

ALTC CITATION

AWARD WINNER

For stimulating multidisciplinary first year students to learn Anatomy for life via innovative, pro-active approaches to improve engagement and learning outcomes

CLAUDIA M DIAZ, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
FACULTY OF MEDICINE, HEALTH AND MOLECULAR SCIENCE

What does being acknowledged by JCU and your peers for influencing students' learning through your teaching practice mean to you on a professional level, and on a personal level?

I am very humbled and honoured to receive an ALTC Teaching award this year. This acknowledgement will help me to further develop this work and in particular to share my expertise and experiences with colleagues around Australia and the world. I have already been asked to present workshops on my teaching methods at four Australian Universities. On a personal note, I am honoured and moved to think that my teaching methods may be having a profound influence on my students; this is my ultimate goal and aspiration.

In what way has student feedback regarding the way in which students experience your teaching style, informed your teaching practice?

Student feedback in the form of SFT's, special surveys and focus groups has formed a central part of my efforts to improve anatomy teaching at JCU. Of central importance is student learning of Anatomy. My surveys found that my health sciences students enjoy the subject, have high quality learning experiences, have a high level of interest in the course, believe the teachings to be more relevant to their later years and professional career, and have a high level of interaction with both their peers and their teachers. Backing this, SFS data shows I have consistently received scores of 4.1-4.6 on the 5-point scale in questions regarding student interest, motivation and learning experience.

You have a rich teaching career and valuable experiences that have shaped your teaching style, but what drives you to teach well?

I strive to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for students that will make learning both enjoyable and stimulating. I feel that I am on an important path to change the historical views regarding the teaching and learning of Anatomy. By making Anatomy engaging, stimulating and fun and by helping students to be pro-active learners I believe I am laying the foundations for a new approach to learning Anatomy. In light of the inherent and contextual challenges involved in teaching anatomy, I have tried to find and evaluate methods to teach all students Anatomy more effectively, in less time, and often with limited resources. I aim to take students from the traditional view of Anatomy as a subject that requires surface learning to one that can lead to deep learning through understanding.

What are some of your current research interests?

My current medical (anatomical) education research is investigating further the best methods to teach anatomy to diverse cohorts of health profession students. In particular I am investigating the use of the whiteboard as a powerful learning tool and the teaching of surface anatomy, using body painting. I am particularly interested in further developing 'hands-on', multisensory teaching approaches to engage students and improve results.



Associate Professor Claudia M Diaz - 2011 ALTC Citation Award Winner