**Pedagogic Research and Teaching Innovation (PRTI) Award: Final Report**

The final report should consist of a two-page summary of the project and its findings (using the fields below as a guide).

Along with this form, please also send (where relevant):

* Conference papers and/or articles for publication
* If your initial application was ‘approved with conditions, evidence that these conditions have been met (in ‘Other’)

Send all forms to: teachandlearn@plymouth.ac.uk by September 28th 2018

**Name of key contact (project leader):** Paul Murray

**Department:** Art, Design and Architecture

**Names of other staff involved:** Sheran Murray; Paul Warwick; Anne Bentley

**Title of project:** Building student resilience: a self-leadership approach

**Type of project** Research and Development):

**Keywords** Students, resilience, training interventions

**Aims of Project**

This is a pilot project evaluating the potential of a programme of resilience-building techniques to support student wellbeing by enhancing their personal competency levels. The research targets the general student population. The project objectives are to:

1. Evaluate, and adapt for use with students, techniques for developing “*Personal and Workplace Resilience*” previously delivered as Plymouth University staff development training).
2. Deliver the revised programme to students drawn from across the university
3. Evaluate the impact of the programme on participant perceptions and confidence in their ability to influence their personal wellbeing

**Background/context to project**:

This pilot explored the potential of face-to-face resilience-building training techniques to support students by enhancing their personal competency levels. The project involved delivering 8 hours of face-to-face intensive training to three groups of student volunteers drawn from across the university and evaluating the training outcomes using feedback questionnaires and independently run focus group discussions.

#### Methods used:

A literature review explored the rationale for resilience enhancement in students and the use of specific resilience training interventions. Three two-part training courses (adapted from previous resilience courses for university staff) were delivered to the volunteer students. Post-training feedback was obtained after each session and qualitative evaluations were secured through independently managed focus group discussions that took place two weeks following the completion of the training.

**Results:**

45 students participated in the training (from 75 expressing interest). All the two-part courses proved successful in terms of student participation, however the final (Part B) afternoon course had to be cancelled with no notice due to extreme weather. The anonymous post-training feedback indicated gains in student confidence and self-efficacy due to the training; a number of particular approaches and tools were repeatedly mentioned. The Focus Group discussions revealed high quality, in-depth data on the sense of vulnerability students experience, the need for, and appreciation of, providing a safe and secure training environment that allows participants to openly explore their experiences and to learn by supporting each other. Key lessons arising from the project include:

1. The need for resilience training for students is real
2. Students may feel much more vulnerable than staff (or their peers) realise
3. Providing a ‘safe’, open environment where students feel ‘un-judged’ and can talk and experiment openly with like-minded others is key to successful intervention.
4. Providing participants with guided opportunities to coach each other (i.e. in developing understanding and using tools) and to provide peer support is appreciated and beneficial.
5. Sessions need to be delivered by ‘cognate’ staff (who practice what they preach).
6. Simply understanding the (resilience) territory is helpful
7. Properly guided, peer coached experiential learning works well – providing a sense of connection, confidence, etc.
8. Providing a variety of resilience intervention tools is important – nothing work’s for everyone
9. Activities that aim to support a positive focus (e.g. values awareness, etc.) can be tools in their own right.
10. Key tools stand out – STOP Process, thought diaries, values awareness, goal-setting/mind-set reframe.
11. The training as delivered works well – but ongoing follow up is needed (resilience café, etc.) to help participants embed and extend their learnings.
12. Effective handouts/training papers can have longer term value
13. Recruiting students requires thought: the techniques top use, the language to use, securing commitment, and pros & cons of cross-university vs in-subject recruitment needs to be evaluated.

The intent is to use the project findings to inform future wellbeing policy and practice within the university.

**Associated publications**:

Murray, P.; Murray, S.; Warwick, P.; Bentley, A. (2018) Learning: to Change. Developing Student Resilience: a pilot. Proposed for International Journal of Sustainability I Higher Education, or similar (submission expect October 2018

**Dissemination**:

Two-hour workshop for the School of Nursing staff (Teaching & Learning Day 2018)

1 hour values and resilience workshop: V.C’s T&L conference 2018

Internal dissemination planned for policy groups on Student Wellbeing and People Strategy

**Total project expenditure: £2868**

**Are you happy for us to include your project on our website?** Yes