

AAUT VIDEO SERIES:

2019 EARLY CAREER TEACHING AWARD RECIPIENT:

DR DEMELZA IRELAND, UWA

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

My name is Demelza Ireland and I'm a teaching intensive senior lecturer at the University of Western Australia. I work with the School of Biomedical Sciences and the medical school division of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

KEY ASPECTS OF YOUR TEACHING BEEN RECOGNISE FOR

I was awarded the 2019 Australian award for University Teaching Excellence early career. This was largely for the design, development and delivery of a unique undergraduate broadening program in women's health. I created one unit, a year for three years.

Globally, a gender gap exists in health outcomes. Our solution to this multifactorial problem will require input from within and outside of the traditional women's health sector. As such, I created a curriculum with a foundation in biology health and medicine that also explores the issues through a much wider interdisciplinary lens. I engage industry experts and academics and women's health from a range of disciplines, including the more traditional ones, like obstetrics, physiotherapy, psychology, but also from the law, ethics, history, economics, to name a few. As broadening units, these must be attainable by students from across the whole campus from all of our major learning areas. So, I assume little knowledge, and I teach really practical skills. I aim for both personal and professional learning opportunities. I tell my students that they have achieved my learning outcomes, if they can have a really informed conversation with an aunt at a Friday night family barbecue, that empowers her to vaccinate a cousin against HPV, for the protection from cervical cancer.

MY JOURNEY OF WINNING THE EARLY CAREER AWARD

My women's health units quickly became very popular. Feedback from students and contributing guests were really positive. And I was nominated for faculty teaching awards.

I knew that I must have been onto something good, but I was really hesitant to believe that it was worthy often award. I was just having a blast. I was just doing my job. It was only after I had run the new level three unit for the first time that I converted an award nomination into an application. I did this because we had hit one of our core goals of the program. It was to promote more students into women's health research, the level three unit required students to prepare a research proposal on a research question of their design and match students with a research mentor to help them shape their ideas. And at the end of the semester students pitch their proposals for Monopoly money, three out of 12 students were offered research placements that day to complete the project that they had designed as undergraduates. I was impressed!

I won the faculty award on my first attempt and was then nominated for a University Award. I was still not convinced that this work was worthy of any Award but I could not let down the students who had nominated me. We all know how hard it can be to mobilize them into completing a feedback survey.

I was elated to win the University Award and absolutely floored by a nomination for an AAUT. This application process was really intense and really soul searching. Whilst my women's health units had been going swimmingly, my immunology teaching was really challenging. I was involved in the redesign of our MD program and the introduction of an undergraduate entry pathway. This was a huge amount of work, and our staff were under a lot of pressure. Feedback from students was poor, and I took it really personally. It shook my confidence. But I workshoped all of these with a wonderful advisor, and we decided that I would put all of this into the AAUT award. And I won. And when I got the call, I thought it was a joke, and not a very funny one. I still can't believe it today.

SINCE RECEIVING THE EARLY CAREER AWARD IN 2018, HOW HAS IT IMPACTED ON YOUR CAREER

The AAUT has opened up so many doors for me. My network has grown enormously both within the University and beyond. I received so many requests, to contribute to new programs, to speak at events, to provide peer observations and support, to review and score award applications, to inspire new teachers. I've since been promoted to senior lecturer and was also appointed as head of division for biomedical sciences education. I'm an education leader now within my school, within the university, nationally even, yet I'm only in my sixth year of teaching. I have learned so much through this process about myself, about teaching and learning and about the world of higher education.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO ASPIRING APPLICANTS

So, I have three pieces of advice for you as you prepare your application. Firstly, I would encourage you to believe in the belief that others have in you. Reflect really openly, write about how you think and feel about teaching and learning. The narrative, as I've given you here, is a huge part of the application, so tell and sell your story.

Secondly, make the application process a really collaborative one and ask people to read it for you, ask people to contribute to it. And then once you have it all together, and once you have won, share it all again to help others. I shared mine recently with a colleague from another faculty. She modelled hers of mine and won. She received feedback that her application was really well structured and a pleasure to read. So, I have now saved that as further evidence for my impact in future applications.

And so that brings me to my final tip, collect evidence from a range of sources, student feedback scores are great, but reviewers want to see a little bit more evidence of the impact than that. So, save emails from students who write your little thank you notes. These are gold. A student recently wrote to me to thank me for a journal club assignment that she had hated at the time. She's currently undertaking an internship and had to write a huge report, and now saw how useful it was. So, ask collaborators and contributors to your teaching to comment on the impact that it is having, especially if they are current or future employers or supervisors of your students.

CONCLUSION

So, I wish you all the best for your teaching and for your application to AAUT.

AAUT CONTACT DETAILS

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[Dr Demelza Ireland](#) Mentor profile

For any further questions, please contact the Awards Team aaut@rmit.edu.au