UNSW educator wins national award for teaching excellence

Associate Professor Jayashri Ravishankar, Deputy Head of School (Education) from the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications has been awarded a Citation for outstanding contributions to student learning in the 2019 Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) The national award recognises Jayashri’s work developing innovative online and face-to-face learning strategies and promoting an inclusive classroom in large electrical engineering courses that improve the employability skills of students.

Since Jayashri joined UNSW in 2010, her transformative teaching practices have had a substantial and sustained impact on student engagement, success and satisfaction.

“A/Prof. Ravishankar’s contributions to improving the student experience are outstanding. A thoroughly informed educator and tireless innovator, she confidently steps well beyond the norms for advanced courses in her discipline, boldly experimenting intellectually, and follows through with carefully thought-out implementation and evaluation, as well as scholarly dissemination.” Prof. Julien Epps, Head of School, Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications.

Teaching her first class at UNSW in front of hundreds of students was a pivotal moment in Jayashri’s career and led to the innovation in her teaching style. “In my first lecture at UNSW, I spoke into a microphone in front of 450 students, whereas in India I was used to smaller classes of 70. The lack of direct contact with students meant that I could not see their reactions, nor understand whether they had taken something away from my lecture.”

Jayashri responded to this challenge by utilising recording facilities at UNSW to create flipped learning video resources for students and implementing live quizzes at the start of lectures to gauge student understanding of
course materials, enabling her to customise lessons to the needs of her students. After engaging with the video resources, students have identified Jayashri as more approachable leading to positive feedback both in person and via student surveys.

Reflecting on her career, Jayashri has witnessed a decade of transformation at UNSW. “One of the most impactful changes I have seen is the addition of Education Focussed roles and the support that they bring to educators. Becoming an Education Focussed Academic in 2017 has allowed me to focus on my teaching practice while continuing to supervise PHD students. I’ve also contributed as a member of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Community of Practice and have been recognised for my peer leadership in Learning and Teaching. I was also able to apply for and receive a promotion to Associate Professor via the Education Focussed career pathway.”

Jayashri has been commended for enthusiastically responding to new challenges, developing innovative solutions and sharing new approaches with others. She is institutionally and internationally recognised for the impact of her innovative, research-led and highly effective teaching and leadership. In addition to her Citation, Jayashri’s achievements have been celebrated when she was awarded the 2016 UNSW Faculty of Engineering Individual Staff Excellence Award in Teaching and the 2018 UNSW Teaching Excellence Award.

Congratulations Jayashri!

Further information on Jayashri’s award can be found on the UNSW Newsroom site.