



Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching General Category

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"Learning is deeply personal. Students acquire knowledge best when teaching is tailored to their specific requirements. I put students at the centre of my teaching and connect with them as distinct individuals."

Having grown up in India, Anuj's desire to help people led him to teaching. After starting as a medical teaching fellow at the University of Otago, he joined the University of Auckland's Physiology department in 2005. Having faced challenges during his own medical degree, he enjoys creating positive learning experiences for his students. The rich diversity of his students has inspired his teaching framework. He teaches Māori, Pasifika and international students, for whom English is often their second language. Many are the first in their family to attend a tertiary education provider. Outside the classroom, he connects his students with industry contacts and shares ideas about learning and teaching with his peers.

"Mastering these ideas rewards them with a new level of lifelong knowledge. 'Oh, I get it now!' moments drive my teaching and my search for innovative teaching methods."

Anuj teaches physiology to around 800 second and third-year Medical and Bachelor of Science students in large lecture, small group and laboratory settings. Whatever the setting, he gives each student his respect and attention. His holistic teaching philosophy develops students, initially focused on memorisation and comprehension, into independent learners who can synthesise, communicate and effectively apply their disciplinary knowledge. He sees physiology as a cornerstone subject for understanding medicine. As it relies on abstract concepts, which can be difficult for students to grasp, he uses real-life examples to demonstrate physiological principals at work, enabling students to contextualise and substantiate ideas. He says superficial, rote learning is inadequate in physiology, which requires a deep understanding of key concepts.

By providing personal support, guidance and extensive feedback, Anuj enables his students to build confidence in core understandings, from which they can explore and take ownership of their learning. He has developed and implemented blended or hybrid learning strategies which respond to students' diverse learning styles. As well as using real-world examples for context, he promotes an interactive learning environment by encouraging student dialogue during lectures and draws on the student-centred model of constructivism, where the learner interacts with experience and environment to construct knowledge. Anuj supports critical inquiry in his students and develops assignments which give them a sense of the detail and depth involved in scientific research. He provides opportunities for self-reflection and peer review of fellow students' work which further enriches their learning. His informal communications with students provide the impetus for many of his educational initiatives, such as an interactive online discussion board, 'Piazza', for 'virtual office hours'.

In order to better understand his students' different learning strategies, Anuj began using a short questionnaire (Biggs, 1999a) in 2007 to determine whether his students had previously perceived themselves as superficial or deep strategists. He then offered a consultation to identify the learning strategies they needed, a process which also encouraged self-reflection. Anuj has increasingly employed case-based learning strategies in his practical laboratory sessions and lectures, encouraging learners to take responsibility for their own learning and apply concepts to practice.

Anuj has won several Faculty awards for his dedication to teaching and his leadership in innovation. These have recognised his commitment to small-group learning, the development of teaching programmes for Māori and Pacific medical and science students, as well as outreach to these communities in high schools, and the development of digital resources. In order to shift from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred learning environment, Anuj complemented traditional class time with online materials. Using "KuraCloud", an on-line platform, he made previews of laboratory sessions available, overcoming many of the difficulties of lengthy clinical laboratory sessions.

As the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (FMHS) contains a significant number of students from diverse backgrounds with diverse learning needs as well as high-achieving students, Anuj delivers information in flexible ways. He supports the *Māori and Pasifika Admission Scheme* and the Faculty's *Vision 20:20* objective of increasing the proportion of Māori and Pacific health professionals to 10% of the health workforce by 2020. He is an active participant in the *Whakapiki Ake Project* – an outreach and recruitment programme that engages with rangatahi (youth) Māori enrolled in secondary schools. In 2016, he initiated the *Manaaki academic support programme* to provide academic support for Year Two and Three Māori and Pasifika students, also providing leadership opportunities for many students.

To foster a supportive community of learners, Anuj worked with students to establish the Student Association for the Medical Sciences (SAMS), which has helped him organise career events and student mental wellbeing initiatives. Since 2009, he has designed and organised School of Medical Sciences professional development events, careers expos and networking events to connect BSc students with industry contacts. He also developed a demonstrators' training programme in 2008.

Anuj works in collaboration with his colleagues, inspiring and empowering them to refine their teaching strategies, such as online tools for students, which allow prior access to teaching content and provide help with lab reports and literature reviews. He has contributed to the Business School's *Learn, Do, Share* and other university-wide teaching seminars as well as being a long-term contributor to CLeaR's Learning Catalyst induction workshops. He has worked with colleagues on design thinking implementation and cloud-based learning within their respective teaching spaces and formally empowers his peers through the FMHS Teaching and Learning Community (TLC) professional development sessions.

Over the last fourteen years Anuj has embraced the challenges of stimulating enthusiasm in students for physiology, and identifying pedagogical and social strategies to sustain students' curiosity in the subject. He has focused on holistic learning initiatives that prepare students for life-long learning.

"Student voices are my inspiration for developing Auaha (creative approaches) and for creating Wānanga (creative spaces) within my teaching domain."
