

2012 Australian Awards for University Teaching

CITATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENT LEARNING



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TITLE

For the development of transformative pedagogies through 'courageous conversations' within the cultural interface to motivate student engagement and promote reconciliation.

ABSTRACT

James Cook University (JCU) is committed to achieving "genuine and sustainable reconciliation between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community" (Reconciliation Statement, 2012). This nomination powerfully highlights our achievements since 2007 to enact transformative pedagogies that are innovative and, importantly, valued by a diverse student cohort, JCU and the wider community of North Queensland. The subject we have designed and teach within, Linking Indigeness, is a first year subject that is highly sought after by international students, established now as a foundation subject for Bachelor of Education students, and taken as an elective by a wide array of students ranging across our University areas.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO APPLY FOR A CITATION?

The encouragement of our peers was a major influence in the decision. If it had been left to us, we may not have taken this further. However, after individuals such as our Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Nola Alloway, Director of Teaching and Learning Professor Angela Hill and our Head of School Professor Stanley Nangala (School of Indigenous Australian Studies), requested that we do so, we changed our minds and actually took the time and effort to make this a reality. It was, overall, a rather humbling experience for us to have others recognise and value our work in this area. In particular, it was under the guidance of Professor Hill where the citation became the actualised product.

The concept of sharing our teaching philosophy and practices, which have proven to be effective over time with a variety of student cohorts, was the other primary motivator to apply. Transformative pedagogy works, and as such, we desired to share our knowledge with the academy.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE AND HOW ARE YOU SUPPORTED IN PURSUING THESE PRACTICES AT JCU?

Our educational practice engenders transformative, inclusive pedagogy, where students are placed at the heart of our teaching. Together, we engage in an academic journeying where risk-taking and shared narratives, including our own, are centrally positioned as we collaboratively construct a learning place. Our subject challenges perceptions and thinking in a supportive, safe environment where we intentionally create a space for all voices to be valued and all opinions to be heard. To this end, we continually encourage all students to actively engage in difficult dialogues and courageous conversations in contested cultural spaces. Furthermore, the intertwining of Field Trips is also an integral, effective strategy we incorporate into our teaching repertoire, as it broadens the scope of the traditional classroom to include the environmental cultural landscape. JCU encourages us to reflect upon ourselves as teachers so that student engagement will be a worthwhile experience; while SIAS supports us in our endeavours to do so.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE HEADING IN THE FUTURE?

We would love this subject to be compulsory for all first year students at JCU and to have them perceive themselves as part of the Australian cultural landscape. It is important to recognise that Australia has a shared history and to distinguish the place and role of individuals and distinct cultures in shaping our national identity. We see our future teaching directions adding further to this cultural discourse.