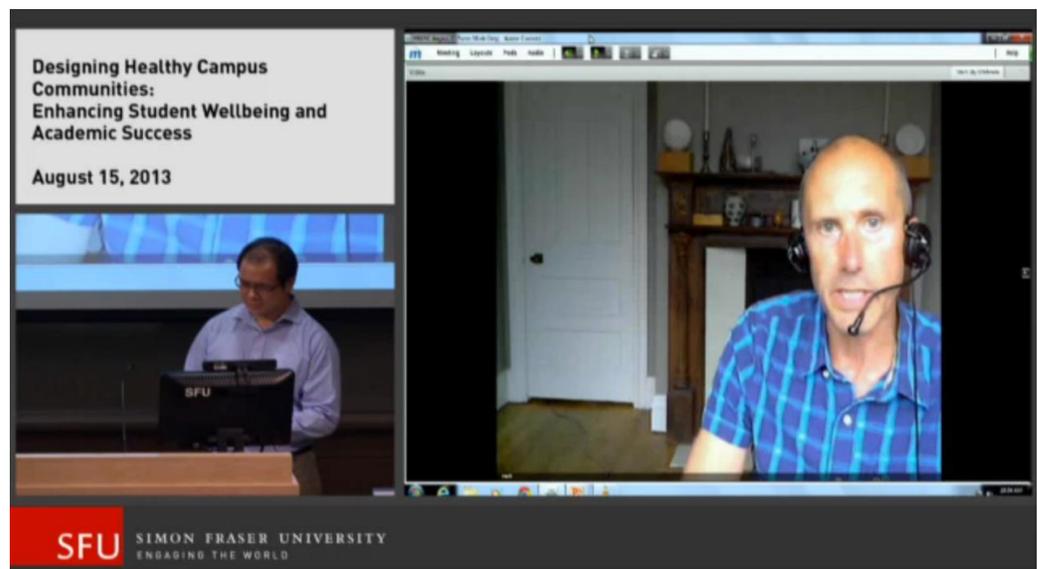


MARK DOORIS



8/15/2013

International Expert on Healthy Campuses and
Director of the Healthy Settings Unit,
University of Central Lancashire, UK

Mark Dooris

**INTERNATIONAL EXPERT ON HEALTHY CAMPUSES AND
DIRECTOR OF THE HEALTHY SETTINGS UNIT,
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE, UK**

Jonny: Can you describe your relationship to the idea of healthy universities? Specifically, how did your work start in this area?

Mark: In terms of how I got involved in this area of work... long ago I studied Human Science at University, which got me used to looking at things strategically and from all different angles. That led me into a diverse career in health promotion, community development, organizational policy, sustainable transport and healthy cities which stretches back to 1985. I've long had a particular interest in moving from single thread interventions to more holistic perspectives such as characterized by the health promotion. That led me to being appointed at the University of Central Lancashire in 1995 to a job post as part-time lecturer and part-time healthy university coordinator. So I established the initiative then and I was the lead person until 2001 when I was asked to build on that work by founding the Healthy Settings Unit. Currently, in terms of my work with healthy universities, I chair the initiative at the University of Central Lancashire and Sharon, the current Coordinator, sits within my team. I'm also one of two conveners of the UK Healthy Universities Network, which involves around 70 higher education institutions and includes several associate members, such as Simon Fraser, from overseas. I also represent the UK in an embryonic European network.

Jonny: Given your work in this area, why do you think efforts to design and support healthy post-secondary institutions are important?

Mark: There are a few different reasons. Firstly, coming at this from a public health perspective. There is a logic to investing in the places and systems in which people live their lives and spend their time. That was encapsulated in the Ottawa Charter statement that health is created and lived within the settings of everyday life where people learn, work, play and love. Universities tend to be large institutions with large numbers of both students and staff and strong links into their local communities.

Secondly, there is a strong and widely accepted focus on health promoting schools that's been around for decades now. That's not only as a means of improving well-being but also an evidenced approach to improving learning and achievement. And it therefore makes sense to build on that experience and learning and extend that type of whole system approach to the whole education spectrum.

Thirdly, the settings approach is concerned to integrate health into the mainstream business of different settings. Universities offer enormous potential to connect health, well-being and sustainability to a whole range of subject areas and curricula thereby informing future professional practice not just in careers labelled health, but in a whole range of practices/ professions that impact well-being.

Lastly, university marks an important transition point for many young people and I think this offers an important opportunity to do all we can to make sure the higher education context provides an environment that is supportive to students as they explore experiments and find themselves.

Investing in a healthy university or campus is not just about the 3 or 4 years that a student is at a particular institution, it's an opportunity for what we've termed future shaping for infusing the whole ethos and culture of higher education so that health is in the mix as students and indeed staff develop the values and interests they will take into their future lives, their families, their communities, their workplaces and into decision making.

Jonny: You just watched our animated video and I'm wondering if there are any particular images or words or concepts in the video that really stand out for you?

I love the video and I like in particular the use of fairly simple but powerful images such as the trampoline and the blankets to portray the ethos of a healthy campus through serving as a springboard for people to develop and aspire and as a supportive context for them to explore and experiment as I was saying before.

I really like how you used the word design because it implies that creating supportive settings is a conscious and strategic process and also that harnessing design and planning expertise is part of the setting approach and to fostering supportive environments.

I was also struck by your emphasis on doing more than addressing the needs of individual students, of taking a systems approach and of using a wide range of terms such as resilience, engaged and creative to articulate what being healthy is all about. In that sense of going beyond the normal contained box of just talking about health and well-being, it's been extremely successful. And certainly, I've done all I can to get going viral in the UK.

Jonny: What would you identify as the key conditions or success factors that support campuses in moving forward with implementing a whole campus approach?

Mark: Reflecting on our own experience at the University of Central Lancashire but also within our UK network, I'd identify a few different things. Firstly, we need to have top down leadership in tandem with the ground swell of bottom up engagement and ownership.

Secondly, we need the humility to find out where our organizations are at. To find out what's in place and what's working well, to map assets as well as assess needs. Rather than just marching in with something called a new project and risk trampling over things that are already working really well. It's about mapping and harnessing and joining together those things. We quite often talk about Sharon at our University who is organizational glue to bring things together.

Alongside that, I think we need a willingness to forge connections with other agendas that may not be labeled health but shares similar aims and has common points of interests. And certainly a commitment to environmental and social sustainability is one such area here, as is corporate responsibility.

And lastly, I'd suggest dedicated coordination. Linking to what I said about the organization glue, we actually need to have somebody that is that lynch pin in organization. That person can also bring in peer supports and access our wider networking.

Jonny: Could you share with us some of your key take home messages for the audience, in other words, some of the key lessons you've learned over the years?

Mark: Three things: Firstly, at UCLAN, in the 18 years since we launched our healthy university initiative there have inevitably been ups and downs and it's been important to have individuals who remain passionate about the work. And alongside that, to know who your champions are at a directorate level at any one time.

Secondly, it's been important to hold onto a big vision of what we understand a healthy university to be. That might be encapsulated in an action plan for instance. But at the same time, alongside that big vision, to find entry points and take smaller scale incremental steps that will be in the form of discrete projects that will work towards that vision. It's a combination of vision and pragmatism.

Thirdly, it's been crucial to map our activities and action plan against the universities strategic priorities and goals, translating the language of health into language that relates to the core business and must dos of higher education. I think your video and animation have done that really well in terms of highlighting the links between learning, performance, achievement, retention, etc.