**PART I: BASIC INFORMATION**

Heiskell Award Category: Category 2: Study Abroad

Name of Institution: La Trobe University (Australia) and Kantipur School of Dentistry (Nepal)

Carnegie Classification (for U.S. institutions):

City/State/Country: Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Name of Program: Oral Health in Nepal

Total Student Population: La Trobe University - over 30,000

Program Website: N/A

How long has your program been in operation? since 2010

How many participants are involved in your program or specific program activities annually?

10 - 12 students

What is the targeted audience(s) for your Program? ☑ Current Students ☐ Faculty ☐ Administrators ☐ Alumni ☐ College/University Community ☑ Local Community ☐ Other (Specify)

**PART II: SHORT ANSWER**

Summary of Program (100 word limit):

The Oral Health Promotion Training Centre in Dhangadi West, Nepal was established in 2010 and is a three year project. As part of the oral health program at La Trobe University, students may participate in a two week placement at the centre. The program is based on the philosophy “if you can’t afford prevention, how can you afford disease”. The main aim of the placement is to provide opportunities for students to provide community education in Nepal about oral health and its role in the prevention of diseases, such as cancer, and more commonly dental decay and associated pain.
PART II: SHORT ANSWER CONTINUED

How does your program contribute to internationalization on campus? (200 word limit)

The Oral Health Program provides an innovative international approach to practicum. Due to stringent curriculum requirements, it was determined semester mobility programs could not be accommodated within the Oral Health program. However, the curriculum for the program was able to be adjusted to enable the incorporation of a short term study abroad experience. La Trobe University has a strong commitment to student mobility and strives to provide programs that support world ready graduates. Through this commitment, and the vision of the Oral Health Coordinator, the Nepal program was developed to offer students the opportunity to develop skills in cross cultural understanding and learning in an international context. Upon return, participants contribute to campus internationalisation by sharing their experiences with the rest of the student cohort through class presentations and social engagement. As the Oral Health program is facilitated at the regional Bendigo campus of La Trobe University, this program also gives access to a cohort of students that is generally underrepresented in student mobility program participation. Students participating in this program fall into two categories of underrepresented students undertaking international study experiences: Health Science students and Regional students.

Describe how your program is replicable and innovative, relative to your target audience, for your institution and/or in the field? If your program is more than 10 years old, what are you doing to keep it current and/or make it more innovative? (200 word limit)

The program was generated through the contacts of the Oral Health Coordinator and his previous work in Amsterdam. Innovation and commitment were required to restructure the curriculum to allow an elective international short program. While not the first, the Nepal program was developed through modelling another program. Additional programs have been developed in various countries around the world. Since 2009, international placement opportunities for La Trobe University students in New York (USA), Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki and Turku (Finland) and Presov (Slovakia) have been introduced. Each program provides students with the opportunity to explore the differences in dental health care systems and the scope of practice of oral health professionals in each country. Students are expected to be able to articulate their experiences in comparing the systems of the country they visit with the Australian system. At the 2011 Australian Outbound Mobility Forum, a presentation on the Nepal program was given to mobility professionals from Australia and around the world. At the conclusion of the presentation, other university representatives provided feedback that their Oral Health programs currently were unable to accommodate international experiences. This further highlighted the international learning advantages to which La Trobe University students have access.

What has been the impact of your program on your target audience and/or on your campus (include specific data on program and student outcomes)? (200 word limit)

A few years ago, availability of credit bearing international opportunities for oral health students at La Trobe University was non-existent. In 2012, 85% of students enrolled in the program have undertaken the international placement elective. The commitment from the Oral Health Coordinator and active promotion of the opportunities within the program coupled with returned student participant enthusiasm can be credited with this participation rate. Returned student feedback shows the deep impact it has made on their studies and wider life.

“this was an invaluable part of my learning experience…out of this whole trip I have been able to confirm and if not re-learn an important lesson about the world we live in. Our world is not perfect.”
“we experienced barriers in language and communication which were quickly overcome with support from the Nepalese oral hygiene students.”
“this experience has also prepared me with the means to better manage poor and underprivileged patients, as the knowledge gained from this placement will be integrated into my daily practice in Australia.”
“and so it turned out, it wasn’t me doing all the teaching it was these children who were teaching me the valuable lesson of life.”
The initiative was developed to support the Dental Hygienist Profession in Nepal. Supporting the education of a new oral health profession in a developing country is a challenge, but a challenge should never be a deterrent. While the need for dental treatment in Nepal is extremely high we decided to develop a program that would focus on prevention of oral diseases only. We didn’t plan to provide additional treatment (i.e. making restorations or extracting teeth) as many Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) or International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) in Nepal are active in providing this kind of emergency treatment. We worked to incorporate World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for successful health promotion programs. This included involving the local community in order to establish a model of empowerment to ensure the citizens of the targeted community would develop the required skills to take charge over their own oral health. We searched for sustainable ways of supporting the Nepalese people in gaining better oral health awareness and to improve oral related aspects of quality of life. Part of this project was an investigation into oral related aspects of quality of life in Nepalese children and training of rural women to become oral health advocates. From the very beginning, students were involved in these activities.

Within the program, students spend 4-5 days in one specific location and live together with a Nepalese community. They spend time bonding with the community and during this time they observe life style behaviours. Students are then expected to consider the beliefs and habits of the community they have been observing and develop a culturally sensitive oral health promotion message as well as supporting activities.

Students must adapt their advice to the local lifestyles and circumstances. They are trained to use a holistic approach in regards to oral health. For example, if it is determined that general health issues stemming from hand washing and toileting habits are causing a problem, this will be incorporated into the oral health promotion message. Students utilise the training foundation that systemic health and oral health are linked in their approach to care.

Students examine each individual within the community at a specific location and provide individual tailored advice. Sufficient time is allocated to provide advice, answer questions and practice techniques. During their time living in Nepal, students form connections with the members of the community and they monitor the implementation of the oral health promotion message. Students are proactive in addressing any barriers to the community adoption of the new oral health habits.

Upon return, students write a reflective assessment on their experience. Reviews showed that student perception of their participation in this program is life changing and very rewarding.

A significant learning outcome achieved through this program, in addition to the application of practical oral health skills, is the focus on interpersonal dynamics and cross cultural elements in patient care. As we are living in more multicultural societies, health professionals need to not only address the academic components of their training but also the cultural requirements related to patient care. The Nepal and other international training programs provide practical learning and application opportunities to ensure this learning outcome is achieved. The La Trobe University Oral Health program places great importance on students being given the opportunity to experience working in a different country and contributing to empowering local communities very different from their own. Students obviously agree with this approach and this is supported by the fact that 85% of Oral Health students at La Trobe University are now participating in one of the international placement programs.

In 2010, the inaugural Nepal program hosted 15 Dental Hygiene Educators, in addition to the student participants, from around the world. This was not only a milestone in the development of this program but more importantly achieved a positive outcome in the development of the Dental Hygiene profession in Nepal and provided an invaluable practical and cultural learning experience for the students who participated. From this innovative program, the La Trobe University Oral Health Coordinator and several international colleagues have published academic papers highlighting their findings. For a list of related articles please see references at the end of this section.

“Samakoshi is a children’s home caring for orphans under the age of 16 and severely disabled children. Seeing the conditions that these beautiful children lived in broke my heart… However, the sound of their laughter and the smiles on their tiny faces you would never know how little they had. Witnessing this showed me the importance of the simple things in life. And so it turned out, it wasn’t me doing all the teaching; it was these children who were teaching me the valuable lesson of life.”


**PART III: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (1,000 WORD LIMIT) CONTINUED**


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**PART IV: ENDORSEMENT LETTER(S):**

Please attach a signed letter from your President or Chief Academic Officer endorsing your program’s nomination when you email your completed nomination form. Nomination packages may also include one additional letter of support. *(Note: Institutions applying for the Partnership category should include a letter from each of the partnering institutions, and may include up to one additional letter of support).*
18 October 2012

To: 2013 Heiskell Award Selection Committee

Dear Selection Committee,

On behalf of La Trobe University, Australia, it is my pleasure to endorse the application of La Trobe University for the 2013 IIE Andrew Heiskell Award for Category 2 – Study Abroad.

The innovative program led by our Oral Health Coordinator has been active since 2010 and has played a large role in enabling regional students to experience an international study practicum. La Trobe has a vision to transform the lives of its students through learning and knowledge creation and the program in Nepal and other locations has demonstrated the value our students receive.

Since the Oral Health Program began the numbers of students participating has increased to a point where 85% of students enrolled in the program have undertaken this international placement elective. Given the substantial growth in numbers, it is encouraging to see that students from our regional campuses are embracing the notion of becoming part of the broader global community and contributing to the advancement of developing nations.

Further to our strategic directions, La Trobe’s internationalisation plan focuses on enhancing the student experience by celebrating a multicultural student environment and developing sustainable University-wide partnerships that support student and staff mobility, teaching and research. The program and the connections our students build with local Nepalese communities prepares them to be global citizens and understand the intricacies of cross cultural sensitivity and communication.

I fully endorse this application on behalf of La Trobe University and look forward to hearing the outcome.

Yours sincerely

Professor John Dewar
Vice-Chancellor and President
Date: 14th October 2012

To whom it may concern,

Kantipur School of Dentistry (KSD), Nepal and La Trobe University, Australia have established a relationship through student exchange program since past several years, which allowed the students from La Trobe University to visit Nepal and observe clinical techniques, community programs, and physical facilities at their host institution.

This program enabled international students to interact closely with faculty members which provided an excellent opportunity for learning and cultural exchange. A group of approximately 10-15 dental hygiene students and faculty member from La Trobe University is expected to visit the School of Dentistry for 10-15 days each year. During the time of visit, students get enough opportunity to interact with national students and broaden their understanding of dental hygiene education and profession in Nepal. It helped them to expand their knowledge base in oral health programs and health care systems of our country. Similarly, KSD and its dental hygiene students also received great opportunity to communicate with foreign dental hygiene students and share their knowledge and experiences with dental hygiene students of the global community. This program has supported our students to develop a global perspective and approaches to dental hygiene education and cultivate intercultural competencies.

Dental hygiene education and profession grew in Nepal with the attempt of Dr. Buddhi Man Shrestha in 1997 by establishing Kantipur School of Dentistry, after which it received support from many national and international organization and one of which is La Trobe University. The instructors from the university have provided training to dental hygiene educators over here mainly on instrumentation techniques, community program conduction and some clinical applications. So, this has benefited KSD in producing skilled dental hygienists and providing quality education to our dental hygiene students. During International Dental Hygienist Educators Meeting in 2010, initiated by La Trobe University, the dental hygiene curriculum of Nepal had been positively received by representatives from the International Federation of Dental Hygienist and 15 international educators from different parts of the globe. Likewise, our dental hygiene professionals have also learned the techniques of community based promotional activities during oral health promotional initiatives taken by La Trobe University in Nepal every year.

Therefore, KSD is truly privileged to have the support of La Trobe University mainly for student exchange program and promoting dental hygiene program of KSD and gaining recognition in IFDH. Therefore, we are extremely grateful to La Trobe University for their valuable support.

We look forward to continue cordial relationship with La Trobe University in future too.

Thank you
Yours faithfully,

Dr. Buddhi Man Shrestha
Chief Executive Director