Dr Lane Perry – Western Carolina University, USA

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I was visiting from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina where I serve as a tenure-track faculty member in the College of Business where I serve in the Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Leadership program. I have the honour of teaching our early courses in the curriculum focused on entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, leadership, new venture creation, and how to tap into creativity and ideation strategies. I get the opportunity to help entrepreneurs develop the mindset, attitude, and disposition along side the skillset and tools needed to grow new ventures from the ground up!

The chance to study at the University of Canterbury as an Erskine Fellow was a dream come true. The opportunity to engage with UC students, learn alongside internationally recognized faculty (like Associate Professor Billy O'Steen and many others), and tap into the hotbed of entrepreneurial growth and development in Christchurch taught me much about how entrepreneurial ecosystems can catalyse and support that spark of motivation that inspires young people to pursue ground breaking and cutting edge innovation. The work being done at UC around community engagement and development and entrepreneurship through incubators and accelerators was something I just had to see and experience for myself – and I did during my time as an Erskine Fellow.

Through the Bachelors of Youth and Community Leadership, I delivered around 12 lectures on various topics ranging from identity development, teamwork and dynamics, civic engagement, and social entrepreneurship. I spoke publicly to the UC community, to a local Rotary Club, and contributed to numerous classes. In addition to my lecturing and teaching schedule, I had the opportunity to visit growth centres and incubators while also interviewing 15 young (under 30) entrepreneurs who have founded new ventures within the Christchurch ecosystem. I also had time – alongside my family – to enjoy the beauty and wonder that New Zealand Aotearoa has to offer… and that could have been a full-time responsibility for the beauty stretches in all directions further than humans can imagine or process.

The support, the people, and the opportunities afforded. I was able to learn far more than I could teach; I was able to receive far more than I could give; and I was able to become a version of myself that I do not think I could have become without the opportunity. While no single event can awaken a stranger inside of you (St. Exupery) – I am reminded that an aggregate of experiences, concentrated in a specific time, alongside a healthy dose of reflection can truly help you become who you are meant to be. That was this experience for me. Thank you for changing my life.