

22 September 2016

To whom it may concern,

My name is Brett Smith. I am currently serving in the role of Scholarships and Exchange Officer in the Office of International Services at Charles Darwin University. I am responsible for managing the Australia Awards Scholarship Program.

In this capacity, I am writing to lend support to the Academic Language Learning and Success Program (ALLSP) team's application for a Vice-Chancellor's Award for contribution to student learning in the category of approaches that are supportive and inclusive of a diverse student body and contributions that enhance student learning and development.

The ALLSP team, consisting of Amanda Janssen, Roz Rowen and more recently, Coral Campbell, have delivered a consistently outstanding, highly personalised academic preparatory program specially tailored to the needs of Australia Awards Scholarship recipients as part of the Introductory Academic Program (a compulsory 4-6 week program prior to the commencement of formal academic studies covering information on life and studies in Australia) over the past two years.

The student-centric program, which begins up to three months before students arrive in Australia, has resulted in excellent academic progress in the first semester and beyond for participants. Awardees, generally ambitious self-starters, are pleasantly surprised being tasked to submit assessment (designed to assess a wide range of academic skills) before the IAP begins - an important first impression which primes students to excel from the outset.

Onshore, the rigorous program, developed with significant input from course coordinators and unit lecturers, provides scholarship recipients with a comprehensive introduction to the knowledge and skills required for success at CDU in the context of the Australian education system. Students are encouraged to share cultural insights and learning experiences based on their own educational journeys. ALLSP's customised model provides a unique academic experience for our students compared to the generic, one-size-fits-all approach adopted by other institutions. Importantly, the personal, cross-cultural nature of the workshops translates into engaged and supported learners.

ALLSP's integrative approach fosters mutually respectful relationships and creates a positive student experience. Research suggests that increased student satisfaction correlates with student attachment to the institution which leads to improved academic performance, student retention and, at a later stage, alumni engagement. In providing exceptional service to our scholarship students, the ALLSP team are directly contributing to the perception and reputation of CDU as a truly international university and thereby strengthening the competitive positioning of our institution.

A majority of Australia Awards Scholarship recipients come from diverse and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Oftentimes, the awardees are high-profile, well-respected leaders in their fields who have made the decision to continue their educational journey in a classroom, educational system and language very different to their own. The inherent challenges are immense. Mindful of the complex issues facing our students, the ALLSP team, embrace the opportunity and deliver a unique educational experience with sensitivity, enthusiasm and dedication.

It is truly a privilege to collaborate with such a passionate, caring and hard-working team. I am very grateful to Amanda, Roz and Coral for their ongoing efforts and exceptional contribution to the academic success of our Australia Awards Scholarship recipients. I recommend ALLSP in the highest possible terms and wholeheartedly support their application for recognition to their outstanding contribution to student learning.

Yours sincerely,



Brett Smith