



# Attitudes of Hope, Care and Joy: Stories of Collaborative Learning Mentors



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**Aim:** This study explores the role collaborative learning has in building student fieldwork capacity in rural, remote and Indigenous communities.

**Background:** Australia has significant examples of inequality in health and wellbeing, with significant disadvantage still evident in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. Preparing a future health workforce to be equipped to deliver healthcare that provides inclusive care is necessary. Traditional placement models, utilising discipline-specific supervision and in clinical contexts, may be insufficient to adequately prepare students for the collaborative practice needed to redress these inequalities. Examining alternative student placement models is therefore necessary to determine the legitimacy and value they have in preparing health students for collaborative and inclusive care provision.

**Method:** This study examined community mentors' stories of supporting speech pathology students in rural NSW communities. These mentors provided this specialist student support as part of the inaugural Specialist Integrated Community Engagement - SpICE project in 2012. A narrative inquiry was undertaken into the mentors' experiences with collaborative learning. Interviews were conducted with the community mentors. The information they provided was then analysed and re-storied into mentor narratives.

**Findings:** The research findings convey the attitudinal narratives that these community mentors share that overcome many of the barriers to collaborative learning and endeavour. Their stories speak of 'hope' for a better future; 'care' about providing a meaningful learning experience; and 'joy' in what can be accomplished in a collaborative learning context.

**Conclusion and implications:** The significance of these findings is that non-traditional, collaborative placements offer not just an 'alternative' placement model to shape our future health workforce. Importantly, they also provide an approach that teaches about 'care' in health-care, and result in broader and more sustainable benefits for rural, remote and Indigenous communities and those who deliver specialist services within them.

***For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'***

Marijke is a speech pathologist and student educator at Albury Community Health. She has lived in rural areas for most of her life. Her work in recent years has focussed on harnessing the opportunities that present for rural, remote and Indigenous communities by combining student collaborative learning and community engagement.

