

## Emerging Health Policy Research Conference 2010

### Abstract Submission

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Dr Smith has a PhD in social theory and is a research officer in the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Science at the University of Wollongong. Professor Crookes is the Dean of the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Science (UOW) and the Chair of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (ANZ).

#### Presentation Details

Rethinking scholarship: implications for academic health workforce policy

Keywords: Academic workforce, health education, research development, nursing, scholarship

#### Research Details (250 word limit)

**Introduction/Background:** The move of health professions such as nursing into the tertiary sector has had flow on consequences for the attraction and retention of suitably qualified academic staff. Current academic structures and an emphasis on original research has made it difficult for health academics to meet traditional criteria for probation and promotion. This project looks at the work of Ernest L. Boyer to argue for a different way of structuring faculty activities which would enable a reward system across a number of different scholarly functions, ensuring more flexible career pathways.

**Methodology:** Workshops, surveys, focus groups and interviews are being used to gauge on-the-ground thinking about barriers to undertaking academic careers. Combined with theoretical work, a new probation and promotion matrix will be developed, trialled, and evaluated.

**Findings:** The research is still in a preliminary stage in that a workshop and survey has been conducted which identifies real and perceived barriers to health professionals entering the academic workforce. Drawing on Boyer's work and similar programs instituted overseas, a draft proposal has been submitted to senior university administrators, who have asked for more consultation to be conducted in this area.

**Policy Implications:** Immediate implications exist for the structuring of scholarly activity within health disciplines, with consequences for university probation and promotion policies. Flow on implications include more flexible career pathways for health educators, improved evidence based practices in clinical settings, and increased quality of education for students. This then has implications for attraction and retention strategies into the professions themselves.