Summary

This project celebrates the partnership between the University community, led by the School of Health and Human Sciences and the North Coast Local Health District. It recognises the School’s leadership within the community and its contribution to the debate on the future delivery of healthcare in the region, with a specific focus on the nursing profession.

The focus of this collaboration has been on the development of sustainable person-centred care in the North Coast region. The engagement has influenced academic and professional practice in the partner institutions. Specifically, it has led to the re-integration of the academy with practice some 25 years post the registration of the first university nursing graduates in NSW.

The work of the partnership has also enabled a re-examination of the career structure in both institutions and has resulted in the development of the clinical faculty at SCU (Clinical Teacher Leaders) and joint research positions with the Local Health District.

Background

This collaboration emerged in response to the implementation of major changes in the government’s hospital and healthcare reform agenda. It also reflected the desire for greater integration between the academy and the service. The partnership has resulted in enhanced student learning through better integration within the health sector. The partnership has also enabled the development of research programmes focussed on clinical outcomes and workforce innovation.

The priorities of the North NSW Local Health District have been met through increased capacity to generate and apply industry-specific knowledge via research and teaching partnerships with the University. This in turn has enabled the North Coast Local Health Network to better meet the needs of the region’s health consumers. The partnership has been commended by the Chief Nursing Officer of NSW.

Learning

Key to the success of this partnership has been open and regular communication. This has enabled the partnership to function across two different systems and within an environment of constant and rapid change.

Outcomes

This collaboration has enabled:

- A number of successful research grants, and the development of faculty practice opportunities;
• The employment of one post-doctoral employee focussed on capacity building within the hospital network and secondment of the assistant executive nurse director into the workforce strand of the Nursing Collaborative Research Network. As a result a number of published ward-based projects have been initiated;

• Better lines of communication between the University and the North NSW Local Health District resulting in increased placement capacity for the University. In addition there has been an increase in the number of health service employees participating in clinical teacher workshops and other continuing professional development activities;

• The ongoing systematic recording and evaluation of all partnership activity thereby contributing to the development of scholarship through publication and conference presentations.

**Impact**

The impact of this collaboration is significant and includes:

• Increased recognition within the health sector of **SCU students and graduates** as early practitioners able to make meaningful contributions to the enhanced culture of care;

• The re-integration of academy with **professional practice** within the partner institutions some 25 years post the registration of the first university nursing graduates in NSW.

The partnership has also enabled a re-examination of the career structure within both institutions. This has resulted in the development of the clinical faculty at SCU (Clinical Teacher Leaders) and joint research positions with the Local Health District.

More generally the **region** has benefited from enhanced educational opportunities at SCU and from the provision of evidence-based care through the health service.

**Awards Category**

Leadership

**Good practice principles**

Collaboration, mutual benefit, partnership, capacity building, partnership, trust.

**Recognition**

This project was the recipient of Southern Cross University’s Excellence in Community Engagement Award for Leadership in 2012.