance and authentic approaches to teaching and assessment. *"I was amazed at the breadth of knowledge and skills that were covered in these subjects with attention to application of health promotion. Sue had developed the post graduate subject to prepare practitioners to implement sound evidence based projects and evaluate programs"; "The relevance of the undergraduate students to their specific discipline was amazing as discipline specific case studies and academic journal articles were sourced for each discipline. These helped students not only understand health promotion but also developed skills in applying health promotion in their specific disciplines"* (Asha Kiran, Former Director, Health Promotion, Townsville Health Service, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

**MY AUTHENTIC AND INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP TO EMBED PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROMOTION WITHIN** undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at JCU and build capacity of the profession more widely has profoundly influenced the next generation of health professionals. Through my passion and commitment to championing the discipline and providing content authentic learning experiences, students develop a deep understanding of public health and health promotion within the context of their professional practice, inspiring them to become engaged, well informed and effective collaborative partners in the work of contemporary public health and health promotion. In the words of a professional colleague, *"Sue's work has far reaching effects for health promotion professionals in the region. She advocated for strengthening of health promotion and chronic disease prevention agenda and mentoring upcoming health professionals in the region"* (Asha Kiran, Former Director, Health Promotion, Townsville Health Services, 2015). The impact of my work on the health professionals of the future is particularly highlighted by a recently graduated allied health professional: *"I just wanted to thank you again for your valuable time and experience during classes and tutes - and every time I bothered you thereafter! Your classes were always full to the brim with students which is a testament to your teaching style and delivery. I really loved Health Promotion thanks to you. With your guidance, I understood its enormous impact on our communities, and how I can make a difference. I just want you to know that you made a huge difference to my life - how I think, and how I approach other academic and personal challenges. It's a gift you cannot wrap but priceless all the same. So thank you so very much"* (unsolicited email from a recently graduated Sport and Exercise Science student, Jan 2015).

**References:** 1. Aust Health Promotion Ass. *Core Competencies for Health Promotion Practitioners*. AHPA; 2009. 2. Devine SG, Llewellyn-Jones L., Lloyd J. Impact of a five-day short course on integration of health promotion into practice in North Qld. *Health Prom J of Aust*. 2009; 20, 1:69-71. 3. Gordon S, Franklin R, Devine S. Allied health in rural and remote settings: moving practice upstream. Oral presentation presented at the 2012 Services for Aust. Rural and Remote Allied Health Conferences, Launceston, Tas. 4. Qadeer I and Nayar KR. Politics of Pedagogy in Public Health. *Social Scientists*, 2003; 33, 1/2: 47-75. 5. Brown J S, Collins A, & Duguid P. Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Ed Researcher*. 1989; 18, 1: 32-42. 6. Herrington, J., Reeves, T.C., Oliver, R. *Authentic Learning Environments*. Springer, NY; 2014. 7. Chavez V, Turalba RAN, Malik, S. Teaching public health through a pedagogy of collegiality. *Am J of Public Health*. 2006; 96,7: 1175-1180. 8. Tynjala P. Towards expert knowledge? A comparison between a constructivist and a traditional learning environment in the university. *Int J of Ed Research*. 1999; 31,5: 357-442.