Woolf Fisher Trust Funding proposal brief

In Submitting your proposal, please bear in mind the mission of the Woolf Fisher Trust:

**“To recognise and reward excellence in education”.**

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| **Project 13: Enabling Human Potential in Higher Education Programme** **Contact Person: Dr Aaron Jarden** |
| **Provide a brief description of the project/Initiative** |
| AUT’s Human Potential Centre (HPC) will provide a series of health and wellbeing orientated modules that will result in short online courses and workshops on Human Potential, available to students and staff. The purpose of this programme will be to greater enable educational and work engagement and achievement, and to prepare higher education students for their future by developing and cementing skills that lead to innovation, collaboration and leadership. This programme will be piloted across the AUT South Campus, with modules designed to target key aspects of psychological and psychosocial wellbeing. These modules will be specifically focused on promoting AUT staff and students to be ‘the best they can be’ – in life, in work, and in their studies. **Modules will include*** **Resilience** - Developing skills to become more hopeful, optimistic, flexible, and to better cope with change and stress.
* **Positive leadership** - Developing aspects such as positive communication skills, life crafting, psychological flexibility, organisational purpose, and positive identities.
* **Psychological strengths** - Learning about and utilising strengths in the right amount in the right situation is one of the keys to both performance and wellbeing.
* **Health -** This program of 'Positive Health' targets improving physical activity, diet, sleep, sitting, the body, and health habits through tried and tested behaviour change strategies.
* **Mindfulness -** This course teaches the skills of mindfulness, as well as outlining the benefits for both individuals, organisations, and society.
* **Positive relationships -** Positive relationships at work and in class settings are about how individuals and teams flourish in various work and academic environments.
* **Personal Best -** Providing the tools and resources to enable people to be more grateful, savour the good, develop a sense of purpose and meaning, and build flow and engagement into their days.

The interdisciplinary block courses, each 6 weeks in duration, yet not requiring more than 10 to 15 minutes each day, will involve fun and interactive inquiry-based learning both online and in workshops with trained course facilitators and experienced and PhD qualified professionals who specialise in health and wellbeing science and implementation. These experts will demonstrate and share knowledge, skills, and practices required to work effectively and optimally with people. They will be supported by flexible e-learning content that will aid self-directed learning. On completion of the programme participants will receive an AUT certificate of proficiency. Graduates from the Human Potential Programme will be offered the option of completing further in depth training to become a fully trained programme facilitator and Wellbeing Ambassador.  |
| **Why is this project/initiative important?** |
| In recent years AUT has done a fantastic job of growth and attracting new students and expanding as an organisation. However, if AUT is to produce graduates for the changing world then we need to focus beyond academics on developing creativity and innovation, skills for collaboration and leadership, and individual level wellbeing skills – resilience, perseverance, mindfulness, positive relationships and communication. These skills are sorely needed both during academic pursuits and in industry after graduation. Research in the fields of Organisational Psychology and Wellbeing Science demonstrates that equipping staff and students with these specific skills will lead to a thriving workforce that drives the economy and leads a nation of flourishing and resilient citizens. A successful and optimistic future for staff, graduates, and New Zealand, relies on our ability to equip its people with the skills to flourish in life, work, and study (as life-long learners). The interdisciplinary Human Potential programme will:* **Improve the personal wellbeing of individuals (staff and students)**

The courses will enable students and staff with knowledge, skills and practices to flourish in their life, work and studies (also a good in itself).* **Foster creativity through exposure to new concepts and people from multiple disciplines**

Positive wellbeing brings new concepts that challenges the way we view life and solve problems. The interactive and experiential programme will explore ways to look at new ideas creatively and from differing perspectives, which lead to increased motivation (e.g., self-concordant goal striving) and innovation excellence. * **Provide knowledge and skills for collaboration and enterprise**

Understanding how to work with people, lead positively, and utilise strengths (both individual and those of others) will equip staff and students with skills for future collaboration and enterprise on a national and international stage. The interdisciplinary programme delivery will also foster opportunities for enterprise and research through new ideas, new collaborations, and pooling of resources in their current work or course of study.* **Learn skills in order to be able to obtain or create work and perform well in work situations**

Flourishing individuals are highly employable and succeed at work – research indicates that they are healthier, have less sick days, earn more, get promoted sooner, are more effective and productive, more creative, display better organizational citizenship behaviours, inspire customer loyalty, increase the wellbeing of other employees, stay in their jobs longer, as just some examples. * **Equip people to understand other people**

The interdisciplinary programme delivery will enable a range of people from various disciplines across AUT (e.g., Business, Health, Design and Technology, Culture and Society, Māori Development) to interact and bring differing viewpoints to concepts of wellbeing and success. It will also provide skills and knowledge for working effectively with people and leading teams positively.* **Capitalise on the strong, and largely unrealised, link between wellbeing and academic success**

The developing field of Positive Education (Norrish, 2016) in secondary school settings has overwhelmingly demonstrated the benefits both individual and school wellbeing provide to academic success – higher grades, greater qualification completions, increased belongingness, reduced mental health issues as just some examples. Such studies are currently being replicated in the higher education setting internationally. * **AUT can lead the way internationally in embracing wellbeing**

The field of “Positive Universities” or “Wellbeing Universities” is only just being established on the basis of many universities embracing wellbeing. Approaches to embedding wellbeing range from assessment (e.g., Canterbury Universities assesses the wellbeing of its whole student population), to light touch (e.g., mindfulness courses Melbourne University), to slow integration (e.g., George Mason University), to whole institution approaches (E.g., Tecmilenio University). * **Establish a culture of positive wellbeing across the University**

Increasing psychological wellbeing is strongly related to improvements in both mental illness and physical health, in both recovery and prevention. The programme will provide positive benefits to the AUT community through empathy towards mental illness and stress-related issues, and through an improved understanding of the significance of positive wellbeing. * **Establish a culture of positive wellbeing beyond the University**

These courses and programme once demonstrated will be integrated into and across the wider community AUT interacts with, further strengthening community partnerships.This programme reflects the vision of the qualities of Sir Woolf Fisher – it aims to increase integrity, promote positive leadership, inspire a boldness of educational vision and exceptional zeal, and enable a greater keenness and capacity for work. |
| **How could the Woolf Fisher Trust help achieve this? i.e. What would the money be used for?** |
| Funding provided by Woolf Fisher Trust would fund direct costs of running the programme (online courses, workshops) and associated resource costs (certification), including a rigorous evaluation of the programme. Furthermore funds would support development of work force capacity within AUT and provide transitional vocational opportunities for AUT’s talented post-graduate student base.  |
| **How does the Woolf Fisher Trust gain exposure? What are the benefits to them?** |
| Woolf Fisher Trust will be consulted on final naming of the Human Potential programme and certification. Any associated AUT wide activities, programmes, and resources will be attributed to the Woolf Fisher Trust. This will build awareness in the AUT community of the collaborative nature of the Trust and its focus on leadership in quality education.  |