

Strategic Plan

2018–2020



University Centre
for Rural Health

Northern Rivers NSW

education | research | workforce

The University Centre for Rural Health is a vibrant collaborative academic hub for rural health development. The Centre is located in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales, an area characterised by significant disparities in social and economic conditions, a rapidly growing and ageing population, and a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Vision

To consolidate the University Centre for Rural Health as a national and international centre for excellence in health education, research and workforce development that delivers improved long-term health outcomes for rural communities.

Guiding Purpose

To be a leading authority on population health, a strong advocate for equity and wellbeing in the Northern Rivers region and in other rural and remote areas of Australia, and a key contributor to developing a skilled and sustainable rural health workforce. Our teaching and research will be guided by the pursuit of excellence in improving rural health outcomes, and engagement with communities, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, governments, clinicians, and research, education and health-related organisations.

Values

- Service, inspiration, leadership and engagement
- Curiosity, innovation and creativity
- Equity, inclusion, diversity and respect
- Compassion and empathy
- Professionalism and ethical practice
- Optimism, celebration, enjoyment and humour
- Integrity and authenticity

Strategic Goals

1 Excellence in Student Education

To deliver a high-quality, distinctive and supportive education program that builds an effective health workforce committed to the health needs of rural communities throughout Australia.

2 Strengthening Rural Health Research

To promote a culture of excellence in rural health research.

3 Developing Health Sector Capacity

To strengthen the rural health workforce and the delivery of health care within our communities.

UCRH is a collaborating Centre between:



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



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Southern Cross
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Values

Our work is underpinned by the values of:

- **Service, inspiration, leadership and engagement:** We bring commitment, passion and courage to working in partnerships, and to acting as role models and transformative leaders to bring out the best in our students and colleagues.
- **Curiosity, innovation and creativity:** We are committed to life-long learning and advancing knowledge through constructive questioning, reflection, and the development and testing of new ideas and solutions.
- **Equity, inclusion, diversity and respect:** We strive for cross-cultural competence and to act respectfully with people from all backgrounds and circumstances to enable them to realise their full potential.
- **Compassion and empathy:** We care for our students, colleagues and ourselves through building empathy and self-awareness.
- **Professionalism and ethical practice:** We are committed to professional and ethical excellence in all our interactions.
- **Optimism, celebration, enjoyment and humour:** We expect the best from our work and from each other, we celebrate success, we have fun and we laugh.
- **Integrity and authenticity:** We each hold ourselves true to our conscience through reflection and by demonstrating commitment to these values, which we strive to uphold in all our work.

Strategic Goals

1 Excellence in Student Education

To deliver a high-quality, distinctive and supportive education program that builds an effective health workforce committed to the health needs of rural communities throughout Australia.

Objective

To be an outstanding provider of inter-disciplinary health education by providing an authentic and supportive student experience through exposure to diverse learning opportunities in rural communities, and an excellent education program that complements those of our partner universities.

Strategies

- 1 To deliver a strong teaching and learning program – supported by an informed faculty, committed professional staff, and engaged clinical and community partners – that:
 - builds skills, knowledge and professionalism relevant to a range of health disciplines
 - fosters a commitment to rural health, social equity and to improving health outcomes for priority populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - emphasises interdisciplinary, inter-professional, biopsychosocial and patient-centred approaches to health care.
- 2 To attract and train students who will contribute to society and to their professions through a commitment to our values.
- 3 To support the ongoing development of a committed and cohesive education workforce, through promoting engaged scholarship that enhances clinical and educational environments, backed by quality resources and infrastructure.
- 4 To work in partnership with other education and service organisations to build strong, trusting and respectful relationships that deliver positive outcomes for the health of rural communities.
- 5 To support students educationally, socially and emotionally to transition from their studies into professional practice in rural health.
- 6 To promote interest in and support local community members to pursue careers in health.
- 7 To advocate for education policies, programs and curricula that address health system inequities, including through engagement in local and international fora, and via media and other knowledge exchange activities.
- 8 To evaluate and refine our programs regularly to ensure that all educational activities are of the highest possible standard and contribute effectively to achieving our explicit goals.

2 Strengthening Rural Health Research

To promote a culture of excellence in rural health research.

Objective

To conduct locally relevant and internationally significant research that informs better health services, enhances population health, reduces inequalities, and contributes to a more skilled workforce for rural Australia. We are committed to excellence in research that addresses the priority health needs in the Northern Rivers region, with particular attention on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Strategies

- 1 To invest in research capacity to retain and attract high-quality researchers and collaborators and build expertise in three main areas of strategic research focus:
 - Health systems and service research: health workforce, models of care, team-based approaches to care, quality of care, system and process development, effectiveness, efficiency and coordination of care.

Strategic Goals: Strengthening Rural Health continued

- Population health and equity: understanding and influencing the determinants of population health.
 - Medical and allied health education and workforce development: inter-professional learning and engagement with the community to support the delivery of training to students, service learning models and curriculum design.
- 2 To conduct translational research that is implemented to improve health outcomes for rural communities and to influence health policy and practices in six key areas:
 - Healthy start to life
 - Social and environmental health
 - Mental health and social and emotional wellbeing
 - Alcohol and other drugs
 - Chronic disease and co-morbidity
 - Healthy ageing and care for an ageing population.
 - 3 To strengthen existing and build new partnerships for research engagement, knowledge exchange, and the promotion of a culture of research, learning and continuing improvement with clinicians, policy makers, communities and other researchers.
 - 4 To attract and advocate for research funding from a variety of sources, including through building partnerships and collaborations, and identifying funding opportunities for research infrastructure and specific projects.
 - 5 To develop health research capacity in our region by supporting and mentoring early career researchers to undertake research higher degrees and other research training.
 - 6 To build capacity in research skills and knowledge among all our students and staff by engaging them in research programs that address issues of significance to local communities, and through peer-support and skills development.
 - 7 To support the implementation of evidence-informed policy and practice through evidence-based research translation activities.

3 Developing Health Sector Capacity

To strengthen the rural health workforce and the delivery of health care within our communities.

Objective

To provide exceptional continuing professional development opportunities for health professionals in the Northern Rivers region, and to be a leading authority and advocate for both the development of the rural health workforce and the evolution and improvement of health services and health systems.

Strategies

- 1 To support the development of a rural health workforce through enhancing training pathways and providing regular training opportunities that are relevant to the needs of rural populations – with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 2 To deliver a broad program of accessible and affordable continuing education and training that addresses the needs of our region, with particular attention given to increasing the number of community members training and working in the region as health professionals.
- 3 To work in partnership with local health care service providers, educational institutions and community organisations to ensure their training needs are effectively addressed.
- 4 To provide leadership in enhancing rural health practice, models of care and service delivery.
- 5 To build innovative partnerships with other rural health education and research institutions that broaden the scale and reach of workforce development opportunities.
- 6 To analyse, evaluate and report on trends, new developments and opportunities that may simplify and enhance access to high-quality health care, improve health outcomes, and strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the health system, particularly in our region.
- 7 To retain, attract and develop an excellent workforce of educators, researchers, practitioners and professional staff, who are committed to inter-disciplinary and collaborative education and research, to promoting our values and to achieving our strategic goals.

Education



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Strategy and Priorities

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Our Objective

To deliver a high-quality, distinctive and supportive education program that builds an effective health workforce committed to the health needs of rural communities throughout Australia.

To be an outstanding provider of inter-disciplinary health education by providing an authentic and supportive student experience through exposure to diverse learning opportunities in rural communities, and an excellent education program that complements those of our partner universities.

Our Strategies

1 To deliver a strong teaching and learning program – supported by an informed faculty, committed professional staff, and engaged clinical and community partners – that:

- builds skills, knowledge and professionalism relevant to a range of health disciplines
- fosters a commitment to rural health, social equity and to improving health outcomes for priority populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- emphasises interdisciplinary, inter-professional biopsychosocial and patient-centred approaches to health care.

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- Teaching and learning environments that meet academic and service need
- Values-driven learning environment
- Skills, knowledge and professionalism relevant to a range of health disciplines

2 To attract and train students who will contribute to society and to their professions through a commitment to our values.

Student Outcomes

- Accountable to the needs of their communities
- Able to address health system issues to counter health inequities
- Interdisciplinary, inter-professional, biopsychosocial and patient-centred approaches to health care
- Professional attributes of innovation and leadership

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3 To support the ongoing development of a committed and cohesive education workforce, through promoting engaged scholarship that enhances clinical and educational environments.

Education Workforce Outcomes

- Faculty and teaching partners well developed in contemporary pedagogy
- A culture of research in clinical and educational environments
- Clinicians provided with opportunities for academic development
- Supported by quality resources and infrastructure

4 To work in partnership with other education and service organisations to build strong, trusting and respectful relationships that deliver positive outcomes for the health of rural communities.

Partnership Outcomes

- Partnerships with service providers in developing models of care
- A commitment to rural health, social equity and to improving health outcomes for priority populations
- A strengthened local workforce, fit for purpose

5 To support students educationally, socially and emotionally to transition from their studies into professional practice in rural health.

Transition to Practice Outcomes

- Aware of the need for self-care and wellbeing
- An understanding of, and appreciation for, rural life
- Able to work in an integrated team with an appreciation of cross-discipline roles

6 To promote interest in and support local community members to pursue careers in health.

Health Career Promotion Outcomes

- Local community with an interest in health careers
- Students with an interest in rural health, specifically including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schoolchildren
- Students who transition to rural careers

7 To advocate for education policies, programs and curricula that address health system inequities.

Rural Advocacy Outcomes

- Representation on local, regional, national and international fora
- Dissemination of research through publications, conference and community presentations, media and other knowledge exchange activities

8 To evaluate and refine our programs regularly to ensure that all educational activities are of the highest possible standard and contribute effectively to achieving our explicit goals.

Evaluation Outcomes

- Consistent and comprehensive evaluation framework
- Timely adoption of change for improvement

Research



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Our Strategies

1 To invest in research capacity to retain and attract high-quality researchers and collaborators and build expertise in three main areas of strategic research focus:

- Population health and equity
- Health systems and service research
- Medical and allied health education and workforce development.

Our focus on population health and equity recognises the wide disparities in social and economic conditions in our region, and respects the diversity of our community. By increasing our understanding of differences in health needs and health status, we are working to ensure that services and policies are effective in promoting health for all people in our region.

2 To conduct translational research that is implemented to improve health outcomes for rural communities and to influence health policy and practices in six key areas:

- Healthy start to life
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