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To whom it may concern

I am applying for the position of Head of School because I am a big picture person, I am working in a school that I really care about and I want to make a difference. These seem to be reasonable attributes for a leader

I came back to work at the school of OT after a period of years when I focused on my own development as a researcher. My intention was to quietly develop the research foundations within the school, but increasingly I realise that it is difficult to develop one area of the school without having a vision for how it fits together with all the other parts of the school mission. Leadership is the key to how this can happen and I want a leader who is committed to the strategic development of the school within the context of the polytechnic.

I am putting myself forward because I have come to realise that I care deeply about the school and that there are many different ways of being a leader. My strength is that I am able to value ideas because I have a strong set of values. In terms of leadership I am usually considered to be relatively neutral and positive in my approach. This has means that in several instances I have been nominated as leader for community groups during difficult transition periods. My approach to leadership is generally a quiet one, but I expect and receive respect within these contexts. I have the capacity to think laterally and to help a number of different perspectives to be heard. This can make the decision making process easier – because I will always work towards a consensus approach, while holding the key ethical and philosophical issues in the foreground.

Since returning to the school of OT I have found myself developing a vision of how I want the school to go forward. It has grown up organically as I find myself responding to directions from leadership, as I listen to the amazing ideas generated by staff, and as I search for new opportunities for our staff and students. I found myself increasingly articulating a vision for the school that draws our community of practice into a 'nexus'. This nexus consists of strands related to clinical practice, education, research and enterprise/service. One example of how this has become operationalized in my own practice has been through a series of developments responding the need for a service for people with vision impairment, including: market validation of program to deliver services; submission to select committee about the potential for OT to deliver in this area; supporting undergraduate projects in the area; potential development of postgraduate professional development education; supervision of Master's thesis in the area; and developing conference and publications. Another example has been development of a voluntary internship for our recent graduates, which has seen ten students go to India. In both instance I have been successful in attracting internal and external funding to develop these ideas.

I believe that the School of OT has reached a stage where it is necessary to stand back and focus on a new perspective. The school has been successful to this point, but in order to proceed I believe that it needs to re-conceptualise both its mission and the way in which it provides education to students. The ground is shifting in terms of delivery of the kinds of services that OTs have traditionally been responsible for. This has implications for the training and employment of occupational therapists, both in NZ and worldwide. There are

particular things that OT in Otago could do in response to this: a) we could align ourselves with the traditional biomedical perspective of the allied health professions, move to the university and turn this into a profession that is strongly aligned with physiotherapy and medicine; or b) we might use the flexibility and vision that is available in the polytechnic to re-shape how education is provided, so that occupational therapists are ready to serve the kind of needs and the kinds of communities that their mission covers. After a period of time working in the polytechnic, my belief is firmly in the latter camp. Many schools of OT are constrained by the kinds of curricula that can be developed in the university context. The strength of positioning OT in the polytechnic is that it can be genuinely responsive to the changing face of health care provision New Zealand and internationally. The development of our postgraduate program for working clinicians is a good example of what can be done. We need to shift our vision of how the undergraduate program is delivered.

Over the last decade I have been relatively successful in terms of attracting research funding and developing as an emerging researcher. This offers a comfortable, if somewhat sterile, path. Research and education can best be generated within the lively context of an environment where staff are engaged alongside their students in the transformative potential of education. During my recent time at the polytechnic, I have contributed to creating such an environment, for example I set up a research discussion group when I was contemplating employment in the school of OT in 2011. Part of how I do this currently is by providing regular lunchtime meditation to staff and students. This is an effective way of generating resilience both in myself and in those who surround me; it is also a great way of creating networks across the polytechnic and university.

I am applying for this position because I want to ensure that the school is the kind of place that I can continue to love working in. I want to leave a legacy that reflects the 1961 definition of occupational therapy given by Mary Reilly: "Man through the use of his hands as they are energised by his mind and will can influence the state of his health". Leaders arise when they are needed: I hope that whoever leads the school through the next phase of its development is able to put our students on the map and create a capacity in them to competently serve their within their communities of practice.

Kind regards

Mary Butler