

2015-2016 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR DR. RAYWAT DEONANDAN



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Prepared and read by Judy Bornais, University of Windsor

On behalf of the Teaching and Academic Librarianship Awards Committee, I am delighted to present Dr. Raywat Deonandan with a 2015-2016 award for his impact on teaching and learning which transcends the walls of his classroom to his local community and across the globe.

Dr. Deonandan's professional career has been extensive working as a high school teacher, a martial artist, a novelist, a journalist, a comedy writer, an independent consultant and entrepreneur and an epidemiologist. He was even a Chief Science Advisor to the federal government prior to joining the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa. He has used his expertise and contacts from many of his previous positions to help create incredible learning opportunities for students. Using his knowledge as a journalist, he created the Interdisciplinary Journal of Health Sciences which publishes manuscripts devoted to disseminating students research. He developed a competitive grant writing experience where the format and timing allowed students to submit their completed projects to a Gates Foundation competition. He created bursaries to pay five students to participate in a consulting contract with the World Health Organization, offering invaluable experiential learning opportunities to these students in addition to financial support. As his nominator wrote [he has], "used his extensive professional network to arrange for internships for students both domestically and abroad, and in government, academia and private industry", including research opportunities for students not even registered in his classes.



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Transcending the walls of the classroom to help teach students and also inform the broader public is something that distinguishes Dr. Deonandan as an extraordinary educator. He is known to donate much of his time to public education, giving community presentations, volunteering with educational organizations and developing tools and initiatives for public edification. He has produced four internet podcasts specifically dedicated to public education and organizes students from around the country to submit their own tracks for the audio show. He has written textbooks as well as books for the public and even partnered with a German company, Lecturio, to create a series of educational videos about epidemiology. He developed a special one-month Global Health Summer Institute for young professionals in India in 2015, in partnership with scholars from the University of Saskatchewan. He also created an intense workshop for public health students and professionals in the developing world which was piloted in Rwanda. One of his colleagues noted that he extends, “his passion for education to the global corners of the world” citing contributions to capacity building and education in global health projects including those in Guyana and India.

In his teaching philosophy Dr. Deonandan stated that, “Everything is a story. The human animal is hardwired to learn through narrative”. This philosophy is clearly evident in his classroom. One of the student comments in his nomination package stated, “I admire the way you taught lessons not simply using theory, but by always sharing amazing stories and using relevant examples”. Capturing students’ interest through narratives in the classroom is just one of the ways that Dr. Deonandan reaches his audience. He also excels at helping students and the public learn through books, newspaper and magazine articles, workshops and presentations as well as scholarly articles. In fact, he has authored five books and edited two others, and in the eight years he has been a faculty member at the University of Ottawa he has published an impressive 28 papers with his students in various different journals. While pedagogy is not his main research focus, Dr. Deonandan has nevertheless successfully



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obtained four grants related to teaching and learning and published 5 papers about his teaching innovations. Dr. Deonandan's desire to share his knowledge is clearly visible to his students. One student wrote that his life, "reflects his passion for both teaching and his subject matter. He even has a blog and podcast about science, so that he can share his knowledge with anyone at any time, wherever they are".

It is clearly evident from Dr. Deonandan's nomination package that simply sharing and disseminating his research and knowledge is not sufficient. Mentorship both in research, teaching and personal development are essential for him. He has spent countless hours ensuring his students receive training and mentorship in research publications and presentations. Along with co-authoring papers with his students he has also promoted and participated in the 4th year Epidemiology poster event which, in the words of a colleague ensured, "students receive training in research presentations in... senior compulsory courses". Colleagues and students write about being, "extremely appreciative of the mentorship and opportunities" that Dr. Deonandan has provided them. A former student wrote, "it has been 5 years since I graduated from university, and I still regularly keep in touch with Raywat. Because of his repeated encouragement...he is such an active mentor". Dr. Deonandan also extended mentorship beyond what he alone could offer his students. In recognition of the social and emotional stresses of transitioning from high school to university life, he created a peer mentor initiative known as the HSS Buddy Program, whereby senior students assist first year students to integrate and adapt to university life and develop social supports. His efforts continually strive to support students and offer them mentorship opportunities so they can excel in all facets of university life.

One student wrote, "You are (and will continue to be) an inspiration for my career. Thanks for your on-going support since the first class you taught me. It has been irreplaceable and tremendously appreciated!" while another student commented, "You make a difference in so



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many lives. Thank you". The OCUFA Teaching and Academic Librarianship Committee are also appreciative of excellent teachers like you who inspire students in their classroom and whose impact extends beyond the wall of their classes. It is for these reasons that you, Dr. Raywat Deonandan, are being recognized with the prestigious OCUFA teaching award. Congratulations!