Supporting Students in Becoming: A Pedagogy of Hope Through Professional Identity Formation

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This photograph captures the induction of first-year students into the pharmacy program at James Cook University (JCU), Australia. For me, it represents much more than a welcome event. It symbolizes the beginning of a journey of professional identity formation, where students take their first steps towards becoming future pharmacists and healthcare professionals.

As an educator in the Discipline of Pharmacy, College of Medicine and Dentistry at James Cook University, I believe that a pedagogy of hope is about helping students see possibilities in themselves before they fully recognize them. Many students commence university with uncertainty about their abilities, their place in higher education, and their future role within the healthcare workforce. Moments such as this induction help students develop a sense of belonging, purpose, and connection to the profession they are entering.

Professional identity is not formed at graduation; it begins on the first day that students start to see themselves as members of a professional community committed to improving the health and wellbeing of others. Through authentic learning experiences, mentorship, reflection, and engagement with practice, we support students to grow in confidence, values, and professional responsibility.

Working at James Cook University in regional and northern Australia, I have the privilege of supporting students who will go on to serve diverse rural, regional, remote, and Indigenous communities. This image reminds me that hope in higher education is not simply about academic achievement. It is about nurturing the confidence, identity, and purpose that enable students to become compassionate healthcare professionals capable of making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

For me, this is the essence of a Pedagogy of Hope: nurturing the confidence, values, and

sense of belonging that enable students to become pharmacists, who improve the lives of others and strengthen their communities.