

## In Memory

# Remembering John Clarke

### Student Success Editorial Team

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**Professor John Clarke** was a founding editor of *Student Success* (previously titled *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education*) and later a member of the Journal Advisory Board.

John commenced his professional career as a science teacher in secondary education joining the higher education sector in 1970, taking on a number of research and teaching roles with a strong focus on psychology and teacher education (at the University of Queensland and the Brisbane College of Advanced Education – now Queensland University of Technology in Australia). After retiring from his faculty role, he worked as a project manager co-leading pivotal student experience projects and institutional and national research related to the first-year experience, and student engagement and retention. His [published research](#) is comprehensive.

John was actively involved with both the STARS Conference and its predecessor the International First Year in Higher Education Conference (FYHE) and FYHE Centre. As co-editor of the Journal, he ensured that articles sent for review were suitably aligned with the FYHE and STARS signature themes centred on student success and he had a specific focus on the critical quality of educational research, willingly working with less experienced authors to support the publication of their work.

John had a formidable intellect, he exemplified what it means to be an academic, and most importantly, he was a wonderfully generous collaborative colleague and friend. He offered wise advice and supported many of us to progress in our careers. He was a friend and mentor to the STARS Conference team and the *Student Success* editorial team.

We thank our colleagues who have provided their reflections on working with John.

*I have such fond memories of John. We collaborated and wrote together. He was both the consummate academic and the loveliest person, which made every interaction an absolute joy. His expertise was deep and broad, and he wrangled it effortlessly. But John was so much more again than his exceptional professional acumen. He was also endlessly patient, generous, thoughtful, funny and kind – all of this woven into the rich fabric of his character. His humble and unassuming manner drew people in, as it did me, and he treated everyone he met with respect and genuine interest, which is no small thing. I learnt much from our many conversations over the years and will always be grateful to him for his gentle guidance. He and his lovely wife Lesley were part of our FYHE and STARS family and we shared many happy times together. He is much revered and greatly missed.*

Sally Kift

*I worked with John after he was retired and yet still active in academia. I appreciated him because he was a well-balanced person. He was highly experienced and qualified, yet was always ready for a joke and showed an interest in myself as a person. I also remember him as humbly being willing to take on any task, plugging away at it until it was completed. The world was a better place because he was in it.*

Ian Stoodley



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*I was privileged to work with John on several teaching and learning grants as a research assistant at QUT, and then with the IJFYHE, and later the Student Success journal. He was meticulous with journal content, had a thorough understanding of research types and methods and often worked closely with authors to improve their writing. His warmth and level of engagement with authors was appreciated - he liked the use the odd emoji in his track changes comments on papers which really helped humanise the editorial review process and put authors at ease. He was also a referencing guru, there wasn't anything he didn't know about APA style for example – I learnt a great deal from him and am forever grateful that he shared his knowledge with me. John's love for his wife Lesley, children and grandchildren was the only thing bigger than his passion for educational research – he is missed.*

Tracy Creagh

*John and I first worked together in early 2007 on a large first year 'transitions-in' project at QUT, and we continued to work together for many of the years after that on a series of national higher education research projects, writing papers to disseminate that research, for the FYHE and then STARS Conferences, and for the Int J FYHE and then Student Success Journal. John always gave his all to his work, no matter what he was doing. He had a gift for finding just the right word or turn of phrase that made complex ideas clear or to provide much needed reassurance when needed. He was meticulously organised, absolutely dedicated to quality in research and more than generous with his time and his colleagues. His approach to higher education research was scarily thorough, deeply respectful of the informing literature and inclusive of his colleagues and friends and this resulted in us with other colleagues being published in top education journals. John also had an uncanny ability to keep completely abreast of test cricket while simultaneously writing an article or preparing a project report. Between, 2011 and 2012, John, Tracy Creagh, Sally Kift and I worked on a review of 400 empirical reports and conceptual discussions encompassing ten years of Australasian first year experience literature. We examined the literature through two theoretical constructs or "lenses": Sally's now ubiquitous first year curriculum design principles and the generational approach to describing the maturation of initiatives, which led to our work on the Student Engagement Success and Retention Maturity Model. The outcomes of 'the book' (as John referred to it) provided a blueprint for the next decade of first year policy and practice. In remembering John and his contributions, it is timely that we are planning to embark on the next decadal 'review' in his honour. He'd be embarrassed by these accolades, which sadly have come too late for us to share with him. John was a kind and gentle person and a wonderful mentor to me. Working with him was fun, challenging, stimulating, and personally and professionally rewarding. Knowing John was a privilege for which I will always be grateful. Farewell John and thank you!*

Karen Nelson

*John was an inspiration and a delight. He mentored me and many many others in manifold ways and it was a privilege to know him. John was steadfast in his student-centred approaches to pedagogy and scholarship, his generosity was limitless, he made us laugh (a lot!) and he reminded us not to take ourselves too seriously, while remembering always that our work is important and serious. His contributions to the scholarly literature are significant and will have lasting impact. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity and honour to work with John and also to know Lesley. With gratitude and love.*

Rachael Field

