Creating a collaborative learning community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health promotion students - enhancing access, progression and learning in higher education

Final Report 2014

The University of Sydney

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We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which The University of Sydney has been built, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. As we share our own knowledge, teaching, learning and research practices of this university may we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Custodianship of Country.

We also acknowledge all of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, alumni and their communities who participated in this project. Without you all this project would not have found life.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AHEO</td>
<td>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Education Officer</td>
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<td>AHPA</td>
<td>Australian Health Promotion Association</td>
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<td>ARTD</td>
<td>ARTD Consultants-strategy and evaluation</td>
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<td>BLOCK</td>
<td>Away from Base Teaching Block</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDN</td>
<td>Northern Territory Chronic Diseases Network</td>
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<td>DIISRTE</td>
<td>The Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDIHP</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma in Indigenous health promotion</td>
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<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
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<td>ITAS</td>
<td>Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme</td>
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<td>MIPH</td>
<td>Master of International Public Health</td>
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<td>MPH</td>
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<td>NADA</td>
<td>Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies</td>
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<td>NIDAC</td>
<td>National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee</td>
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<td>NTML</td>
<td>Northern Territory Medicare Local</td>
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<td>OLT</td>
<td>The Australian Government Office For Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney</td>
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<td>SSPH</td>
<td>Sydney School of Public Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational education and training</td>
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<td>WIPCE</td>
<td>World Indigenous people’s Conference on Education</td>
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<td>WM</td>
<td>Wingara Mura - Bungarabugu</td>
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Executive summary

Background to the Program

The Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion (GDIHP) was established in the Sydney School of Public Health (SSPH), University of Sydney in 1998 after two years national consultation. The GDIHP aims to provide a pathway to higher education for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers. It also provides a globally recognised qualification, provides knowledge and skills specifically for advanced health promotion in urban, rural and remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and prepares students for health promotion roles in mainstream settings. Participation in the GDIHP provides students with knowledge, skills and confidence to protect and develop the health of their communities, and help them progress personally, professionally and financially.

The Seed Project: “Alumni Engagement Project”: Creating a collaborative learning community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health promotion students – enhancing access, progression and learning in higher education

In 2012 and 2013, we obtained $80,000 funding from the Australian Government Office for Teaching and Learning (OLT) to bring our alumni back to teach and mentor current GDIHP students. Each Block, one or two GDIHP alumni spend two days with the students discussing their health promotion work since completing the GDIHP, sharing stories about their journey as a GDIHP student, and providing assessment task and other advice. Many of these alumni are now undertaking masters and PhDs and are powerful role models.

This project addressed the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and teachers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students studying the GDIHP at the University of Sydney. By developing learning partnerships with alumni the project brought together Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion practical experience and expertise to campus and established collaborations between current students, staff, and alumni.

The project met the OLT priority “Strategic approaches to learning and teaching which enhance student access and progression, and respond to student diversity”. Specifically, it developed and piloted an innovative approach to enhancing the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student progression and experience by embedding collaborative knowledge exchange into the entire program curricula.

Positioning collaborative learning as its pedagogical framework and health promotion as its disciplinary foundation, this project modelled how Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students can develop their intra-cultural and inter-cultural competencies, transform their understandings of their professional culture, and experience academic support through collaborative knowledge exchange with program alumni.

The project successfully met the set objectives and achieved deliverables beyond the initial project scope. In addition to achieving Alumni collaboration for nine teaching blocks, the project undertook an external evaluation, established a model for alumni/program collaboration, established a professional social networking site, will be delivered at a number of conferences and will have several academic papers published. Details about Project outcomes and deliverables can be found in later stages of this report.

Creative ways of engaging our learning community included the production of several short film clips, detailing the learning of both the students and the alumni. Links to these film clips are provided in the dissemination chapter of this report.
As a result of the project the program has developed linkages with a number of collaborators, including a remote community in the Northern Territory, Garrthalala, the South Sydney Rabbitohs Souths Cares outreach program, and the Master of Internal Public Health (University of Sydney). These linkages will continue to form an important part of program delivery into the future.

Recommendations made, as a result of the external evaluation, include taking the “Alumni Engagement Project” into the alumni workplace and community. Students, staff and alumni all saw that a potential for increasing the community teaching and learning collaboration by respecting the true nature of two way learning and teaching. This project enabled the University to bring alumni back into the university environment. The next developmental step is to seek support to take the University into alumni community and undertake teaching block learning there. This will help contribute to further building our collaborative learning community.
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Chapter 1 – Background

The University program behind this “Alumni Engagement Project”

Background to the program

The Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion (GDIHP) was established in the Sydney School of Public Health (SSPH), University of Sydney in 1998 after two years national consultation. The GDIHP aims to provide a pathway to higher education for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers. It also provides a globally recognised qualification, provides knowledge and skills specifically for advanced health promotion in urban, rural and remote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and prepares students for health promotion roles in mainstream settings. Participation in the GDIHP provides students with knowledge, skills and confidence to protect and develop the health of their communities, and help them progress personally, professionally and financially.

GDIHP students are enrolled full-time, in a face-to-face away from base, Block-mode program. They attend one week long teaching Blocks six times per year. Students return to workplaces and communities between teaching Blocks to complete further self-directed learning and assessment tasks.

The GDIHP contributes towards closing the gap in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participation and attainment in higher education. Since its inception in 1998, the GDIHP has enrolled 240 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander adults from urban, rural and remote communities throughout Australia.

Over the years, the University of Sydney and its public and private sector partners have striven to establish a learning environment that provides a high quality education that is also culturally affirming and values each student’s particular set of knowledge, talents, skills and experiences. The tension between these principles in not insignificant and the level of support required is substantial, given that the majority of GDIHP students have not completed Year 12 and do not have an undergraduate degree. A non-completion rate of almost 40% over the first 10 years of the course was therefore considered acceptable.
Exploring the GDIHP student experience

In 2008 in-depth research (Plater, 2012) was undertaken to explore the student experience in the hope that improvements could be made that would result in higher retention and completion rates. Eleven graduates and four students who had not successfully completed the course were interviewed and the research findings were used to make significant changes to the recruitment process, curriculum, assessment tasks, scholarship support, Away-from-Base arrangements, tutorial support, and the functioning of academic and professional staff.

These changes have provided a higher quality learning environment and excellent student support for a cohort that has been historically disadvantaged and disenfranchised from the higher education sector. Over the past six years, the completion rate has increased from around 60% to 100%.
GDIHP enrolments and completion rates

Enrolments have also increased to the point where the course has operated at capacity for the past three years. We believe these increases are due to deliberate and sustained efforts by teaching and professional staff to improve the student experience, and the course evaluations and student testimonials support this assertion.

![Figure 1. GDIHP enrolment and completion rates 1998-2013 (numbers)](image)

The GDIHP has a very clear purpose: to graduate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion professionals who have the practical knowledge and skills to prevent or minimise the harm associated with illness or injury in their communities. It is distinctive in that it is one of only a handful of AQF Level 8 Block-release programs specifically for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the country and its recruitment, retention and completion record attests to its outcome-oriented focus. It remains Australia’s only Block-release postgraduate health promotion program for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Linking university study to work and professional needs

The GDIHP is taught over six face-to-face one-week Blocks and each Block is linked to the next. It mimics the planning, development, implementation and evaluation stages of a health promotion program and results in the students producing a comprehensive health promotion project plan by the end of the year. We also aim to link the students’ university work directly to their jobs. Many are employed in health promotion roles and we liaise with their employers to ensure that our support is tailored to meet the student’s study and work responsibilities.

Systematic approaches to coordination, implementation and evaluation

For the past seven years the GDIHP had a highly committed course coordinator who strategically planned to develop the GDIHP. As coordinator she sought an opportunity to employ a lecturer (Aboriginal) on contract and was well supported by a part-time administration officer. Through this 2012/2013 Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) “ Alumni Engagement Project” Grant a second Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion students - enhancing access, progression and learning in higher education – referred to in this report as the “Alumni Engagement Project”
Islander lecturer was employed (part-time initially) and in 2013 the program coordination was handed over to the first Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander lecturer.

The previous course coordinator remains tightly connected to the program through teaching, research and academic mentoring. The success of this OLT “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant allowed for further sustainability and growth to be sought through internal University funds, and now the second Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander lecturer has full time tenure. This combination of program leadership allows us to separate our roles and develop and implement innovative and appropriate course content based on international and national best-practice (with an emphasis on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specific health promotion).

The GDIHP has also one of the most robust and iterative evaluation processes in the SSPH. Students complete detailed evaluations at the end of each Block (six per year) and the data is analysed and disseminated to GDIHP staff, who then meet to discuss the results and make changes to the course where necessary. In this way, the course is constantly evolving. We then share the results and decisions with the students so they are assured that we take their feedback seriously and are prepared to act on it.

![GDIHP students and staff](image)

**Key factors that influence student learning and student engagement**

Most GDIHP students have high needs: they are unfamiliar with and wary of the university environment, they have experienced discrimination and exclusion throughout their lives, their self-efficacy is very low, and they face many more life challenges than the average mature-aged university student. GDIHP staff have taken a number of direct and indirect steps to attempt to alleviate these and other pressures; for example:

**Building relationships:** We facilitate early one-to-one and group contact so students can develop a relationship with us and their fellow students before commencing their first Block. These aspects of the student experience are captured in our evaluative research and the comment below is indicative of the level of student satisfaction:

*And the staff, they were fantastic, they really helped me get organised real quick...I felt like everywhere I walked was on red carpet, that’s how good they were. The other thing I liked about the first Block was I felt so welcome, I felt secure, like you all did care about us.* – GDIHP student
Developing community learning partnerships

Benefits of solid student engagement also extend to the community that surrounds the University. In partnership with the South Sydney Football Club, GDIHP students commenced the ‘Framing Health’ project. Alumni involved in this OLT “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant were an integral part of this learning initiative. Its primary aim was to introduce local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students to university life while developing our students’ health promotion skills via the development of an anti-tobacco film to be shown on social media sites. Involvement of alumni through this project supported the growth of University, school and community partnerships and increased engagement of both tertiary and secondary Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students with education. Please see the link below for more information:


- Academic literacy: We have developed an academic literacy program which is integrated with course content and assessment. It is delivered in each Block by experts in the field.

- Tutorial assistance: We experienced many difficulties with the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) over the years and this impacted negatively on the student experience. To address this, we appointed academic Michelle Dickson as Head Tutor in 2010. In partnership with the ITAS Coordinator, Michelle recruits and matches tutors to students. She up-skills tutors when necessary, provides tailored course materials so they are better able to assist the GDIHP students, and ensures that the complex tutor/student documentation required is completed and submitted in a timely way. Michelle is now mentoring the newly appointed lecturer into the Head Tutor role, thus developing our GDIHP workforce.
Safe learning environment: The social, cultural and physical environment our students learn in is safe and encourages group cohesion and a sense of belonging: teaching and professional staff are either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or are culturally competent non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; the dedicated classroom is decorated with past and present student photos and artwork; the curriculum reflects the lived experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; classes are interactive rather than didactic; and students are encouraged to share their knowledge and learn from each other through problem-based learning activities.

Out of hours support: Our relationship with students means they feel comfortable calling or emailing us at all times, including weekends, to discuss any issues affecting their studies.

Travel, accommodation and meals: The funding for student travel, accommodation and meals is provided by DIISRTE; however, the personal and professional service that ensures students arrive in Sydney on time, enjoy safe and comfortable lodgings and are not unduly stressed is uniquely ours. Jonathan Birch (GDIHP Professional Staff) individualises student itineraries and acts quickly to accommodate the many challenges faced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have community and extended family responsibilities in addition to their work, study and immediate family commitments. Also, where once students were housed in cramped hotel rooms, they now have apartments with study spaces, and laundry and cooking facilities.
Breadth of impact – GDIHP testimonials

The extent to which the GDIHP has led to widespread benefits for students, their communities and the University is evidenced by the following testimonials:

Geoffrey, graduated 2010:

I live in Darwin, Northern Territory – Crocodile Country! I am Gurindji and Kungarakan and my adopted clan is Rirritjingu. I’m an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Male Health Coordinator, working in and assisting with male health programs. This involves travelling long distances, making myself available to assist Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in wanting to set up health programs or other associated well-being activities. Course Coordinator (Suzanne) is fantastic! Jonathan is great too. For anyone considering this course - sign up now! Tell others – we need more of our mob involved in health design, application and decision-making. As more and more go through, a network and pool of mentors, tutors, advisors and support people are then created – which can subsequently manifest into ‘our own, teaching our own, for our own’ (people).

Note: Geoffrey is now employed as Associate Lecturer, Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion at the University of Sydney. Geoffrey was originally employed as part of the 2012 OLT “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant and later, following the success of this “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant, his position was tenured under The University of Sydney’s Indigenous Strategy, Wingara Mura- Bunga Barrabugu (WM).
Ella, graduated 2010:

I live on Thursday Island where I was born and raised. I’ve worked for Queensland Health for the past 12 years. This is my first time in a course like this. I found the course content well developed and structured. Suzanne and the rest of the staff are excellent and are always available and ready to assist. I’ve always been interested in health promotion so when the course was advertised I did not hesitate. I have always been a mover within my local community and know that I’m a person who can make changes to the health of local indigenous people, with the qualification from this course and my personal and professional life/work experience.

GDIHP alumni and students

Note: Ella has just completed a Master of Public Health and is now employed as a researcher by the Menzies School of Research in Darwin. She has also been responsible for the development of the health promotion workforce and the implementation of successful health promotion programs in the Torres Strait. Ella has recently submitted a PhD application to the University of Sydney. Ella was one of the visiting alumni. Her visit was made possible through this OLT “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant.

Jason, graduated 2008:

This is a course that has empowered me, a course that has made my spirit stronger, a course that makes me ‘walk tall and stand proud’. The course is very well coordinated, structured and organised. The support from all staff at the school of public health is fantastic. I have worked in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health promotion remotely in the NT for over 8 years. Yet there were no opportunities to get the relevant qualifications or recognition of the work I do, here in the NT. So travelling from Darwin to Sydney was at first challenging, but I soon got over that by making some new friends (fellow countrymen and women) who are friends for life I say. I have also learnt many new ideas, I’ve learnt other ways to think and plan activities. I also realised how important evaluation is to the successful of programs/projects etc. The benefits of the course have had an immediate effect on my working career as I am in the process of a promotion, facing new challenges and I am encouraged to think about taking on other studies involving mainstream and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health. I encourage others to have go at this course. The rewards are there for those who commit and it opens up a whole lot of new career opportunities.

Note: Jason is now earning $18000 more per annum than he was before completing the GDIHP.
Addressing our concern for equity and diversity

The GDIHP was established because there were very limited opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health workers to progress educationally and professionally. Many had spent years at the same low pay grade and had multiple Vocational education and training (VET) certificates – they were moving horizontally through the health workforce and could not achieve uplift. Their educational needs were not being met, even though they still had at least 10-20 years left in the health workforce.

The GDIHP provides a well-structured and supported pathway from Certificate IV level to higher education without having to undertake a three-year full-time undergraduate degree, which is prohibitive for students who live in rural and remote locations, and have full-time work, community and family responsibilities. The insistence by some that this cohort should follow the same pathway as school-leavers into an undergraduate degree also fails to take into account their years of experience, knowledge and skills.

Our preferred student/teacher ratio of 10:1 positions us differently to most mainstream courses and may appear resource-intensive. It is also one of the primary reasons we are able to provide equitable teaching and learning conditions to a disadvantaged minority. The GDIHP exists because we (and the SMS) subscribe to the principles of social justice: improving higher education access, participation and outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander is our raison d’être.
One example of our commitment to equity, inclusiveness and diversity was our 15-year fight against the New South Wales Health industrial award that prevented Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Education Officers (AHEOs) from entering the graduate pay scale if they completed the GDIHP without also having completed an undergraduate degree.

The previous GDIHP course coordinator was involved in the fight for the past six years and persisted with the help of many others until this archaic award was finally suspended in 2013. A GDIHP graduate – regardless of their educational background – will now be remunerated accordingly. This not only makes a significant difference to their salary: it is also an acknowledgment of their unique contribution to the health and wellbeing of their communities and valuable professional recognition.

Another example is this “Alumni Engagement Project” OLT-funded Alumni Engagement Project. We know from our research that the more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people we engage as teachers, mentors and role-models, the more comfortable with and connected to the University our students become. It also inspires them to continue and to reach higher, as this student suggested:

*Having someone there who was black, and I don’t mean the colour of their skin, I mean they know us and where we come from, they relate to our struggle and you bond with them straight away. And having an Indigenous lecturer is really good for us because we say, oh, there’s a blackfella up there, how good is that? It’s pride and then it’s hey, I can do that too.*  
- GDIHP student

As stated earlier, this project is currently funded by the OLT; however, we have also successfully applied for funding through the WM initiative and hope to be able to continue engaging GDIHP alumni to support our students. An additional benefit is that the alumni are recognised and rewarded for their achievements.

We also provide clear pathways to higher degrees and actively encourage our students to enrol in Masters and Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) programs. We then support them academically when they do so. We are currently providing academic support to three alumni who are completing a Master of Public Health (MPH) and have assisted another to submit her PhD application.
The impact of completing the GDIHP is highlighted in the words of Jenny Sewter, a 2008 graduate far north Queensland who was one of the visiting alumni in this project:

*It was very rewarding, you know, personally and professionally. It’s really defined my work now and I’m achieving what I always wanted to achieve...and in a couple of years I’m coming back to do my masters...I want to get back into learning. And I want to give my grandkids something to be proud of, doing university study and that, hey that’s my nanny there!*

*GDIHP students*
Chapter 2 - The “Alumni Engagement Project” Grant

2.1 An Overview

Creating a collaborative learning community for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion students – enhancing access, progression and learning in higher education – “The Alumni Engagement project”

In 2012 and 2013, we obtained $80,000 funding from The Government Office for Teaching and Learning (OLT) to bring our alumni back to teach and mentor current GDIHP students. Each Block, one or two GDIHP alumni spend two days with the students discussing their health promotion work since completing the GDIHP, sharing stories about their journey as a GDIHP student, and providing assessment task and other advice. Many of these alumni are now undertaking masters and PhDs and are powerful role models.

This project addressed the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and teachers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students studying the GDIHP at the University of Sydney. By developing learning partnerships with alumni the project brought together Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion practical experience and expertise to campus and established collaborations between current students, staff, and alumni.

The project met the OLT priority “Strategic approaches to learning and teaching which enhance student access and progression, and respond to student diversity”. Specifically, it developed and piloted an innovative approach to enhancing the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student progression and experience by embedding collaborative knowledge exchange into the entire program curricula.

This OLT “Alumni Engagement Project“ will give us a chance to really extend our learning community. It is one of the ways our mob learn, to learn from each other, and to be able to do that in a University classroom is unique and valuable.” - GDIHP lecturer

Positioning collaborative learning as its pedagogical framework and health promotion as its disciplinary foundation, this project modelled how Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students can develop their intra-cultural and inter-cultural competencies, transform their understandings of their professional culture, and experience academic support through collaborative knowledge exchange with program alumni.

GDIHP alumni and students

“This project has given us a chance to combine our Uni learning with our work learning and with the knowledge and skills of the past students. It has been awesome.” – GDIHP student
Bridging the gap between campus learning and community learning, and between health promotion theory and practice was possible through this innovation. This project demonstrated how collaborative learning partnerships between current students, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teaching staff, and alumni could enhance access, progression, learning and teaching in higher education in culturally appropriate ways.

As an enhancement for supporting the progression of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, this collaborative learning project demonstrated the potential to achieve greater student engagement with discipline specific knowledge through interactions with program alumni, create nurturing professional relationships and enhance graduate employability.

When embedded as a core component of curriculum, collaborative learning exchange also led to significant benefits for both university staff, current students, alumni and their professional networks, by encouraging reflective learning and knowledge exchange. Program alumni also experienced academic and professional mentoring through their participation. This provided alumni with additional knowledge and skills to embed within their own work practices and communities.

“I never thought I would come back to the University as a guest lecturer, but here I am. I am proud that I can bring professional knowledge and experience into this classroom and share it with the current students—what an opportunity for us all.” – GDIHP Alumni employed through the “Alumni Engagement Project”

The project outcomes include a reflective discussion paper to be published in a higher education and a community journal, and a social networking page. The latter is dedicated to maintaining the student and alumni connections established through this project and such a networking tool has wide transferability across the higher education and health promotion sectors. These outputs will encourage the further uptake of this pilot by showing how collaborative learning partnerships are designed and facilitated, how they support intra and inter-cultural professional exchanges between students, teaching staff and alumni, and will show how such innovations can be embedded within existing curricula. Project outcomes are written about in more detail later in this report.

2.2 The Rationale

A large number of our current students are first-generation university students. Collier and Morgan (2008) explored the differences in first-generation and traditional college students’ understandings of faculty expectations. Their research highlighted a number of key points relevant to our project, including the apparent “fit” between expectations of faculty, students and community. This project aimed to provide a best practice example of how a university program can work together innovatively, to engage alumni and enhance Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander student progress and participation in higher
education, resulting in a more transparent “fit” between academic expectations and professional and community expectations.

While satisfied with the current mix of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teaching staff, research (Plater, 2011) identifies that students in the GDIHP would like additional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teaching staff within their program. A rich pool of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander GDIHP alumni was targeted, in this project, to provide innovative workshops throughout the teaching year. Cabrera et al. (2002) showed that exposure to collaborative learning practices influenced student outcomes positively. Our approach used collaborative learning in a way that provided benefits for a number of key stakeholders including current students, alumni, and faculty staff.

Hurtado (2007) writes about embedding diversity within higher education learning strategies and linking those with community spaces. Innovations in teaching, with a focus on linking student learning to “off campus” activities are described in Wood (2009). In this work Wood proposes that traditional teaching methods fall short of what is required by many students, communities and employers. This project embedded innovative and collaborative learning into the core curriculum, utilizing the knowledge and skills of program alumni, in an effort to meet the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and enhance their learning pathways, progression and outcomes.

Frenk et al. (2010) provides a summary of a range of international innovations aimed at transforming education in order to strengthen health systems. Current students of the GDIHP are all employed in the health sector. This project was inspired by the examples of best practice in innovation in teaching and learning in the health sector in Frenk et al.’s work. Embedding alumni knowledge and skills into core curriculum provided opportunity for current students to “experience” examples of best practice in health promotion, whilst fulfilling their academic program requirements as an enrolled university student. An important component of this initiative was the role modeling and mentoring provided, both from the alumni to current students, and from current faculty staff to alumni. The cyclical
nature of such a knowledge exchange highlights the journey from student, to alumni to Faculty possible, and seamless.

2.3 The Activities

The project activities aimed to increase access, and engagement and progress in higher education by establishing a collaborative learning community comprising the current GDIHP student cohort, GDIHP faculty and GDIHP alumni. Project activities included:

- Establishment of collaborative learning partnerships with GDIHP alumni (covering several states and territories and cover urban, regional, rural and remote communities)
- Mentoring of GDIHP alumni by current GDIHP academic faculty to plan and prepare for the alumni collaborative learning exchanges
- Implementation of alumni workshops and mentoring activities with enrolled GDIHP students
- Conducting a minimum of one alumni visit per teaching Block (6 Blocks over a year). During each alumni visit the alumni delivered a workshop to the current enrolled student GDIHP cohort and participated in other related learning community activities, including networking with current students, workshops on academic and professional issues and mentoring current students
- Providing a community based example of health promotion in action through each alumni visit, using the theoretical framework taught in the GDIHP curriculum and
experiencing how this learning has been utilized in community health promotion projects

- Establishment of a social networking page
- Comparison of the learning outcomes for the 2013 GDIHP cohort with those for the 2012 cohort
- Analysis of the Project’s impacts on collaborative knowledge exchange on students, faculty and alumni during 2012 and 2013
- Dissemination outcomes via a reflective discussion paper for publication in higher education and community journals
- Dissemination outcomes to the alumni network, university communication and philanthropic engagement areas to seek support embedding the project’s teaching practice into the GDIHP curriculum

GDIHP alumni
Chapter 2 – Project Outcomes and impact

2.4 Project Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

This project aimed to develop and pilot an innovative approach to enhancing the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student progression and experience by embedding collaborative knowledge exchange into the entire program curricula.

The goals of the “Alumni Engagement Project” were:

1. Within 18 months, 100% of enrolled GDIHP students will experience sharing health promotion knowledge with at least six GDIHP alumni.
2. Within 18 months GDIHP faculty, students and alumni will be able to identify a seamless role pathway from GDIHP student to GDIHP alumni guest lecturer.
3. Within 18 months the GDIHP community will have increased their diversity and community participation in teaching and learning.

The objectives of the “Alumni Engagement Project” were:

- To enhance the learning experience of current students of the GDIHP Program
- To increase the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teachers within the GDIHP Program
- To achieve greater student engagement with discipline specific knowledge
- To establish collaborative learning partnerships between current students, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teaching staff and alumni
- To increase connections between the Program and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion professionals and their communities
- To support the progression of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
- To support the ongoing development of GDIHP alumni
- To share learnings of the alumni project through publication in a refereed journal.

The Immediate outcomes for the project were:

- Alumni of the GDIHP participate in the teaching and learning activities of the Program
- Present on a community health promotion initiative
- Show case opportunities for current students
- Share their journeys
- Are recognised and honoured
- Alumni share their knowledge, skills and experiences with current students
- Experiences as previous students
- Experiences as new graduates of the program
- Community health promotion knowledge, skills and experience
- Current teaching staff provide professional mentoring to participating alumni
- An evaluation of the Alumni project was planned and implemented.

The achievement of the objectives would represent achievement of the following longer term outcomes for the project.

The Intermediate outcomes for the project were:
- Collaborative knowledge exchange occurs between alumni, teaching staff and students
- Students respond positively to the contributions of alumni
- Students report that the contributions of alumni enhanced their learning experience
- Alumni gain new knowledge and skills to embed in their work practices and communities
- Alumni maintain their connection with the GDIHP Program
- Academic staff report that the contributions of alumni enhanced Program teaching
- Students, alumni and teaching staff participate in an evaluation of the Alumni Project.

_GDIHP students, staff, alumni, Souths Cares staff and students, South Sydney Rabbitohs and Sydney University Social Inclusion Unit_
Chapter 3 - Project approach and methodology

3.1 Where we started:

Funding for this current teaching and learning “Alumni Engagement Project” innovation commenced mid-2012, providing the 2012 cohort of students enrolled in the GDIHP with opportunities to extend their higher education experience. These students experienced three teaching Blocks (six months) of the original teaching and learning initiative before completing their program of study at the end of 2012. 100% of those participants successfully completed, progressed and graduated in May 2013. The 2012 cohort experienced the following activities and outcomes, utilising the original OLT Seed Grant funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre teaching Block 4 2012</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes and deliverables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Program planning scheduled alumni visits and workshop delivery&lt;br&gt; • Booking of 6 alumni to visit (1 per teaching Block)&lt;br&gt; • Booking of alumni travel and accommodation&lt;br&gt; • Planning with External Evaluation consultant for Project evaluation Plan</td>
<td>• 2012 timetable for GDIHP, highlighting dates for collaborative learning experiences&lt;br&gt; • Alumni confirmed Travel and accommodation booked and confirmed&lt;br&gt; • Project Evaluation plan developed and confirmed&lt;br&gt; • Initial baseline evaluation measures taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks 4, 5, 6 (2012)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes and deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One alumni to visit per teaching Block&lt;br&gt; • Planning and mentoring meeting to be held each Block between alumni and program staff identified partnership lectures/workshops, student networking events and other associated activities will be undertaken and evaluated</td>
<td>• Planning and mentoring meetings held once per Block-notes are taken as part of the evaluation&lt;br&gt; • Teaching and learning materials are distributed to alumni&lt;br&gt; • Student/staff/alumni networking sessions held each Block&lt;br&gt; • Evaluations undertaken for each activity&lt;br&gt; • Alumni teaching and learning activities occur in each Block&lt;br&gt; • Sources for publication of project outcomes are identified</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block 6 (2012)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes and deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One alumni be as assessor on the assessment panel for final student presentations</td>
<td>• Assessment guidelines written and alumni trained and mentored on assessment processes&lt;br&gt; • Evaluation near completion by end of Block 6</td>
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<tr>
<th>Post Block 6 (2012)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes and deliverables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project team to draft paper for publication in academic journal&lt;br&gt; • Summaries and stings written for use of program&lt;br&gt; • social media page&lt;br&gt; • Evaluation completed</td>
<td>• Draft paper written&lt;br&gt; • Summaries, outcomes and tips for implementation written for use on program social media page&lt;br&gt; • Evaluation report written</td>
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### Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blocks 1, 2, 3 (2013)</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes and deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One alumni to visit per teaching Block</td>
<td>• Planning and mentoring meetings held once per Block - notes are taken as part of the evaluation</td>
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<td>• Identified partnership lectures/workshops, student</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sources for publication of project outcomes are identified</td>
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</table>

### Activities that added value to the original funded Seed Grant

In addition to the core activities the following were also achieved in the first six months of project implementation:

### Project evaluation

The project team worked closely with the external evaluator to design tools that were user friendly and appropriate for each project activity. These tools included focus group questions and schedules, individual student end of teaching Block questionnaires, student focus group questions and schedules, project team interviews, alumni post-visit interviews. The team was excited by the evaluation plan and saw opportunities for the evaluation data to provide feedback as the project progressed, in addition to evaluation feedback at the end of the project.

### Ethics approval

The project team submitted an ethics application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Sydney. Ethics approval was obtained, ensuring all project and evaluation activities were approved for future publication. Project information sheets and participant consent forms formed part of the approval, and were immediately implemented as part of the program’s evaluation activities.

### Additional alumni joined Block 6 assessment panel

We were able to invite a Sydney based alumnus to join two other alumni on the student presentation assessment panel in Block 6 2012. He was released from his current employ for two days and joined the assessment panel. The alumni’s employer decided this collaboration was considered a positive career development option for the alumni.

The project already had budgeted for one alumnus to participant in Block 6 in a teaching and learning and an assessment role, and two to join Block 6 in an assessment role. It was evident that the three planned alumni could both join in as assessors and both particulate in the teaching and learning activities in Block 6, as both were already in Sydney and able to do so. As a result the current 2012 cohort of GDIHP students enjoyed teaching and learning workshops from two alumni in Block 6.
### 3.2 Program implementation

**Selecting and preparing alumni**

As a basis for selecting alumni to participate, program staff put together a list of alumni who had graduated from the GDHIP between 2008 and 2011, and planned to invite alumnus for each Block to come back and share their experiences with current students. Alumni were selected based on those who had obtained good marks, who had an ongoing relationship with the program staff, and who were working in health promotion roles or who could show that having a university qualification had opened up other employment options for them. Two alumni commented they would never have achieved their current employment positions without their degree. It was also important that the alumni’s workplace supervisors supported them to attend.

The original funding allowed one alumni to visit each teaching Block, with additional alumni participating in the final assessment Block. The OLT extension funding, obtained in 2013, enabled two alumni to be involved per Block (rather than one) in the second half of 2013; and four alumni to be on the panel in Block six, 2013. Alumni who presented in the same Block were specifically chosen to complement each other in the areas of work with which they were engaged, for example, ‘we had one person working in very directed childhood physical activity and nutrition, and then another one working very targeted in sexual health’ (GDHIP lecturer). GDHIP staff also wanted a balance of alumni working on research projects and those working on health promotion practice projects.

In response to student feedback from the mid project evaluation report, more female alumni were invited through the extension funding. Feedback from students was that they appreciated ‘having a female come in and listening to her perspective as well, not a male dominated sort of thing as well’ (GDHIP student). Students also requested more alumni from urban areas and this was also organised. GDHIP staff also wanted to make sure that alumni were representative of the age spectrum, given that the program has students aged from their twenties to their fifties.

![GDIHP students and alumni](image)

The alumni chose to come back and support the students because they felt it would be useful for the students if they shared their experiences as GDHIP students; as one alumnus said,
I think I can understand what students are going through because I went through it. And I had a lot of obstacles and barriers when I was doing it and I guess that those experiences and knowledge I believe I can help students manoeuvre different ways through them.

Sharing their experiences of working in the health promotion field was another reason alumni enjoyed coming back and talking to the students.

One alumnus said that being asked to come back and support the students gave him confidence, ‘made me think, geez you might have been doing something right.’

GDIHP program staff said alumni are clear before they arrive about what they are expected to do, with alumni asked to present their current health promotion work; discuss their student journey; and spend social and classroom time with the students for the purpose of mentoring. Staff suggested how they think the alumni’s time could be spent, alumni are asked for ideas and then both work together to plan the alumni’s sessions. Although adequate time was set aside for this planning phase, in future even more time would be devoted to this task. The alumni reported that “feeling fully prepared for the visit made me feel at ease, made me lose some of the nerves” (GDIHP alumni).

Delivering the workshop to current students

Prior to the alumni’s visit to Sydney, the program staff talked with them about what the staff hoped to achieve through the alumni workshops. The program staff organised the alumni’s travel to Sydney, talked them through the logistics of their visit and updated them about what the current students were learning. One alumnus said

*We had phone conversations and email conversations around travel down to Sydney and where we were staying, all that sort of logistical stuff as well as around what sort of things we needed to bring down for identification, our presentation.*

Alumni were asked to prepare and present a workshop about a health promotion program they had been involved in.

*They would introduce what they are doing now but also the journey they had taken from the time they were a student here up until the time they walked back in the door here, and that was really important in locating them in the eyes of the current students and also I think for the visitors to reframe their experience here, this time coming back here as an alumni of the course (Program staff)*

Alumni had an hour and a half to do their presentation, which included time for students to ask questions at the end. One alumnus talked about how they decided what they would present to the students:

*At first I looked at the topics that...the students were going to be doing during Block and stuff like that and I wrote it up and I re-looked at it and said “no, I’m better off doing it and telling them a story of a project that I’m working on”. So then I just gave them a bit of an insight on what I’m doing...and what activities, who our stakeholders are, the contributing factors, what sort of budget, so going through all of those things and they could see that it was – how the university, the graduate diploma, how that then was put into work in progress, sort of thing, with the activities and project that I was doing.*

Alumni talked about how much they enjoyed the workshop experience. This included sharing how they have used their university degree and the skills and confidence they gained around service delivery; talking about things that are passionate to them; getting the
students’ ideas and suggestions. One alumni said

\textit{Being able to sit and talk in a forum where they are comfortable and I’m comfortable so we can actually talk to each other, it was just so easy, it was so open. It was like sitting around the table having dinner and having a yarn, it was like that. We had a good yarn.}

3.3 Some limitations we were working with:

Due to the timing of the original funding we had applied for we originally planned to deliver the teaching and learning innovation in the second half of the academic year of the 2012 cohort, and then deliver the second half of the originally funded project to the first six months of university learning undertaken by the 2013 cohort. Together, this would result in learning outcomes that did measure the impact of the innovation over a 12 month period (a period of program enrolment), but it would reflect results from two half years. Another limitation was that it would only provide each of the two student cohorts with having half a year of their enrolment connected to this innovation.

We designed our evaluation plan to explore the impact the project had on student learning outcomes over the entire 12 month period, acknowledging that the results would comprise half a year of learning from each student cohort. Ideally we would have liked to track the impact on the learning outcomes of one student cohort, by following their experience of the innovation over their entire period of enrolment (12 months), but we needed to commence our original funding mid-year. This encouraged us to evaluate the first six months and consider options for applying for extension funding to enable the project to run over the entire enrolment period for the 2013 cohort.

Exploring a the impact of a 12 month teaching innovation

There are few examples in the literature exploring, specifically, the impact of a 12 month teaching innovation on tertiary student learning outcomes, with focus on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. Of those available in the literature, Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray & Krause (2008) and Kelly and Moogan (2012) endorse the value of a 12 month cohort study in higher education, although neither have specific focus on teaching and learning higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. Our project aimed to produce evidence of this and will contribute to the body of literature.

At the end of the first six month period student evaluation feedback included comments that supported our thesis, that this teaching and learning innovation would have an incredibly powerful impact on a student cohort if it was a core component of their entire year of learning:

\textit{It would be great to have someone in Block 1 next year because we missed that this year, it didn’t start until Block 4, when the students are really twitchy and anxious about how they are going to go, I think that’s really going to make a difference... having someone who has done it and says this changed my life is going to be so much more powerful}

\textit{GDIHP Program staff member}

A 2012 student Agreed with this:

\textit{I think Block one, with someone coming in, an alumni coming in, showing their final presentation, saying this is what you are going to be doing...I wasn’t doing my program and I probably will do it, it was all theory and I wasn’t in that headspace and until I saw the alumni present their program that they did all throughout the year I’m like – and it put me into it and I thought hang on, I’ve got to – it’s real.}
3.4 Extending our project to offer the teaching and learning initiative over a whole academic year to the 2013 cohort - adding value to the original project

A proposal was forwarded to the OLT seeking additional funding to extend the project for a further six months. These were some of the key reasons for requesting further funding:

Adding value – measuring a 12 month cohort’s learning outcomes

Providing additional funding to the original project allowed us to respond to the mid project feedback obtained from the 2012 students. By securing additional funding we are able to conduct a cohort study that follows the 2013 GDIHP cohort from their first teaching Block at university through to their last. By tracking the impact that this innovation has on the 2013 cohort, over a 12 month period, we are able to clearly report on how exposure to the teaching and learning innovation contributed to their learning outcomes.

Retrospective cohort comparison:

Additionally, having a complete 12 month period of evaluation data that reflects a cohort student journey through their university degree then allowed us to conduct a retrospective cohort comparison. We have detailed teaching and learning evaluation data from previous GDIHP cohorts; however, these cohorts did not experience this teaching and learning innovation. This creates ideal data for a 12 month cohort study. We aimed to compare the learning outcomes of past cohorts who did not experience the innovation, with the complete data set of the 2013 cohort (who would experience the innovation over their entire period of enrolment).

Although the students experiencing this innovation will have had additional questions added to the existing teaching and learning evaluation tool, there are also identical questions and open-ended questions to allow comparative analysis.

Evaluating the teaching experience - voices of GDIHP alumni and other program lecturers:

Zhu, Valcke and Schellens (2010) also provide evidence in the value of a 12 month cohort experience of a tertiary education teaching and learning experience. However, their study focused on the impact of a teaching innovation on the professional and academic development of faculty staff.

Zhu et. al., explored teachers' understandings of their teaching role in higher education, focusing on how their university teaching was influenced by the adoption of a teaching and learning innovation. The original funded innovation included mentoring GDIHP alumni into the university teaching program, creating teaching and learning collaborations between current program faculty staff, including an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander program lecturer (Sydney School of Public Health), GDIHP alumni and their communities. The extension funding provided an opportunity to fully explore the impact of a 12 month innovation on the academic and professional outcomes of those involved in teaching in the GDIHP program of higher education teaching.
Responding to student evaluation to original project:

In the mid project evaluation report alumni and students suggested trying to broaden the geographical areas that the alumni come from. They talked about having alumni visit who are from all around Australia, and having visiting alumni who have experience working in urban areas and cities so that the students can see the differences of health promotion work depending on the geographical setting, and how effective or ineffective the programs have been.

I’d like to see a bit more ex-alumni coming from around Australia too. A lot of the examples we’ve had have been like the Cape which is great but it would be good to hear someone from the Kimberleys, 3,000 kilometres on the other side of the country.

\textit{GDIHP Student}

More [...alumni from...] urban communities because I think half [...of the students...] – or there is a lot of people that do work in urban areas, cities, [would like] to see the difference in how effective or ineffective their [alumni, urban] programs have been.

\textit{GDIHP Student}

An extension of the current project allowed us to respond to this valuable feedback and extend what we were already doing well, as evidenced by the mid project evaluation report.
Activities completed during the extension phase

The following outlines how major project activities were undertaken and how outcomes were achieved during the extension phase of the project:

**Additional extension funding was obtained through the OLT to enable the project to continue beyond Block 3 in 2013. Similar project activities were undertaken, with an increased number of alumni and dissemination opportunities being embedded into the project.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block 4 (2013)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Program planning to schedule alumni visits and workshop delivery</td>
<td>• 2013 timetable for GDIHP, highlighting dates for collaborative learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Booking two alumni to visit each teaching Block</td>
<td>• Alumni confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Booking alumni travel and accommodation</td>
<td>• Teaching and learning materials are distributed to alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning and mentoring meeting to be held each Block between alumni and program staff</td>
<td>• Travel and accommodation booked and confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identified partnership lectures/workshops, student networking events and other associated activities will be undertaken</td>
<td>• Project Evaluation plan is developed and confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Initial baseline evaluation measures are taken</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Planning and mentoring meetings held once per Block - notes are taken as part of the evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Block 5 (2013) | Program planning to schedule alumni visits and workshop delivery  
| Booking two alumni to visit each teaching Block  
| Booking alumni travel and accommodation  
| Planning and mentoring meeting to be held each Block between alumni and program staff  
| Identified partnership lectures/workshops, student networking events and other associated activities will be undertaken and evaluated  
| Planning with External Evaluation consultant for Project evaluation Plan  
| 2013 timetable for GDIHP, highlighting dates for collaborative learning experiences  
| Alumni confirmed  
| Teaching and learning materials are distributed to alumni  
| Travel and accommodation booked and confirmed  
| Project Evaluation plan is developed and confirmed  
| Initial baseline evaluation measures are taken  
| Planning and mentoring meetings held once per Block - notes are taken as part of the evaluation |
| Block 6, (2013) | Program planning to schedule alumni visits and workshop delivery  
| Booking four alumni to visit each teaching Block  
| Booking alumni travel and accommodation  
| Planning and mentoring meeting to be held each Block between alumni and program staff  
| Identified partnership lectures/workshops, student networking events and other associated activities will be undertaken and evaluated  
| Planning with External Evaluation consultant for Project evaluation Plan  
| 2013 timetable for GDIHP, highlighting dates for collaborative learning experiences  
| Alumni confirmed  
| Teaching and learning materials are distributed to alumni  
| Travel and accommodation booked and confirmed  
| Project Evaluation plan is developed and confirmed  
| Initial baseline evaluation measures are taken  
| Planning and mentoring meetings held once per Block - notes are taken as part of the evaluation |
GDIHP students, staff and alumni and Souths Cares staff and students
Chapter 4 - Undertaking an external evaluation

ARTD Consultants (ARTD) was contracted as the external evaluators of the “Alumni Engagement Project”. The aims of the externally conducted evaluation were to assess the extent to which the project achieved its intended objectives and what other impacts the project had on the GDIHP students and the delivery of the GDIHP. The evaluation then contributed to achieving the aims of the “Alumni Engagement Project”—feeding back information into a learning cycle that connected current students and graduates of the program.

The evaluation data collection activities captured student and alumni experiences of the project and their reflections of the value and contribution of the project to their overall learning experience. The reflections of program staff were also captured.

It used a mixed methods design with data collection through surveys, interviews and reflections. Data that was collected over time was used as an inbuilt reflection process as data was analysed and the results fed into ongoing improvement of the Alumni Engagement project.

Ethics approval

The GDIHP academic team applied for ethical approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee to use the evaluation data to write up a paper for publication. This paper is based upon the evaluation of the Alumni Engagement Project. Ethics approval was obtained and the paper is in final stages for publication.

Evaluation data collection methods

Student surveys

End of Block survey questions

To gain feedback on immediate outcomes of the Alumni involvement in the Block program, 2-3 additional questions were added to an existing end-of-Block student evaluation sheet that is provided to students on the last day of each Block program. This end of Block evaluation aligns with the SSPH and the University requirements for end of unit evaluations. The additional questions were focussed on student’s immediate reaction to the Alumni involvement and to their contributions.

Post semester student survey

All students were asked to complete a survey at the end of the semester, equivalent to an ‘end of unit of study’ evaluation that will include questions about the Alumni project. Questions focused on how the project contributed to improvements in course delivery and student experience.

The Course Administrator gave the students all of the surveys, collected them and entered the data. No student names were entered on the surveys or in the file containing the entered data. The administrator maintained student confidentiality and anonymity. The anonymous survey data was analysed by University staff and by the external evaluator.

Student interviews

A sample of students was self-selected from the 2012 and 2013 student cohorts to participate in interviews about their experience of the Alumni involvement in the program. Small group interviews of approximately four (4) students each aimed to provide sufficiently rich data for the evaluation, especially when combined with the information from the other data collection activities.

Students were randomly self-selected to participate in the interviews from all those students
in each cohort who successfully completed the semester of study. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the interview, and included questions covering how this project has contributed to improved course delivery, the benefits for individual students and the student body, and any anticipated longer term benefits for students, their families and communities.

Interviews were undertaken by ARTD Consultants to maintain confidentiality and enhance forthright responses. The interviews were kept short to approximately 20-30 minutes to minimise the impact on students undertaking final assignments and intensive Block learning work.

With student’s permission, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the interview data was analysed using qualitative analysis software. Data analysis was undertaken by ARTD consultants and a summary report provided to the University teaching staff.

Alumni interviews

Each of the alumni participating in the teaching Blocks was invited to participate in a phone interview with one of the ARTD consultants on return to their homes following the participation in the teaching Block. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared for the alumnus interviews. With interviewees’ permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data was analysed by ARTD consultants.

Staff reflection interviews

The two full time teaching staff of the GDIHP program participated in reflection interviews with the ARTD project manager after the end of the 2012 academic year and at the end of 2013. Staff used ‘reflection notes’ kept during the teaching Blocks as the basis for reflecting on the outcomes of the Alumni project. A few questions guided the interview. With interviewees’ permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data was analysed by ARTD consultants.

Evaluation processes successfully implemented

The objective for evaluation of the alumni project was achieved with successful implementation of the planned evaluation activities. Alumni who had participated were interviewed and most students completed the student survey. There were considerable difficulties experienced in contacting some alumni and setting up the interviews but these difficulties were eventually overcome. Participation by a few more students in the student focus group would have been good, but the students who did participate had valuable reflexions, insights and suggestions for improvements.

Preliminary evaluation findings used for program improvements

The preliminary evaluation findings were used to enhance the continuation of the Alumni Engagement Project in 2013. Program staff reviewed the mid project evaluation report and met with the evaluators to discuss the findings and any changes that were needed to either the program or the evaluation itself.
Chapter 5 - Impact of the “Alumni Engagement Project”

5.1 Impact on the learning outcomes and experiences of the GDIHP student cohorts:

Data was analysed, using end of Block evaluation data for the years 2011, 2012 and 2013. A comparison of a number of results revealed that the “Alumni Engagement Project” was potentially responsible for some major changes to the GDIHP program, the learning outcomes of the students and the overall learning experience. In all of the following evaluation questions students were able to choose from “Strongly disagree”, “Agree”, “Neutral”, “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. The figures have been analysed to enable comparison between the 2011, 2012 and 2013 cohorts.

“Were the Block learning objectives achieved?”

Question 4 of the end of Block evaluation asked if the Block objectives were achieved. In 2011 the GDIHP students 16% had a “neutral” response, indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed. In 2012 only 8% responded as “Neutral”, reducing further to 6% in 2013. Ensuring that the Block objectives were met has always been a high priority for the GDIHP program staff who always has measured their own teaching content against the Block objectives.

However, some changes made in 2012 and 2013, as a result of this project, could have clarified the concept of “meeting Block objectives” in the eyes of the students. For example, from 2012 each lecture or teaching session clearly had the objectives written in the Block timetable document. Although GDIHP lecturers always listed their lecture objectives at the start of each lecture, other guest lecturers often did not follow this practice. From 2012 guest lecturers were asked to follow this model, stating their session objectives at the start of their lectures, thus making a clear connection between the objectives of their session and how they contributed to the Block objectives, as a whole.

![Figure 2. “Were the Block objectives achieved?”](image-url)
Another change that was made as part of the Alumni Engagement Project was the need to highlight the Block objectives clearly to the visiting alumni. Much time was spent ensuring that the alumni understood what the Block aimed to achieve (overall) and where their session fitted in. The greater emphasis on the GDIHP staff’s explanation of Block objectives possibly contributed to embedding a larger focus on making sure the Block objectives were clearly stated to all students, alumni and guest lecturers. These changes could well have contributed to a clearer understanding of each Block’s objectives and develop a capacity to judge if they have been met, perhaps supporting a 50% decrease in the “Neutral” ranking between 2011 and 2012, and beyond.

“Was the Block content interesting?”

The GDIHP has always presented students with a diverse range of lecturing staff, lecture content and learning experiences. However the introduction of alumni in 2012 did introduce a new content element. For the first time current GDIHP students had the opportunity to spend two days with an alumni who shared their own recollections of what their GDIHP student journey was like, and presented lectures on their current work or projects. The alumni also often co facilitated group learning sessions and enabled the GDIHP lecturing staff to undertake certain teaching activities that required an additional staff member in order to achieve the required learning outcomes. As such elements of the GDIHP program changed, as a direct result of the Alumni Engagement Project.

![Figure 3. “The Block content was interesting.”](image)

In 2011 64% of students “Agreed” or Strongly Agreed” that the Block content was interesting. This figure jumped to 92% for both 2012 and 2013. The addition of the alumni experience, through the formal lectures, co-facilitated sessions, and new group work sessions could be seen as a contributing factor to students providing a higher rating for “interesting content”.

“Were the lecturers engaging?”

In 2011 14% of students “Strongly Agreed” that the lecturers on the Block program were “engaging”. By 2012 this figure had jumped to 40% and by 2013 54% of students “Strongly Agreed” that the lecturers were engaging. Each Block there was always some discussion about the term “engaging”, and what that means from a student’s perspective.
During post evaluation feedback session students often said that an engaging lecturer is a person who keeps them focused, who educates them with solid knowledge and skills, someone who clearly provided a theory into practice approach to health promotion. Having 67% of students “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that 2011 lecturers were engaging is a significant achievement. However GDIHP staff was pleased to see that figure increase to 87% in 2012 and 92% in 2013.

![Graph showing student feedback]

Figure 4. “The Block lecturers were engaging.”

In 2011 the GDIHP was mostly taught by the course coordinator and the other GDIHP lecturer, with some support from guest lecturers. There was a large amount of teaching to cover for two academics and often some of their own professional case studies and projects could not be included in the Block teaching due to time constraints. The instruction of the alumni lectures meant that some of the health promotion theory and concepts could be taught through the alumni session, freeing up the GDIHP faculty to include more of their own professional case studies and practical group work session. This clearly was of benefit to the GDIHP staff and students.

![Image of students and staff]

GDIHP students, staff (also an alumni), alumni, Souths Cares student and Social Inclusion Unit

“Was this Block a positive learning experience?”

While 20% of students in 2011 “Strongly Agreed” that the Blocks were a positive learning
experience, this rating changed to 47% for 2012 students and 49% for 2013 students. By the end of the Alumni Engagement Project the number of students who “Strongly Agreed” they rated their learning experience as positive increased by just fewer than 150%. This is a highly significant outcome, that certainly will have some relationship to the increased opportunities provided through the Alumni Engagement project that was conducted over 2012-2013.

![Bar chart showing student feedback over three cohorts from 2011 to 2013.](chart1)

**Figure 5.** “The Block was a positive learning experience.”

“There was enough opportunity to ask questions.”

In 2011 71% of students “Agreed” that they had enough opportunity to ask questions during Block, with 19% “Strongly Agreeing”. Combined this meant that 90% of 2011 students “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” they had enough opportunity in Block to ask questions. That is an outstanding evaluation outcome, reflecting solid teaching and learning that valued interactive knowledge formative rather than a didactic pedagogy.

![Bar chart showing student feedback over three cohorts from 2011 to 2013.](chart2)

**Figure 6.** “There were enough opportunities to ask questions.”
However, there was a marked shift in those students choosing the “Strongly Agree” rating in 2012 and 2013, with 57% and 59%, respectively, rating “Strongly Agree” to having adequate opportunity to ask questions. The “Strongly Agree” response increased by 210% between 2011 and 2013. This shift potentially was influenced by a number of factors, including the freeing up of the core GDIHP lecturer’s teaching time, enabling even more obvious question time, but could also be attributed to the participation of the alumni, who often set a scene at the start of their session by inviting questions at any time. The students clearly enjoyed this invitation and frequently, and respectfully, took them up on the offer.

**GDIHP student and alumni**

“I had an opportunity to interact with others.”

Students in the 2012 and 2013 cohorts (the Alumni engagement cohorts) responded “Strongly Agree” 55% and 56%, respectively, while the 2011 cohort responded with 10%. A marked increase of 460% in the “Strongly Agree” rating presents a very solid indication that the Alumni engagement cohorts (2012 and 2013) believed, convincingly, that their learning experience provided enough of an opportunity to interact with others.
One major practical change the Alumni engagement project introduced to the GDIHP was the capacity for GDIHP staff to include an increased number of small group work learning sessions, and to introduce a number of “hands-on” practical projects. Both small group work and practical projects required more intense teaching and supervision, and that was difficult with only two lecturers in the room in 2011. With the added alumni bodies practical projects and small group work became a larger part of each teaching Block. Easier facilitation of both learning opportunities can be attributed to the participation of the visiting alumni who not only provided another perspective but also provided a valuable, and much needed, human resource.

“The assessment item given in this Block will allow me to show what I have learned about health promotion”

51% of students in 2013 “Strongly Agreed” that the Block assessment items would allow them to show the health promotion knowledge and skills that they had learnt in that Block. Only 12% of students in 2011 used the same rating. Thus, by 2013 four times the number of students “Strongly Agreed” that the assessment item for each Block allowed them to demonstrate their health promotion skills and knowledge. On reflection, the way each assessment task was introduced to each cohort was the same. The only difference was a change in assessment submission. In 2011 the students submitted lengthy assessment items, and often struggled to complete the tasks on time or without stress.

In 2012 the assessment items were broken down into smaller components and submitted on a more regular basis. This enabled the students to complete manageable sized assignments, get in to a weekly pattern of assignment submission and get early feedback on their work. Although this created a regular flow of marking over the whole semester, it did benefit the students, who perhaps were able to see the connection between the tasks and how they demonstrated their knowledge throughout the semester, rather than waiting for feedback on several large assignments. While this change to assessment was not directly
influenced by the Alumni Engagement Project, it did result from an increased focus on our pedagogy and assessment framework. The GDIHP faculty spent much time preparing for the Alumni Engagement Project and perhaps in this critical planning phase it was easier to make major pedagogical changes.

![Graph showing the percentage of responses for different years.](image)

**Figure 8.** “The assessment item given in this Block will allow me to show what I have learned about health promotion.”

“All staff in this Block were open and responsive to student feedback”

While all cohorts all scored similarly for this question when combining the “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” responses (2011: 86%; 2012:92%; 2013: 92%) there was a distinct difference in the “Strongly Agree” response category over time. Only 8% of 2011 students scored “Strongly Agree” to this question; however the “Strongly Agree” rate increased to 51% in 2013. The GDIHP staff were happy with this increase of 43% and attribute this, in part, to having more time to really engage with students on a one to one levels because of the extra teaching and learning support provided by the alumni during their visits.
Figure 9. “All staff in this Block were open and responsive to student feedback.”
“Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this Block”

![Bar chart showing the percentage of responses for each cohort.]

**Figure 10. “Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this Block.”**

A number of factors could account for the increased ranking of “Strongly Agree” to this question (2011: 12%; 2013: 50%). One important factor is the impact that the alumni visits had on the student experience and on the teaching experience. For the students, the alumni provided a different perspective, shared ideas and tips from a student who has walked the same path; they provided mentoring and solid networking opportunities. The alumni made the GDIHP student feel connected to the alumni workplaces and communities, their work projects and their research interests.

From a teaching perspective, the alumni brought into the classroom current practice and case studies to support the classroom based teaching and learning. The presence of the alumni in each Block allowed for an increase in diversity of teaching methods and approaches, utilising more small group learning opportunities, more technology, more hands on application of theory into practice.

Students’ perceptions of the alumni

“The participation of the program graduate has influenced my thinking about what I will do when I graduate”

Students said that hearing alumni talk about their experiences as students was very valuable for them; with one student saying it was particularly useful hearing from one alumnus about their journey from nervous public speaker to confident presenter by the end of the program.
Students were inspired by the alumni’s stories of working in the health promotion field, with one saying ‘if they can do it in their community we can do it in our community and make a difference and run successful programmes and that’. Students appreciated hearing how the alumni linked what they learnt in the program to their work, ‘Hearing the current work that they are working in now and how it relates to what we have been learning throughout the Block’; one student, though, would like the alumni to make this connection more explicit, for example if an alumni said that in Block one the main things they learnt were formative research and community profiling and then they talked to the students about how they implemented those learnings into their project. One alumnus said that supporting the students while they did group work enabled him to get to know them better so that when he was speaking to them he could talk about the link between their coursework and the projects they were working on.

Figure 11. “The participation of the program graduate has influenced my thinking about what I will do when I graduate.”

Some students said they appreciated having presenters who were from their cultural
You know they understand that we live 24/7 in our work, in our culture, our families. So it is not like, they have just worked with us or worked in the field, they are actually a part of us. It seems to be a little bit more real for me when someone that is Indigenous stands up; another student said that hearing what other Indigenous people have achieved has given them confidence that they can also do well.

I think how you receive like the information from the alumnus too, we do have a lot of speakers come in and give their, it's always the academic sort of way or the mainstream sort of way, so it is really good having them come in because they are on our level and we can relate and talk and you know, give feedback and whatever to one another because we all sort of are on that level of being Indigenous that we can communicate a lot to sort of, to our thinking levels.

Alumni participation influenced student thinking about the future

In all cohorts there was a strong level of agreement among students that the participation of the GDIHP alumni influenced their thinking about what they will do in the future after they graduate. In 2012, 80 per cent of students either “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that the Alumni had influenced their thinking about what they would do when they graduate. This was slightly higher in 2013, with 83 per cent of students either “Agreeing” or “Strongly agreeing” that the Alumni had influenced their thinking about their future. Students said they would love to come back like the alumni and talk to students.

Imagine if I was asked, in a few years’ time, to come back as an alumni and do some teaching here. That would be amazing. Don’t laugh...I can see that in my future. I would love that chance. If it came my way I would grab hold and work hard

GDIHP student

Students also were inspired by the alumni presentations, and talked about their own future plans and aspirations.

After that session I just sat there and thought to myself about what I wanted to do over the next few years. I had never thought of going on to do a Master’s program after this, but that session got me thinking it might be possible.

GDIHP student

I never thought I could come to uni, but now I know that I will go on and do more after this program. Hearing that other people have graduated and gone on to do Masters and PhDs just makes it seem possible for me too. I’m going for it.

GDIHP student

“I learnt a lot from the program graduate who presented in this Block”
In 2012, 40 per cent of students “Strongly Agreed” and 48 per cent of students “Agreed” that they learnt a lot from the Alumni who presented in their Blocks. The result was slightly more positive in 2013, with approximately two-thirds of students “Strongly Agreeing” and one third of students “Agreeing” that they learnt a lot from the Alumni who presented in their Blocks.

Students were very enthusiastic and positive about the alumni workshops, particularly in relating the theory they were learning in the program to the real world.

\[
\text{I think they (the course) were always using examples (of things happening in communities) but you take it at more face value when you've got the person in the room and they are sharing it because you can see their voice and how passionate they are.}
\]

When asked what the most important thing was that students learnt from the graduate who participated in their Blocks, eight of the 18 students in 2012 specifically mentioned that the presentations and feedback from the graduates was one of the most educational parts of the program. In 2013, ten out of fifteen students named the alumni sessions as being ones contributing to their growth in knowledge. In particular, one student from 2013 said they found the graduates presentations very inspirational and consequently felt as though they took away the most from this session.

One student from the 2012 cohort, talked about the value of the alumni presentations to have practical examples to support the theory, and suggested that it would be important to do this in Block One. The 2012 cohort participated in the Alumni Engagement Project when the Project commenced, midway through their year of study.

\[
\text{I think Block one, with someone coming in, an alumni coming in, showing their final presentation, saying this is what you are going to be doing...I wasn't doing my program and I probably will do it, it was all theory and I wasn't in that headspace and until I saw the alumni present their program that they did all throughout the year I'm like – and it put me into it and I thought hang on, I've got to – it's real.}
\]

This was taken into consideration and extension funding applied for so that the 2013 cohort
could experience the Project across their entire year of learning.

Improved student engagement with discipline specific knowledge

Students were very enthusiastic and positive about the alumni workshops, particularly in relating the theory they were learning in the program to the real world:

*I think they (the course) were always using examples (of things happening in communities) but you take it at more face value when you’ve got the person in the room and they are sharing it because you can see their voice and how passionate they are.*

One alumnus felt the students were very engaged when the alumnus was talking specifically about an actual health promotion program.

*I actually talked about a particular program...we looked at the processes of getting there and succeeding and sustainability...I was able to get that across to the students and they were really interested in it.*

Alumni interactions with students

“I had an opportunity to interact with the program graduate”

![Chart showing alumni interactions with students]

**Figure 13. “I had an opportunity to interact with the program graduate.”**

While there was opportunity to network and informally connect with students, most alumni contact with students was generally only though the workshops and during the group work sessions; one student said they really appreciated the alumni’s input into the group work sessions:
I find that really useful when we do group work, they will often, when they are there, they will come, rotate with all the groups and give their experience on how they felt and what they found worked.

Students described the alumni as friendly and willing to help, for example ‘I had a talk with (alumnus) yesterday, you know, about grades and how did he get through and what he found was a struggle’. Alumni have also exchanged contact details with students.

Students appreciated the option to catch up with the alumni informally, outside of teaching time, although time constraints meant this did not occur often enough.

Alumni did enjoy those opportunities when they could interact with students outside of the workshops, including informal catch-ups at breakfast, dinner and coffee. The alumni talked with students about work the students were doing in their communities.

Students appreciated the opportunity to interact informally with the alumni. It was good that you did have the opportunity to talk to them or run into them after class so you could just ask questions.

THE GDIHP alumnus now employed full time in the GDIHP

Students talked about the interaction they have with the alumnus who has been employed as a GDIHP program staff member. Students said that because the alumnus is at the university every day he is very accessible, as one student said,

We know that (the alumnus) goes here now all the time so I would probably be more prone to want to contact him if I had any concerns or whatever, but the ones that just sort of come and
go, while they are here yeah I feel comfortable with them because they are here but then I know that they have got a job and I probably wouldn’t bother them as much.

And another student said,

Having him on site here during the Blocks is a fantastic thing….it gives you that motivation, because you know some of us are still lacking of, oh do I feel like going back the next Block, can I cope with the next Block. But it sort of gives you that motivation and, you know, stimulation that having him turn up during a Block, it yeah, gives you that self-confidence back again and motivation of it is not far off now before graduation, I will hang in there, I have come this far.

One student also said they like that he ‘doesn’t take sides, he doesn’t, he is very neutral, I think that is actually a good thing for this course’. The alumnus said that outside of class he does a bit of mentoring with students, and with some, he continues contact via email once they return home.

Alumni were part of the GDIHP student presentation assessment panel (Block six in 2012 and 2013)

In Block six of the program students present an in-depth oral presentation, accompanied by an extensive written report. This “Final Project” is the result of their entire years learning, and brings together key concepts, skills and knowledge that they have developed over their year of study. Alumni sat on an assessment panel that gave feedback to the GDIHP students on their presentations. Before the first day of the presentations the program staff went through the assessment criteria with the assessment panel. As one alumnus said, ‘they had some key attributes and stuff that we needed to look at…this is the topics that they were going to be covering and these are the things that we are looking for feedback on’.

Two alumni described their role as a member of the panel

Before they (current students) started with their presentation we sort of gave them a bit of a speech on it – not so much speech but spoke to them about how we felt when we done ours and what we expect to hear and see as panellists and for them to talk openly and from the heart because they know their communities, they know the health priorities and the issues that are out there. It’s just the way of them presenting it back, so making them feel as comfortable as they possibly could

We didn’t assume to be the experts either. We just talked about their way of delivery and did we get the message on what they were trying to teach. As one of the community people, we are the target audience, sort of thing, so did they present well enough for us to get the message and that sort of stuff. So it wasn’t about standing up and standing up straight and all that sort of stuff and the nitty gritty stuff, it was just about the PowerPoint presentation and getting the message across

The GDIHP program staff said they thought the students really ‘loved having the alumni on the panel’ because they saw the alumni as ‘health promotion professionals, but also as people who understood them and their communities and their issues’. They added that ‘the students often made comments to us saying it was good to know they’d [the alumni] done it themselves’.

The program staff commented that the alumni became more and more confident throughout the two days (of assessment) and gave the students good feedback.
Enhancement of the overall learning experience of current students

Figure 14. “The participation of the program graduate improved the Block learning experience for me.”

In 2012, 28 per cent of students “Strongly Agreed” and 63 per cent of students “Agreed” that the participation of the GDIHP Alumni improved their individual learning experiences. In 2013, these figures rose to 58 per cent of students “Strongly Agreeing”, leaving 35 per cent “Agreeing”. The higher rate of “Strongly Agree” could reflect the impact of the Alumni Engagement Project over the entire year of learning, enabling the GDIHP student to clearly link the value of the alumni participation to their overall learning experience.

Both 2012 and 2013 cohorts specifically highlighted that the most important thing that they gained from the program was the feedback that they received from the Alumni about their individual journeys in the workforce after they had completed the course. One student from 2013 noted that they found the graduates stories about the barriers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research and the discussion about strategies of how to overcome these barriers to be the most important thing that they learnt from the program.

5.2 GDIHP staff perspective on the impact and benefit of the project

GDIHP program staff said one of the main benefits of the program for students was the role modelling provided by the alumni:

*It’s actually seeing somebody standing up there, who one year ago, or five years ago, or longer, they were a student. And they are sharing the challenges they met as a student, and the things they succeeded in. And that they’re sharing those stories within a really complex working life and community life. So I think, for a current student to sit and have the opportunity to meet role models, and to say, “Wow, he’s not much older than me.” Or, “Wow, she’s done amazing things with this, maybe I could do that.” Or, “I’ve never thought about doing it that way.” That’s inspirational. So I think what stands out is the role modelling.*

The sharing of professional knowledge between alumni and students was also seen, by the GDIHP program staff, as a benefit of the program.
And so people who – an alumni presenting on nutrition, sparks the interest of people in the classroom who are working in that area. The questions start flowing, and then the exchange of emails. And so some of that spontaneous exchange of professional knowledge and experience, has just been mind-blowing.

Program staff would like the opportunity for the alumni to spend more time alone with the students, perhaps with the alumni running the program for one whole day; staff added that this would require good organisation and the alumni would probably need to be a more recent graduate because the program is constantly evolving.

Staff enjoyed seeing the alumni take pride in what they are achieving; one staff member said that by coming back as presenters the alumni ‘felt appreciated and took pride in their achievements – it is a recognition of these things and acknowledgement of all the hard work that brought them here’. One alumnus is now employed in a full-time position in the program and staff said that having him employed to teach in the program has brought a different perspective to the program (from a graduate’s perspective), and complemented the skills and strengths of existing program staff.

Alumni interactions with GDIHP program staff

Alumni had the opportunity to interact with GDIHP program staff both informally and formally, including discussions around the workshops and group work support (‘when the students go off and do group work the alumni actually float around as we do and answer questions and give students ideas and that’s really wonderful to have extra hands on deck’), and networking at morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Sometimes the alumni have opportunities to meet other staff members, or catch up with staff members they had built a relationship with when they were a student.
One alumnus said they liked offering advice to GDIHP staff where they could:

‘I don’t know how much advice I can give, I can give them my advice on different situations that they are in or different personalities that they are having to deal with…offering some feedback on, to them, about I suppose content and structure as well, of some lessons…I find I get a bit more of a student’s perspective as well. So whenever I have heard something that I could, or hear things and I feel like, you know I should talk to them about it just to help their position then I will sort of say that when I could’.

Program staff said it would be good to have more time to network with the alumni, to explore how they and the alumni might continue to work together; but current time constraints meant that was not possible.

One alumnus said he would like more feedback from the GDIHP program staff about his teaching style, ‘the stuff that I spit out, whether that is close to the mark that this course is teaching and what health promotion really is’. A debrief session was conducted after each visit but more time could be factored in to this feedback process in future applications of this Project.

Contributions from alumni enhanced Program teaching

Program staff said that since the workshops they have incorporated some of what the alumni discussed in their workshops, into the program, ‘we were linking their presentations to our own teaching’. GDIHP program staff said that they continued to refer to the content presented by alumni, even after the alumni had gone back home. Program staff said it became an important tool for them to use- linking alumni case studies to the university based teaching.

I realised that I kept saying things like “remember when [alumnus] told you about that health program evaluation” or things like “when [alumnus] described how she engaged community and stakeholders…” All of those references to previous alumni presentations became critical to my own teaching. I used them to highlight key teaching points.

GDIHP program staff

Increasing the presence of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teachers within the GDIHP program

The program staff believed that one of the benefits of inviting alumni down to help teach in the course was the students seeing the presence of more Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people teaching the program to them. The program staff said that this was important to break the norm of ‘white people doing everything’ and that there were cultural benefits of having more alumni/teachers being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander themselves.

One student commented that having an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person present a workshop was ‘a lot less formal than, like, a non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person’, and that you can see that passion of your people who are bettering themselves and their communities’. The findings indicated that the teaching of the alumni (and their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander culture) was valuable and beneficial to the experience of the students.

Improved connections between the GDIHP program, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health promotion professionals, alumni and their communities

One alumnus stated that they believed that they were chosen to come back and present as they were a big supporter of the program, and that it gave her an opportunity to share her knowledge and to be a role model.
If you are fortunate enough to be able to go and get further education I’m a big believer that you should go back and share that with your other colleagues or your community... be a bit of a role model.

One student spoke of how her interactions with the visiting alumni gave her the opportunity to visit the alumni’s community and to implement some of her own health promotion knowledge.

One of them, I got invited up to their community when they set it up, like when they set up for me to go up to help look at delivering my program up there to help them. So it was a great opportunity to share, share knowledge and that.

5.3 Alumni perspective on the impact and benefit of the Alumni Engagement Project

Alumni worked with GDIHP staff to plan appropriate collaborative learning exchanges

One alumni said that the program staff told them what topics the teaching Blocks covered and asked them to tailor their presentations to those topics; another alumni mentioned that the lecturer also said ‘tell them a story of how you’ve implemented your programs into the community’; this alumnus said they were told they could deliver the presentation any way they wanted to suit their own style.

When the Alumni were in the process of preparing their workshop about a health promotion program they had been involved in, the alumni sent their workshop presentations to the program staff before their scheduled session to get feedback about whether their presentations were on the on the right track.

It was very empowering to be a part of the planning process. Being asked what I would like to present, and seeing how my work was fitting with the student’s learning was amazing. I felt very respected by the GDIHP staff and really enjoyed getting my workshop ready.

GDIHP alumni

Alumni interaction with GDIHP students and program staff

Alumni enjoyed that had the opportunity to interact with program staff and students both informally and formally, including discussions around the workshops and panel, and networking at morning tea and lunch.

Morning tea for the visitors, staff, all students, and often we would invite other members of the faculty...informal networking was an opportunity for us to talk to the alumni about what they are doing and what we were doing here - so that was networking and I guess a bit of mentoring, any questions they had about their presentation or who to interact with the students, and also questions we had about the work that they were doing.

GDIHP Alumni

One alumnus did two workshops with students—one of the workshops was more informal and was used by students to discuss concerns they had about the program, including travel and accommodation arrangements. One student said about this workshop, ‘we got to see (the alumnus) outside and just like it wasn’t as formal in class, you could just say all those little things...comparing how was your accommodation, how was this and sharing those stories, it was good’. In the other workshop the alumnus discussed their health promotion project. The alumnus said that having developed rapport with the students in the first workshop, it was ‘a
lot easier for me to step into the next presentation which was a PowerPoint presentation’.

Alumni gained new knowledge and skills to embed in their work practices and communities

Two of the alumni who presented talked about how they learnt something from the experience of presenting, one said

Learning about when you are delivering something you’ve got to talk about the processes, you can’t deliver the guts of the program, you’ve got to deliver the whole lot. Like, sometimes we can go in and deliver a program and talk about how wonderful it is but we’ve still got to look at the downfalls of it, the negative side of it because that keeps us going. So we were able to talk about all that stuff

and

I’m a former student...they (students) ask questions that actually makes you look at what you are doing

Alumni also mentioned that presenting to the students is good for the alumni’s professional reputation, ‘to be flown down to the University of Sydney...to lecture makes me feel proud and makes people at work look at me in a different way, a positive way’.
Chapter 6 - Dissemination

Dissemination of the implementation, progress and outcomes of the Alumni project were able to be disseminated in several traditional and non-traditional ways.

Social media professional networking page

We established and regularly updated a GDIHP social media professional networking page. Alumni, current students and GDIHP partners and collaborators were all invited to “like” the page and keep up to date with the Project. As we gather photos and qualitative feedback through the evaluation, we will continually feed information about the project to this page. This page is accessed by current students, alumni, other interested parties who have “liked” our page. A screen shot of one such feed is below:

![GDIHP Face Book page](image)

Academic publications

1. Publication of the “Alumni Engagement Project” project evaluation framework and methodology

Examples of best practice program evaluation methodology and outcomes are highly sought after in the higher education sector and in the health professions. This program evaluation is being written up for publication in a higher education academic journal, and will provide a case study example of developing and implementing a project evaluation framework and plan. This paper highlights the impact of this teaching and learning innovation on the higher education learning outcomes of a cohort of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
and/or Torres Strait Islander Students.

2. Publication of the impact of the “Alumni Engagement Project” project on higher education faculty

A paper is currently being written, for publication, on the impact the 18 month innovation had on the development of the academic and professional learning of the higher education teachers (alumni and faculty). The audience of this paper would be higher education practitioners, managers and institutions.

Community publication

The qualitative data being collected throughout the project provided an opportunity for an article to be disseminated through relevant Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander community, education and health organisations, detailing the lived experiences of this teaching and learning innovation through the eyes of both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander students and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander alumni and teaching staff. This article is currently being finalised and will be submitted to a community publication such as The Koori Mail.

Community engagement with an alumni’s community in Garrthalala, Northern Territory

The GDIHP faculty won a Sydney Medical School The University of Sydney, Dean’s Award for Supporting the Student experience in 2013. This award is being used to partly fund a trip to the community of the alumni who was employed initially through this “Alumni Engagement Project” project. The trip involves the entire GDIHP faculty and support staff and the alumni project will be introduced to the community to show the alumni’s family and community the impact of this innovation on the lives of the alumni, the GDIHP faculty and on the GDIHP student cohorts. The trip will also involve several other health promotion activities but will create a linkage between this “Alumni Engagement Project” project outcome and a collaborating community.

Higher education sector

The project could stand as a model for other higher education programs to follow in an effort to create collaborative learning environments for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander students, program alumni, their communities and university staff. A summary paper on outcomes and tips for implementation of this innovation will be written and ready for dissemination through the GDIHP social media page, internal publications and external higher education teaching and learning networks (Higher education teaching and learning community, GDIHP alumni, students). The project was presented at a Sydney Medical School Faculty meeting on teaching and learning in 2013. It was also the basis of a lecture given by GDIHP course coordinator to two undergraduate program areas (pharmacy and education and social work) as an example of best practice higher education and community engagement.

Launching an outcome of a teaching and learning activity

Our students and visiting alumni have been involved in a teaching and learning activity in collaboration with Souths Cares (South Sydney Rabbitohs) and local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students. This project has provided funding for our alumni to be part of this teaching and learning activity. One outcome of this is the development of a series of health and education messages, targeting high school students. These messages take the form of short film clips to be disseminated through the high school networks, South Sydney contacts and stakeholders and student workplaces and communities. These film clips will be launched in November 2013.
Presenting to the media and alumni units

The project was presented internally to the alumni, media and philanthropic contacts. Our aim was to secure future support to ensure this model is maintained within our teaching program beyond the funded period. We filmed an interview with the alumni who was originally brought down to Sydney from the Northern Territory through this grant. This interview was used to lobby for internal funding support to further his employ.

One of our alumni - telling his story on film

"The Same Journey: Our Teachers" – is a you tube clip of on alumni speaking about his experience working on the original project. This alumni now works in a fulltime capacity on the GDIHP program, and his initial appointment was a direct result of the Alumni Engagement Project.

http://youtu.be/0iRaV8am-kk

Another dissemination idea was to interview and film/photograph alumni and GDIHP students in action and share their stories using social media and other web based communication. These clips were distributed across the university. They also appeared on a number of home pages and are also part of the University of Sydney’s You tube page.

My life this year - Student life - Indigenous Health Promotion
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9b66jIzYPI

Take on the challenge - Student life - Indigenous Health Promotion
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USLx0EEwYHM

Conference presentations

1. Workshop presentation at World Indigenous people’s Conference on Education (WIPCE)

The GDIHP program coordinator and project leader had an abstract accepted to present a workshop based on the “Alumni Engagement Project” project at the World Indigenous people’s Conference on Education (WIPCE), to be held in Hawaii in 2014. WIPCE is the largest venue for indigenous education in the world. Since its inception, this conference has attracted highly regarded experts in indigenous education. The 2014 conference in Honolulu, Hawaii promises to attract educators from all over the world to discuss contemporary movements in education that support our unique indigenous worldviews. The workshop will provide a background to the project and explore, with conference delegates, how the project might work, as a model, in other educational setting in an international arena.

NADA is the peak organisation for the non-government drug and alcohol sector in NSW. Their goal is to advance and support non-government drug and alcohol organisations in NSW to reduce the alcohol and drug related harm to individuals, families and the community. NADA represents over 100 organisational members that provide a broad range of services including drug and alcohol health promotion, early intervention, treatment and after-care programs. These community based organisations operate throughout NSW. They comprise both large and small services that are diverse in their structure, philosophy and approach to drug and alcohol service delivery. The Alumni project will highlighted through a learning activity that extended across all alumni visits, focusing on the development of short health promotion films on tobacco use in teenage Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students. This will be presented by the GDIHP course coordinator and Alumni project leader and the GDIHP lecturer (also an alumni).


NIDAC is The Leading Voice in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander Drug and Alcohol Policy Advice, provides advice to government, based on its collective expertise and knowledge from those working in the field, health professionals and other relevant experts. Two teaching innovations that the alumni and students involved in the “ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT PROJECT” project have participated in will be presented at this conference. The two presentations will be presented by the GDIHP course coordinator and Alumni project leader and the GDIHP lecturer (also an alumni).

4. Engagement Australia – a roundtable discussion forum

Engagement Australia is committed to leading, developing and promoting an integrated approach to university-community engagement within and between the higher education, private, public and community-based sectors. Their 2014 conference has the theme of ENGAGE AND INNOVATE FOR SUSTAINABILITY and will bring together international engaged scholars and practitioners. The alumni “Alumni Engagement Project” project will be used as an example of how to develop higher education and community engagement. An abstract was submitted and is currently under peer review. Should the abstract be accepted the GDIHP program coordinator and “Alumni Engagement Project” project leader, and the GDIHP lecturer/alumni will present the roundtable discussion.

5. Conference presentation to the 22nd AHPA National Conference and the 18th Annual CDN Conference in Alice Springs

The conference is presented by the Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA), the Northern Territory Chronic Diseases Network (CDN) and the Northern Territory Medicare Local (NTML) who are partnering to jointly deliver the conference in September 2014. The theme of the conference is 'Equity @ the Centre: Action on Social Determinants of Health'. The focus on equity aims to demonstrate the centrality of fairness and social justice as principles that underpin contemporary health promotion, prevention and comprehensive primary health care activities and system reforms across Australia; the focus on social determinants of health responds to the growing national and global evidence and commentary acknowledging the need for action in this area.

An abstract has been submitted to the conference under the conference sub-themes " Creative solutions - this theme will explore innovative and proactive strategies, programs and ‘ways of doing’ to promote health equity through a partnership approach”

The presentation will profile the “Alumni Engagement Project” project as an example of innovation in building learning communities in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or Torres Strait Islander higher education, health and community. If accepted the GDIHP course coordinator and “Alumni Engagement Project” project leader will present.
Chapter 7 - Linkages

Several collaborations and linkages have been established throughout this “Alumni Engagement Project” project. These collaborations have set the scene for continued collaborative work and remain a highly valued outcome of the “Alumni Engagement Project” project.

1. Northern Territory and the Garrthalala Community

The GDIHP staff won the Sydney Medical School, The University of Sydney, Dean’s Award for Supporting the Student experience in 2013. This award is being used to partly fund a trip to the community of the alumni who was employed initially through this “Alumni Engagement Project” project. The trip involves the entire GDIHP faculty and support staff and the alumni project will be introduced to the community to show the alumni’s family and community the impact of this innovation on the lives of the alumni, the GDIHP faculty and on the GDIHP student cohorts. The trip will also involve several other health promotion activities but will create a linkage between this “Alumni Engagement Project” project outcome and a collaborating community. Our hope is we will be able to continue the engagement, established through this project, into future project work.

2. Connections with South Sydney Rabbitohs and the Souths Cares Community Outreach Program

Throughout this project the GDIHP students and staff developed collaboration with Souths Cares Community Outreach Program, South Sydney Rabbitohs. In addition we began working with the University of Sydney’s Social Inclusion Unit and under the guidance of the University’s Indigenous Strategy, WM, we established a linkage with Souths Cares as an important community partner. Through this collaboration we opened up the opportunity for the GDIHP students and staff and alumni to work with Souths Cares and the high schools that form part of their transitions from school to work and further study program. Our visiting alumni were an important part of this collaboration and worked with us during their visits to the GDIHP. This linkage is continuing and is supported by WM.

3. Links with MIPH with potential for community/student/alumni exchange

A further linkage has been made with another program in the SSPH. This Master of International Public Health (MIPH) and the GDIHP program established common ground in the area of community development and health education and practice. Throughout this project the two programs have worked together, finding ways for each student cohort to share knowledge and skills and experiences with each other. The alumni were integral in this process. Feedback from alumni indicated a high level of interest in a comparison between community engaged teaching in overseas communities with community engaged teaching in Australia. As we hope to secure funding to support a visit to one of the MIPH alumni communities, to explore a potential alumni student exchange program.

4. Strategic forum of GDIHP alumni – Alice Springs

The major health promotion peak body is holding an international conference in Alice Springs in late 2014. Many GDIHP alumni attend this conference and the Project leader is presenting this project at that conference forum. Building upon the evaluation feedback of the alumni, it has been proposed that a strategic forum be held at Alice Springs, during the conference, allowing all attending GDIHP alumni to come together with the Project Leader to discuss and explore further ways of keeping alumni and GDIHP collaboration alive and moving forward into the future.

5. Hosting a major conference for GDIHP alumni

Following some evaluation feedback from alumni and GDIHP staff, we have been consulting with the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Indigenous Strategy and Services (DVISS), The
University of Sydney, to explore possibility of holding major conference held in Sydney. The aim of the conference would be to allow all GDIHP alumni to profile their work and connect their study of the GDIHP with current work and future learning and development plans. Opportunities for funding this initiative are being sought and the idea and linkage continues to grow.
Chapter 8 - Success, and lessons learned

8.1 Changes to the GDIHP program during the project’s lifespan

Tenure for an Alumnus

In 2013 additional funding enabled the GDIHP program to employ an alumnus in a teaching position, initially for six months. However, based on the success of the progress of the Alumni Engagement Project, the GDIHP faculty lobbied for internal funds from the University’s Indigenous Strategy, and under the WM Merit Appointment initiative the University and the SSPH united funds to employ the alumni on tenure. This was considered a huge outcome and benefitted not only the appointed alumni, but the GDIHP faculty, the SSPH and the University as a whole.

GDIHP program staff said that the alumnus employed ‘was the obvious person - as a student, and then in keeping connection with us post-graduation, he’d demonstrated his interest in teaching and sharing knowledge, and his capacity to do it. And we were really aware that he had the goods, and he was interested’.

Program staff said the benefits of having an alumnus on the teaching staff were that he could work with them to develop resources and curriculum; he could build relationships with the students from the start of the year; he provided another person for the students to go to for information; and he could teach health promotion from a different perspective. Program staff said that the alumnus being of a different gender to other current GDIHP teaching staff was ‘incredibly helpful...I think it has encouraged the communication channels a little bit more from some students who might have been a bit shy about talking to female lecturers about some issues’.

A couple of challenges to the alumni appointment were the costs of settlement for the alumnus in Sydney; and the demand for the alumnus to work with other areas in the university, as one staff member said ‘we are conscious that sometimes he feels he is being pulled in two directions’. Future projects should factor in relocation costs and established workload guidelines before commencement of the position, to avoid an alumni being asked to do more work than should be required.

At the beginning of his appointment, the alumnus supported the two GDIHP program staff while they lectured; as time has gone on, the alumnus has begun to lead some of the lectures. The alumnus said that his confidence in lecturing and knowledge of the course content is building as time goes on.

New GDIHP program coordinator

In 2014 there were staff changes within the program, as the current course coordinator moved to another position, the other Aboriginal program staff member stepped into the course coordinator role and the alumnus began teaching full-time. While there was a great deal of planning and mentoring in these handovers, the learning curves have been steep-there has been little time for reflection on practice, it has just been a constant busy schedule.

8.2 Changes to the GDIHP program as a result of the Project

More practice delivering health promotion presentations

Participation in the Project encouraged GDIHP program staff, alumni and students to suggest improvements to the program. Many students wanted more practice with, and tips on public
speaking, including how to relieve stress beforehand; how to use your notes rather than just reading from them; and a session on using PowerPoint. One student suggested that having the opportunity to do public speaking throughout the year, rather than just at the end would be of benefit, ‘I don’t personally like doing it, but maybe you would feel a bit more comfortable if you, especially if there is a big one at the end, if you had done a few smaller ones throughout’. As a result 2014 students, and beyond, will have increased opportunities to practice presenting publically, as part of their assessment schedule.

Alumni involvement for the whole teaching block

A number of students indicated they would like the alumni to be involved with the program longer than two days, in order to build up trust and also to have more opportunity to talk with them if you wanted to. Another suggestion was to have alumni cover the whole Block, ‘even if we had a couple for the first couple days and a couple for the next couple of days, like to cover the whole Block, then you will get to know them a little bit more’.

Some students suggested there should be more opportunities to interact with alumni, like a barbecue, ‘very relaxed, sit down and have a good yarn’. Another suggested that the alumni could meet with the students informally before the workshops, ‘then you already have that little bit of connection with the introduction and more time for them to talk about their program or to throw ideas around the room and stuff because you’ve already done that introduction in an informal way’.

Another suggestion was to have a follow-up with alumni and students after the program is finished to re-capture the initial burst of enthusiasm and exchange of knowledge that occurs immediately after the course finishes. A further project has been submitted for funding consideration, partly in response to the evaluation feedback from this Seed project. A follow up project aims to bring alumni to each teaching block for the full duration of Block, and to provide additional connections with students pre and post teaching Blocks. Students suggested

‘It could be like a buddy system with the alumni, once or twice a semester’

and

‘It could be Skype or phone calls or something like that…those tips you would give if you’d known’.

Another suggestion made by the program staff, students and alumni was to have alumni involved in the program from Block one.

'It would be great to have someone in Block 1 next year because we missed that this year, it didn't start until Block 4, when the students are really twitchy and anxious about how they are going to go, I think that's really going to make a difference... having someone who has done it and says this changed my life is going to be so much more powerful (Program staff member).'

A current student Agreed with this.

'I think Block one, with someone coming in, an alumni coming in, showing their final presentation, saying this is what you are going to be doing...I wasn’t doing my program and I probably will do it, it was all theory and I wasn’t in that headspace and until I saw the alumni present their program that they did all throughout the year I’m like – and it put me into it and I thought hang on, I've got to – it's real.

Taking the GDIHP alumni project to an alumni community

As a learning experience, a program staff member suggested it would be good to take a cohort of students to the community of an alumnus or alumni. This was also echoed in
evaluation feedback from GDIHP students and alumni. Investigations have shown that we could do an Away From Base teaching Block in an alumni community as long as the program could present a cost benefit analysis to DIISRTE. However that funding will cover travel and accommodation and no other costs of undertaking the collaborative teaching in community. A further funding application has been submitted with a proposal to follow up on this suggestion and teach a block in an alumni community.

8.3 Challenges met and solutions found

Challenge: Seeking permission to shift amounts under two budget items

Increased travel and accommodation costs meant that we needed to pay more for those budget items towards the end of the project. As such, we needed to follow the process of correctly requesting a slight shift in budget amounts. After consulting information on the OLT website, we sought advice from our School Executive Office and Head of School. We then emailed a request to our main contact in the OLT. Ideally we would have preferred not to have had to ask to change the amounts allocated to approve budget items. However, we saw no other way than to ask for a slight variation (moving $2000 from one budget item to another). The approval of this meant that we could continue to support the project, through appropriate travel and accommodation bookings.

Solution:

Overall, the approval of a shifting of $2000 out of the casual teaching relief into the travel and accommodation did not have an impact on project outcomes or timeline. It just shifted a small amount out of one budget item into another, allowing us to undertake the project activities and meet the changed costs for travel and accommodation.

Challenge: Including alumni from urban, rural, regional and remote areas

Over the course of 2013 we planned to invite alumni from a range of geographic locations, covering rural, regional, urban and remote alumni experiences. However, we learnt it was important to introduce that plan to the student cohort. After the first two teaching Blocks of 2013, feedback from students requested “more urban alumni experiences”. While we knew urban alumni were booked in for later teaching Blocks, students did not know this.
Solution:
In future, at the start of an academic year, we should clearly outline which alumni would be participating in each Block, and highlight where they were from.

Challenge: Travel and accommodation price rises

Some small, but impactful, changes to costs in travel and accommodation budget items also presented some challenges.

Solution:
In the future a contingency amount should be factored in to cover any increase in travel or accommodation, particularly since the project is extending over an 18 month period, within which one would expect price rises.

Challenge: Extra time for professional mentoring

While the GDIHP faculty staff factored time to mentor visiting alumni in to their workloads, in future more time should be assigned to this. At the start of the project GDIHP faculty estimated how much time, potentially, should be spent setting up alumni visits, mentoring alumni (pre visit), mentoring alumni (during visit) and ongoing mentoring of alumni (post visits). In most cases this time allocation was under estimated.

Solution:
All faculty staff saw that allocating more time to alumni mentoring is a vital component of the success of this initiative, and as such responded to the need to increase time spent in a mentoring role.

8.4 A final word

The “Alumni Engagement Project” was successfully implemented in Semester 2, 2012 and Semester 1 and 2 in 2013. There was a very positive response to the project among GDIHP students, staff and the alumni themselves.

Alumni felt they had contributed to the students learning through their workshops and participation on the presentation assessment panel and appreciated the opportunity they had been given to share their experiences with the current students. Students felt that they had learnt a lot from the participation of the alumni and in particular benefited from hearing how the alumnus’ had used their qualifications after graduation and also how they had applied the knowledge they had gained from the program to implement health promotion projects that benefited their communities. Student took away ideas from the alumni presentations for their own student presentations, their work in their communities and ideas for their future careers. Hearing directly from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people working in the field was a powerful strategy for enhancing student learning and developing their ideas for working in communities.

Students also benefited from less formal interaction with the alumni and thought more opportunities for informal interaction could be provided, particularly to enable students to be more at ease with the alumni. The informal interaction that had occurred had allowed less confident students to approach the alumni and had also provided an unanticipated opportunity for students to express some concerns about the arrangements for their accommodation and few other issues.

The alumni welcomed the chance to give something back to the program that had provided them with a significant opportunity to advance their careers and help their communities.
They enjoyed the opportunity to engage with the students and had gained confidence in working with the students as a result of their experience. The participation of the alumni enhanced the students’ appreciation of the connection between their academic work and work occurring in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. Having other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people involved in the program enhanced the teaching experience for the program staff as well.

The opportunities for alumni and students to interact could be continued after their participation in the Block through electronic communication or other means and some students and alumni believed this could enhance connections between the program and communities, as well as maintaining communication between students, program staff and alumni.

All participants believed that starting the “Alumni Engagement Project” from the first teaching Block and having an alumni present during all blocks would have additional benefits for students. While students enjoyed hearing about the work of the alumni they wanted opportunity to engage with alumni in the alumni’s own working setting and community. Students stated that this was an important part of creating a learning community, the two way exchange of people and knowledge.

Overall, the implementation of the alumni project has been successful and the project clearly met its objectives. The GDIHP learning community look forward to finding ways to continue our University, alumni and community engagement teaching and learning process.
Appendix 1: End of Block student evaluation sheet

Evaluation: Block 4 2012

Please take time to complete this evaluation of Block 4. Your opinions and feedback are highly valued and help us make sure we continue to provide you with a quality learning experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please circle your response to each statement.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Block 4 covered what I expected it to cover</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Block 4 satisfied my professional needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Block 4 objectives were clearly stated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Block 4 objectives were achieved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Block 4 content was interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The lecturers were engaging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The lecturers were knowledgeable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The lecturers were respectful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I had a positive learning experience on Block 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. There was opportunity to ask questions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. There was a good opportunity to interact with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The resources and handouts were helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The assessment item given in this Block will allow me to show what I have learned about health promotion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. All staff in this Block were open and responsive to student feedback</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this Block</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I learnt a lot from the program graduate who presented in this Block</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I had an opportunity to interact with the program graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The participation of the program graduate improved the Block 4 learning experience for me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The participation of the program graduate has influenced my thinking about what I will do when I graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did you enjoy most about Block 4? Why?
What did you enjoy least about Block 4? Why?

What was the most important thing you learnt from the program graduate who participated in Block 4?

Which sessions did you learn the most from? Why?

Which sessions did you learn the least from? Why?

In your opinion, how could Block 4 be improved?

Thank you for completing this evaluation of Block 4.
Appendix 2: Focus group and interview guides

These interview questions were used as guides only

**Student focus group**

**Participating students:**
- What did you enjoy most about the GDIHP alumni workshop? Why?
- Was the GDIHP alumni workshop a positive learning experience? Why/ why not?
- Please describe the opportunity you were given to interact with the visiting GDIHP alumni.
- In your opinion, how could the GDIHP alumni workshop be improved?
- Do you have anything else you wish to talk about?

**Alumni interviews**

**Participating alumni:**
- What did you enjoy most about the GDIHP alumni teaching and learning innovation? Why?
- Was the GDIHP alumni workshop a positive teaching and learning experience? Why/ why not?
- Please describe the opportunity you were given to interact with the GDIHP students.
- Please describe the opportunity you were given to interact with the GDIHP staff.
- In your opinion, how could the GDIHP alumni teaching and learning innovation be improved?
- Do you have anything else you wish to talk about?

**Staff interviews**

**Participating staff:**
- How did you decide which alumni to invite? Were there any particular criteria used? How many alumni did you invite and were there two or more participating together?
- What instructions did you give to the alumni? Do you think they were clear before they arrived what the purpose of the project was?
- How did you design the program for the participation of the alumni in the student program? What was the rationale for the way it was designed? How did you introduce the purpose of the project to the students?
- What opportunities were there for the alumni to interact with the students and the staff of the GDIHP? Was these opportunities formal, or informal, or both? Do you think the opportunities were sufficient? On reflection, is there anything that you would do differently in terms of how the alumni experience was structured?
What were the most important things you think the alumni shared with the students? What were your observations about the reactions of the students to the alumni? Did the students share any responses with you? What did the alumni say about their experience?

What do you think was the most important impact of the alumni on the students? How do you think the experience impacted on the alumni?

What did you enjoy most about the GDIHP alumni teaching and learning innovation? Why?

Was the GDIHP alumni workshop a positive teaching and learning experience? Why/why not?

Did you face any challenges during the GDIHP teaching and learning project? What were these and how were they overcome?

On reflection, how do you think the GDIHP alumni teaching and learning innovation be improved? How will you conduct the alumni experience in Semester 1, 2013?

Do you have anything else you wish to add about the first 6 months of the alumni project?
### Appendix 3: List of participating alumni

| Block 4 2012 | Sarah Boyne  
Health Promotion Team Leader  
Deadly Ears Program  
Queensland Health  
Brisbane |
| Block 5 2012 | Ella Bowie  
Senior Project Officer  
Public Health - Health Promotion Services (*Buwalwoedhay Dorge*)  
Torres Strait & Northern Peninsula Area Health Services District |
| Block 6 2012 | Jenny Sewter  
Health Promotion Officer  
Apunipima Cape York Health Council  
Michael Drahm  
Community Engagement & Capacity Officer  
Workplace: Cape York Hospital & Health Service (CYHHS) |
| Block 1 2013 | Geoffrey Angeles  
Associate Lecturer  
Indigenous Health Programs  
Sydney School of Public Health  
Sydney Medical School  
The University of Sydney  
Jake Byrne  
Project Officer  
Indigenous health, Injury  
*Driving Change*  
The George Institute for Global Health |
| Block 2 2013 | Jake Byrne  
Project Officer  
Indigenous health, Injury  
*Driving Change*  
The George Institute for Global Health  
Geoffrey Angeles  
Associate Lecturer |
| Block 3 2013 | Jake Byrne  
Project Officer  
Indigenous health, Injury  
*Driving Change*  
The George Institute for Global Health  
Geoffrey Angeles  
Associate Lecturer  
Indigenous Health Programs  
Sydney School of Public Health  
Sydney Medical School  
The University of Sydney |
| Block 4 2013 | Sharon Thorpe  
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Project Officer  
Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisation  
Allan Stanley  
Health Promotion Officer  
Deadly Ears Program  
Queensland Health  
Brisbane  
Geoffrey Angeles  
Associate Lecturer  
Indigenous Health Programs  
Sydney School of Public Health  
Sydney Medical School  
The University of Sydney |
| Block 5 2013 | Fiona Millard  
Health Promotion Officer  
Apunipima Cape York Health Council  
Steve Ella  
NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander drug and alcohol traineeship coordinator  
Acting Manager of Central Coast drug and alcohol counselling service  
Geoffrey Angeles |
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<tr>
<th>Block 6 2013</th>
<th>Lynette O’Donoghue</th>
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<td>Project Support Officer</td>
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<td>NSW Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>Jake Byrne</td>
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References


Plater, S. (2012). ‘For the Life of Me, I Can't See Why Those Students were Let Go on So Long’: Educating the Educators, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Style. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 41*(02), 156-161.
