



# The Queensland Widening Participation Consortium

Case Studies 2011-2015

# Acknowledgments

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The Consortium also acknowledges Queensland Department of Education and Training for their support and for providing access to schools and institutes across the State.

The case studies illustrated in this publication are only a small sample of the outreach work being undertaken throughout the State. For more information on Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation activities contact [Geoffrey.mitchell@dete.qld.gov.au](mailto:Geoffrey.mitchell@dete.qld.gov.au).

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# Project Overview

Eight universities form Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium, which is focused on improving the participation of low socio-economic background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in tertiary study. Between 2011 and 2015 the Consortium collaborated on School Outreach and Indigenous Engagement Projects funded through two Australian Government Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program grants. This overview of Consortium universities and project activities provides a context for the case-studies featured in this publication.

Institution	School Outreach Project	Indigenous Engagement Project
 <p>ACU AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY</p>	<p>ACU offered a suite of programs to primary and secondary schools in the Northern Brisbane suburbs (shared with QUT). See <b>Playing with Numbers</b> and <b>Uni Step Up</b>.</p>	<p>Indigenous-focused school and community events included campus visits, an Indigenous games day and an Indigenous dinner to engage with school students and the wider community.</p>
 <p>CQUniversity AUSTRALIA</p>	<p>CQUniversity provided a staged delivery of activities to students from Year 5 to Year 12 in the Central Queensland, Bundaberg and North Burnett regions. See <b>Partnerships: a whole school approach</b>, and <b>The Hero's Journey</b>.</p>	<p>CQUniversity undertook two projects: <b>Community Aspirations Program (CAP-ED)</b> focusing on delivery of small community based learning projects; and <i>Correctional Centre Undergraduate Pathways (CUPS)</i> exploring undergraduate pathway development for incarcerated people.</p>
 <p>Griffith UNIVERSITY</p>	<p>Griffith extended its pre-existing <i>Uni-Reach</i> program to target all year levels from Year 6 to Year 12 in Brisbane, Logan, Inala, Redlands and Gold Coast schools. See <b>Launch into Life at Logan</b> and <b>Engaging parents in career conversations</b>.</p>	<p>The Gumurrii Student Support Unit delivered short community based pre-tertiary learning modules to Gold Coast, Logan and Moreton Bay island communities and has established a homework centre on the Gold Coast.</p>



JCU provided outreach and engagement with schools in the North Queensland and Far North Queensland regions including school visits, camps and resource development. See **Charters Towers Education Hub**.

JCU's extensive engagement with schools, communities and organisations across North and Far North Queensland included engagement through regional hubs. See **James Cook University Partnerships**.



QUT's **Explore Uni** program provided on-campus experiences to primary and secondary schools from north Brisbane and Caboolture, complementing other in-school and community activities.

QUT provided Indigenous focused **career counselling services** in the Moreton Bay region as well as tertiary preparation support and school outreach activities.



UQ provided in-school and on-campus activities for secondary schools in the Ipswich and Lockyer Valley region through their **Uni – Yes I Can!** program.

Community engagement included an *Indigenous Youth Sports Program*, youth leadership program, *InspireU* camps and the *Deadly Choices Pathways to Success* program. See **Motivating Indigenous Students to Succeed**.



USQ provided a range of programs to partner schools in the Darling Downs, South West and Fraser Coast schools. See **Beyond Year 10 Camp** and **Tertiary Preparation Program Intensive Pathway**.

USQ worked with local communities and schools to deliver the **DARE mentoring program** as well as *Indigenous Connections* motivational events in Toowoomba, Springfield and Hervey Bay.



USC have worked with primary and secondary schools in the Fraser Coast and Wide Bay regions. See **My Tertiary Education Day** and **Here there be no dragons**.

Indigenous engagement has included delivery of the AIME mentoring program to secondary students; a **digital literacies** project; as well as arts, literacy and leadership programs.

# Introduction

Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium is a unique state-wide collaboration that aims to improve participation of low socio-economic status background (low SES) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in tertiary education. The eight university Consortium, in partnership with the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET), have undertaken School Outreach and Indigenous Engagement Projects across the State between 2011 and 2015. These projects were funded through Australian Government Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) grants. This grant funding complemented and built on existing outreach and engagement work undertaken by Consortium universities. In some universities, grant-funded projects were a small component of a broader widening participation strategy.

The Consortium's collaborative approach, encoded in a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), was based on a consensus amongst the universities about the nature of WP work (not competitive marketing promoting a single institution, but stimulating interest in tertiary study itself); the key outreach activities universities were best-placed to provide (immersion experiences to de-mystify tertiary study, role models, learning partnerships to enhance curriculum, and practical assistance with pathways); and the need to eliminate gaps and duplication in outreach provision to schools by using a federated model of activity, with each university taking responsibility for a particular area of the state.

This publication draws together 19 case studies of projects delivered using HEPPP grant funding. Together they illustrate the range of activities covered under this grant; the diversity of approaches; and the positive impact these projects have had on the students and communities who were involved. This project diversity reflects the diversity of Queensland: from urban populations in south-east Queensland to regional and remote communities in far north, central and western Queensland. Widening Tertiary Participation activities were tailored to meet the needs of different cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people, people of Maori and Pacific Island descent as well as migrant and refugee groups.

School outreach projects have involved each Queensland university working with an identified group of schools. Activities were focused primarily on Year 6-12 students from low SES backgrounds and included:

- raising awareness about tertiary study;
- conducting university visits and overnight camps;
- building student achievement in school;
- strengthening career development skills; and



- providing information on university access, scholarships and financial support.

Over 500 schools were engaged in these projects and up to 65,000 students a year participated in project activities. Engagement with teachers, parents and community members has led to changed expectations about what young people can do with their futures.

As well as school outreach projects, a number of Indigenous engagement projects were delivered within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These projects incorporated outreach to both school students and the wider community and included:

- career advice services;
- access and support to participate in tertiary preparation courses;
- on-campus visits and events;
- student mentoring programs; and
- partnerships with community organisations.

Partnership agreements with over 100 community and government organisations significantly strengthened the reach of these activities and their community connection. As well as engagement with Elders and community members, more than 5,000 school students participated in Indigenous engagement activities over the last three years.

## Project Impact

Each university conducted evaluations of its own projects, and the case studies include evidence that demonstrates the positive impact of project activities. Together, the Consortium also undertook three joint evaluation tasks:

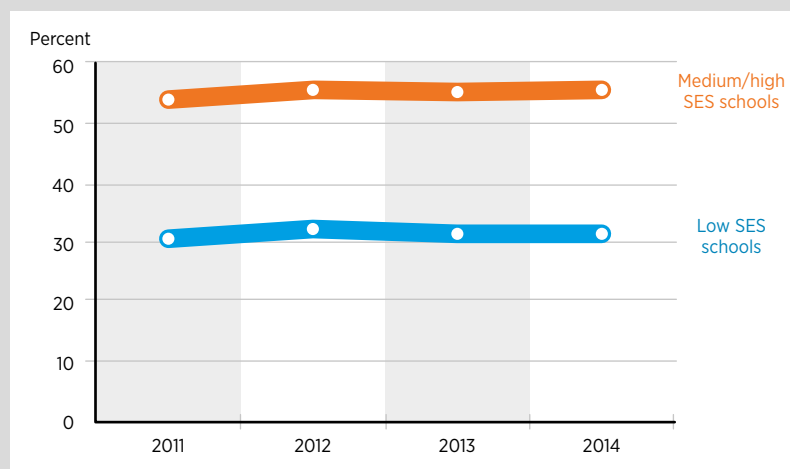
- monitoring Year 12 tertiary applications;
- a common survey question for students attending on-campus events; and
- investigations with Student Ambassadors employed on Widening Tertiary Participation projects.

## Year 12 tertiary applications

The primary objective of the Consortium's work was to 'stimulate interest in tertiary study' which means in the long-term

that more low SES background students and more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people apply to study at a university or other tertiary institution in Queensland. Experience from the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup> has shown that it may take up to 10 years of widening participation activity before a clear impact on tertiary applications and enrolments can be seen.

University application data seen in Figure 1, shows that students in identified low SES schools apply to study at university at only a little above half the rate of students in medium and high SES schools. Overall, only small improvements in application rates have occurred between 2011 and 2014, however, positive application trends are emerging in locations where intense long-term outreach has occurred. Improved application rates have also been seen for students in academic programs at low SES schools.

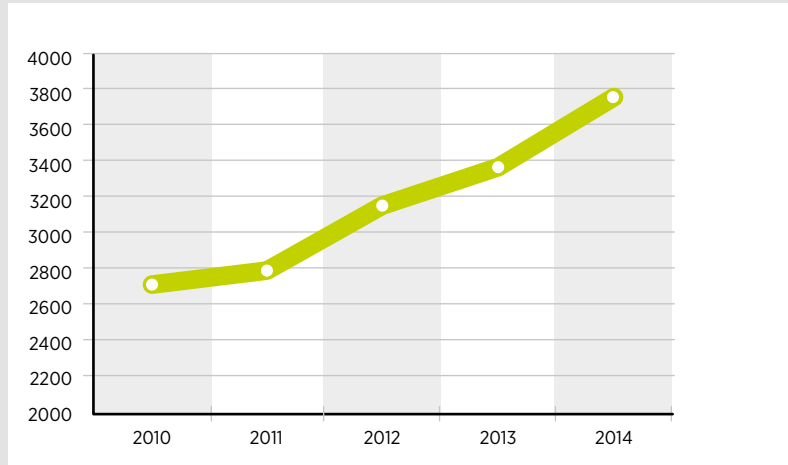


**Figure 1:** Proportion of Year 12 completers (percent) applying to a Consortium university (Semester 1 courses) low SES Schools and medium/high SES Schools 2011-2014

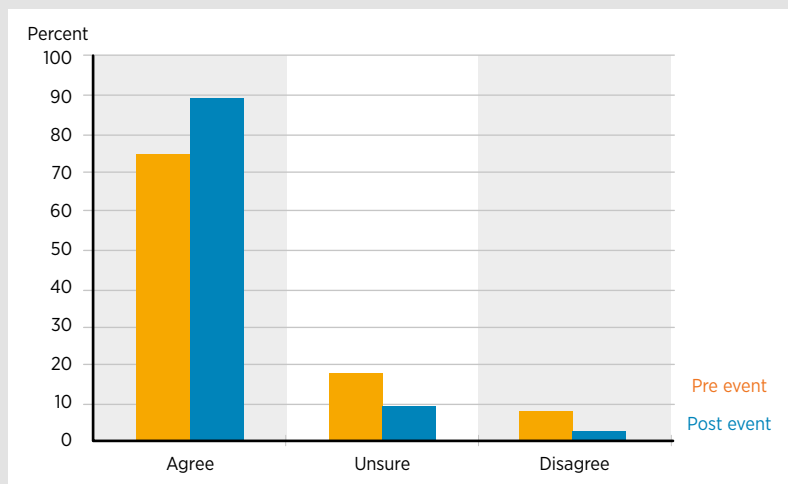
Higher education enrolment data is also showing some early signs that increased numbers of low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are attending university in Queensland. In 2014, low SES students at Queensland universities made up 20.3% of domestic undergraduate students. This is up from 19.6% of students in 2010. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education enrolments in Queensland have experienced particularly strong growth in recent years. Figure 2 shows that between 2010 and 2014, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander enrolments increased by almost 40% to 3,758 students.

### On campus survey question

A common element of Widening Tertiary Participation programs has been providing opportunities for school students to visit a university campus. These visits have included sitting in a lecture theatre; talking to university students and lecturers about university life; and joining in hands-on learning activities. Visits varied between one day university visits to week long camps. All university visits aimed to show school students that universities are places where people like them can attend and succeed if they choose. To test if students were getting this key message, all students attending an on-campus event



**Figure 2:** Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education enrolments in Queensland, 2010-2014



**Figure 3:** Percentage of students in agreement or disagreement with the statement "I believe it is possible for me to go to university."

were asked to say if they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I believe it is possible for me to go to university" before and after the campus experience. Between 2013 and 2014 approximately 13,000 survey responses were collected. Responses showed agreement that attending university was possible improved by 14 percentage points between

pre-visit and post-visit questions. Figure 3 shows that after visiting a campus, almost 90% of students said attending university was possible, and just 3% believed it was not. This result shows that well-designed on campus experiences are effective in changing student perceptions about university.



## Student Ambassador Investigations

Another feature of Consortium projects has been the use of enrolled university students as role models, mentors or 'ambassadors'. International and Australian research has shown that student ambassadors, particularly when they come from similar backgrounds to the school students they work with, can be a powerful source of information about tertiary study. When these ambassadors share their stories about how they got to university, school students' beliefs about who can go to university are often changed. This QUT student ambassador described how attending a university camp in Year 12 was a turning point in her life:

“

*If I hadn't attended an Explore Uni camp in Year 12 I wouldn't be at uni today ... Hearing the Ambassadors' stories made me realise some people had overcome far greater obstacles than mine and made it to uni; therefore I could too.*

”

A number of the case studies featured in this publication refer to the important role these student ambassadors played in the delivery of widening participation activities. A report prepared for the Consortium by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education<sup>2</sup> found that the use of student ambassadors had been an effective strategy with benefits both for school students and the ambassadors themselves. Teachers said that their students could identify easily with the ambassadors and recognised that many of them had come from similar backgrounds and faced similar difficulties. Parents and teachers reported that the discussions started with ambassadors were continued in school and at home. A teacher featured in the *Launch into Life at Logan* case study wrote:

“

*Many of our young people tell us they have never had conversations like this and their world view has been extended.*

”

As well as being a good strategy for breaking down perceived barriers to tertiary study, the ambassador programs have helped low SES students improve their skills and success at university. The ambassadors reported a high level of satisfaction with their role and that it contributed to the development of self-confidence, communication, team-work and employability skills. According to many ambassadors it also led to greater commitment to their studies and deeper engagement with university life.

## Other Consortium Activities

A working group representing all universities has met since 2009 to support the development and implementation of the Widening Tertiary Participation program. This Working Group, supported by a full-time project officer, has monitored policy developments affecting delivery of outreach and engagement programs and supported collaboration between universities. Three state-wide seminars have been held to share good practice and build links between the various projects and their leaders.

The Consortium has also been successful in gaining funding for two further projects under the HEPPP National Priority Pool. The Social Marketing Strategy

project, led by QUT, is bringing together research on widening participation and social marketing to develop a national social marketing strategy for use by the Australian Government. Griffith University is leading a small “Bridging Pathways” project that will help potential students find out reliable information on tertiary preparation or bridging programs available in Queensland. Both these projects will finish in the first half of 2016.

## Sustainability

The large scale of outreach and engagement activities has resulted in deeper relationships between universities, schools and the wider community. Universities will make use of ongoing HEPPP funding, institutional resources, philanthropic and industry funds to maintain these partnerships and to continue outreach and engagement activities beyond the end of grant funding in June 2015. Universities are using evaluations of programs undertaken in the past three years to refine and refocus outreach activities. Many of the projects featured in this publication will continue in their current form while others will change and develop as needs and priorities change and project lessons are implemented.

## Lessons

The Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium has been highly effective in maintaining a State-wide collaboration that has engaged with schools and communities for over three years. The success of the partnership has been based on:

- extensive consultation and consensus-building prior to commencing program activities;
- a “federated” model which allowed universities a high level of autonomy and flexibility in how they delivered programs within an overall shared approach;
- sufficient funding to allow a large scale State-wide program to be implemented;
- commitment by the universities to engage with their local communities and build strong local partnerships that have been respectful and based on mutual benefit;
- support from the State Government’s Department of Education and Training;
- high levels of trust between partners; and
- a shared commitment to the success of the program.








All universities have ongoing Access and Participation Plans in place that commit them to continuation of outreach and engagement activities with their local communities. These activities seek to improve the tertiary participation of people from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and other groups under-represented in tertiary education. The Consortium universities have seen the benefit of taking a collaborative approach to this task and are exploring new ways in which they can continue this collaboration.

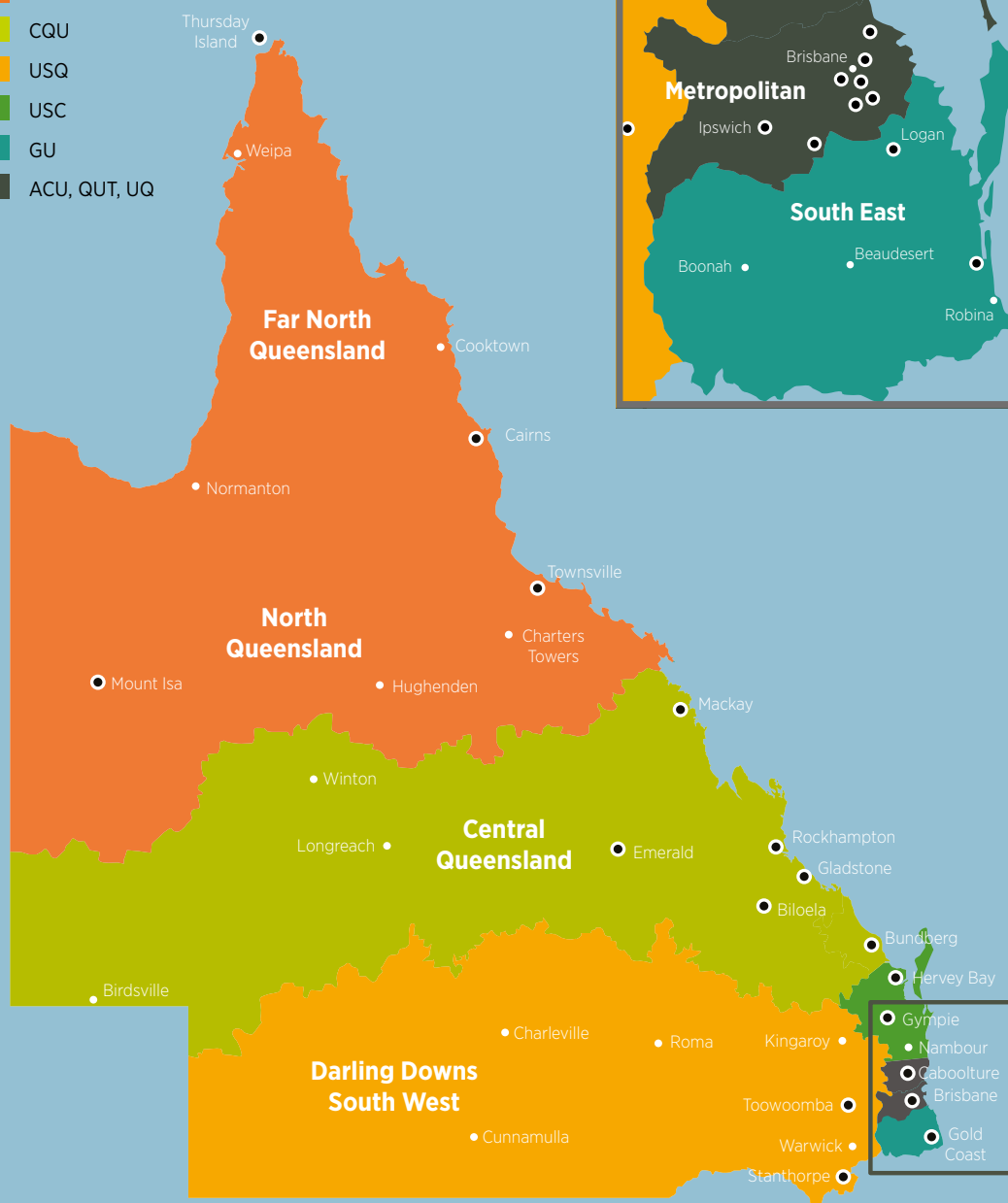
## Endnotes

1. Higher Education Funding Council for England (2013) *Trends in young participation in higher education*, Higher Education Funding Council for England, London UK.
2. Cupitt, C., Costello, D. & Mitchell, G. (2015) *Widening Tertiary Participation Queensland: Student Ambassador Investigations*, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University, Perth WA

## Queensland Regions and Universities

Each university has focused outreach and engagement activity on its local region, with a small number of activities crossing these regional boundaries.

-  University campus or study centre
-  JCU
-  CQU
-  USQ
-  USC
-  GU
-  ACU, QUT, UQ







# Playing with Numbers

**University:**

Australian Catholic University (ACU)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

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## About

*Playing with Numbers* is a primary school on-campus program designed to promote student engagement in mathematics and numeracy. The program supports a national focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and complements other Australian Catholic University (ACU) programs integrating these subjects. The aim is to build primary school students' mathematical skills so that they can succeed in high school mathematics and progress more confidently into STEM areas at university. *Playing with Numbers* builds capacity in mathematics by supporting both teaching and learning and is offered exclusively to ACU's Equity Pathways partner schools.

## Aims

*Playing with Numbers* aims to support student engagement and achievement in mathematics by fostering a community of practice in three ways:

1. Engaging students in hands-on activities at the ACU campus.
2. Involving parents and teacher-aids in the on-campus visit.
3. Building teacher capacity by modelling activities during learning sessions and through additional professional development.

## Strategy

*Playing with Numbers* uses a best practice model called RoleM, a hands-on, evidenced-based learning program. RoleM stands for Representations, Oral Language and Engagement in Mathematics. RoleM resources have been specifically developed for educators that work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds.



The activities are tailored to specific year levels and integrate with key concepts across the mathematics core curriculum including: Number and Algebra; Measurements and Geometry; and Statistics and Probability. The context and learning environments are designed to show a clear link between mathematics and various careers.

## The Program

The *Playing with Numbers* program is a full-day university experience at ACU. Each year ACU invites whole cohorts of students (rather than only selected students) from the partner schools in Years 4–6 to attend. The rationale is to encourage the greatest student participation possible. There is no cost for partner schools to participate and transport is provided where required. Students are invited to share a healthy snack on arrival with university students and staff. This provides an opportunity to ensure students are relaxed and have the maximum energy available for learning.

Part of the day's strategy involves training selected ACU pre-service Education students as program facilitators, who work closely with ACU lecturers to coordinate the day. As well as benefiting the school students, this approach also provides opportunities for the trainee teachers to deepen their practice and skills as they transition into their profession.

The visiting school students are also accompanied by current ACU students (sourced from the ACU buddy and *student2student* programs). The ACU students provide personal support and help the visiting school students settle into what is an unfamiliar learning environment.

Student visitors also have the opportunity to meet with an ACU Professor and to explore career goals in an aspiration-building session.

## Evidence of Impact

Since 2013, 700 students in Years 4 to 7 from eight partner schools have participated in *Playing with Numbers*. Attending students were surveyed on their experience of the program using an age-appropriate three-point scale. They were asked about a) the mathematics activities; b) the aspirations activities; and c) their interest in attending university in future.

## Student Findings

Key survey findings included:

1. The context, learning environment and hands-on nature of the activities promoted a positive connection with mathematics. A total of 98 percent of the students surveyed stated they enjoyed the mathematics activities on campus.

2. The activities reinforced the use of mathematical language with many students using specialist terms to identify their favourite activities of the day.
3. At the end of the program students had high aspirations for their career goals with 90 percent of students reporting an interest in attending university in the future.

These trends were supported anecdotally by conversations between visiting students and ACU staff and students. In addition, the day assisted to break down stereotypes about what kind of person participates in university and what university life is like.

## Teacher Feedback

Teachers also provided feedback on the activities, the use of university resources, and student engagement. Teacher feedback highlighted that:

- students were highly engaged throughout the day;
- the connections between mathematics and careers were clear;
- the material complemented school programs;
- the program increased students' awareness of university; and

- teachers were keen to engage in further professional learning opportunities in mathematics.

Anecdotally, teachers reported their professional learning was enhanced by the learning contexts, mathematics language, engagement in hands-on activities, and through observing the ACU facilitators.

## Testimonials

“

*The feedback from our students, staff and parents was that it was A FANTASTIC DAY! The staff is lit up about teaching Maths, the parents were blown away and the students have a REAL appreciation for the real world context of Mathematics and their interest in learning Maths has lifted. I would love to keep this spirit alive.*

”

Head of Curriculum,  
Equity Pathways partner  
school

“

*Teachers often are amazed by the mathematical knowledge students apply and demonstrate during the activities. It is such a pleasure to be part of a special day and inspire young students to follow their aspirations.*

”

Dr Jodie Miller,  
Lecturer, Education

## Lessons

ACU identified three key challenges of the program. The first was to find a balance between a deep engagement in mathematical concepts and offering a diverse range of activities and learning environments during the day. The second challenge was managing the expectation of teachers that the mathematics activities offered in a university context would target higher order skills such as problem solving. The final challenge was to ensure that the skills of the university student facilitators were of a high enough level to engage, question and challenge the visiting students appropriately.

## Conclusion

The short-term, positive impact of *Playing with Numbers* on student engagement with mathematics and aspirations towards higher education is compelling. However, a systematic approach to tracking and evaluating teachers and students over the longer term will determine the extent to which the momentum is sustained and how it is manifested in mathematics and in other learning areas. To maintain program momentum, it is recommended that follow-up professional learning opportunities be offered to teachers and further STEM holiday workshops be offered to students.







# Uni Step-Up: early access to tertiary study

**University:**

Australian Catholic University (ACU)

**Theme:**

Pathways to Higher Education

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## About

ACU's *Uni Step-Up* offers Year 12 students the opportunity to study a first year university unit from the disciplines of Arts, Business, Education and Health Science.

ACU developed *Uni Step-Up* (USU) to meet its Equity Pathways Widening Participation access objectives. For this reason the program is offered exclusively to Equity Pathways partner schools and communities. ACU's Equity Pathways program aims to build partnerships in low socio-economic areas with schools, educational providers and communities. Student participants may be from Indigenous backgrounds or from low socio-economic-status areas.

## Aim

The program introduces students to university learning in a more structured and supported environment. It aims to build the academic skills and cultural competencies necessary for a successful transition to tertiary study and allow students to start their vocational pathway earlier than usual.

## Structure

### Cost

To make the program as inclusive as possible and to minimise the barriers to participating, students can study the USU units at no cost. The university provides every student with the prescribed texts and study guides and covers the cost of higher education (HECS) fees.

### Learning Environment

USU students study in a supported learning environment. Faculty members and academic skills advisors in the Office of Student Success provide ongoing learning and teaching support. In addition, students are provided with extra support such as access to the Internet and transport to campus, when required, so that they can fully participate in their learning.

A unique part of this project is that students participate in a learning environment separate from other first year students. This enables ACU to provide an experience tailored to the age of the students and their competing Year 12 study commitments. Students complete the subjects

as holiday intensives on-campus with interim online components. The academic standard expected is at the same level as for first year university students. Small classes have helped to foster a close rapport among students and between students and lecturers. This has supported effective communication during the course.

Another strategy to build students' confidence when they start is the orientation program. Students learn academic skills, library skills and IT navigation before tackling subject content.



*Completing a USU subject before entering as an undergraduate gives these students the confidence to know they can succeed. Even though they may still experience other challenges associated with being first-in-family to attend university, they have a solid foundation – they know they can pass their subjects and access support networks when required.*



Jennifer Grant,  
Lecturer, USU Business

## Participation

ACU encourages a range of students from partner schools to participate, including those who have not considered university as a likely option in the past. Eligibility criteria are kept to a minimum, requiring students to have:

- attained at least a Sound Achievement during the previous four semesters of English;
- the endorsement of their teacher and/or Principal; and
- sound organisational skills.

While the program operates independently of schools, students are recruited primarily within the school environment and success relies on school support. Teachers play an important role in identifying and encouraging students and promoting the benefits of USU.

## Evidence of Impact

USU offers students both short and long term advantages. Students who successfully complete their unit are awarded two Credit Points towards their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) and course credit towards a relevant ACU undergraduate degree. Credit may be awarded by other universities at their discretion.

Consistent with the aims of the program, evaluations show positive outcomes for students, even those who do not finish a unit. Outcomes include:

- increased academic skills and confidence transferable to Year 12 studies;
- better Year 12 outcomes;
- vocational aspirations increased students' motivation to work hard at school;
- increased belief that university is more attainable; and
- greater awareness of the standards and expectations of university study.

Students who successfully complete one or two units through USU have a reduced load in their first year of study, thus further supporting their transition. Additionally, those participating in USU are identified for ongoing support in first year, an advantage as an undergraduate.

Since 2011, 109 students have completed a USU unit in Queensland with 20 students participating in Semester 1 2015. On completion, achievement rates show 70 percent (77 students) were awarded a pass or higher (16 percent High Distinction, 19 percent Distinction, 17 percent Credit, 18 percent Pass). Of these students, 21 have subsequently enrolled in undergraduate courses at ACU. A further three students who were not successful in completing the units they began in USU are also completing degrees at ACU. The clear message this program communicates is that university is achievable and is not just for the highest achievers.

“

*Being able to dip my feet in the water through the Uni Step-Up program and experience what university study was actually like allowed me to make a more informed decision.*

”

Current USU student

## Lessons

A key priority and challenge identified is sustaining the program beyond HEPPP grant funding. It is likely to be more effective to recruit cohorts larger than 15 from across partner schools to make the program economically viable. The university is continually monitoring the unit offerings to ensure that they open genuine pathways and that suitable resources are in place to support the units on offer.

Establishing cohorts that are able, willing and committed to the objectives of the program is a challenge. Lecturers have noted that outcomes for students are optimised when teachers take a more active interest in student progress and enhance the enthusiasm, confidence and commitment to pursue university study.

The *Uni Step-Up* program has been successful in achieving its aims of introducing students to university learning, improving academic skills, and facilitating transition to tertiary study. However, as the first group of USU students complete their undergraduate courses, it is important that their experiences and reflections are collected to measure the contribution of this program on their pathway to successful university study. It is the lived experiences of these students that will provide real insight into the longer term outcomes of the USU program.





# Widening Participation: a whole school approach

**University:**

Central Queensland  
University (CQU)

**Theme:**

School Engagement,  
Partnerships

**Author:**

Melissa Nunn  
Widening Participation  
Officer

## About

CQUniversity's Widening Participation team engaged with over 17,000 school students from more than 150 schools in the Central Queensland region to help raise students' aspirations towards university study between 2012 and 2014.

Rural school students in particular face many challenges when accessing higher education and Robinson<sup>1</sup> suggests that rural university campuses must begin to employ creative and innovative strategies to more effectively engage with the increasing number of excluded students. CQUniversity's approach to address this issue was to design a program for students from Years 5 to 12 that sequentially delivered age-appropriate activities about the benefits of higher education and career planning. This pedagogical approach of reinforcing messages at each year level allows students to build a comprehensive framework of skills and knowledge so they can make more informed decisions about their future.

## Program

From Years 6 to 7, a Mobile Education Trailer (MET) travels to schools in the rural Central Queensland region. For students in Years 8 to 12, additional programs reinforce positive key messages about university. These programs are complemented by two Indigenous specific programs targeting students in Years 5 to 12.

The sequence of programs and objectives (directly linked to program key messages) are outlined below:

- **Year 6–7: MET.** Mobile classroom with a program that encourages primary school aged children to reach for the stars and dream big.
- **Year 8: Hero's Journey.** A school and campus-based film project to assist students identify and overcome challenges and/or barriers to accessing university.
- **Year 9: My Career Match.** Based in the classroom, students complete an online survey to discover their personality profile and career matches. They use this profile to research jobs of interest.

- **Year 10: Uni Skills.** Delivered at the university over two days, this program immerses students into the university culture and allows them to experience academic activities. It is aligned with the Senior Education and Training (SET) planning and subject selection dates.
- **Year 11-12: The Great Race.** A program loosely based on the TV show, The Amazing Race. Students race around the university for a day to learn more about university life.
- **Year 12: Scholarships and Access.** The scholarships and access module is a snappy 20 minute program delivered to students in the classroom. It provides an outline of scholarships and access services available to students when starting university.
- **Year 5-10: Indigenous Youth Sports Program.** This program uses sports, health, education and cultural activities to build confidence and develop aspirations.
- **Year 10-12: Indigenous Access.** This program works closely with Indigenous Education workers and uses Indigenous perspectives on learning. It focuses specifically on broadening Indigenous students' aspirations.

## Evidence of Impact

The schools that have participated in CQUniversity's full suite of programs have seen transformational change in their school culture. For example, a small rural school (prep to Year 10) in Bundaberg recognised the importance of sequential aspiration-raising programs and has now participated in the whole program of activities.

The programs started in Years 6 and 7 with the MET visiting the school, and continued through Years 8 to 10 with programs that were designed to raise aspirations towards university study. As a result of these activities, teachers observed students discussing their futures and pathways in a more complex manner throughout the year.

For example, a mathematics teacher commented to a practitioner that,

“

*a couple of the [more difficult] boys seem to be paying attention after you highlighted the requirements for apprenticeships last visit. Students become more focused on performance and behaviour after they connect their future with what they do in the present.*

”

Teachers have also made comments that students enjoy seeing 'Mel from the Uni' each year as they progress through the programs.

“

*They [students] make a connection with Mel and she makes university seem less daunting and approachable for them.*

”

Teacher from Kepnock State High School 2014

A larger regional school also participated in the program from Years 6 to Year 12. During this time, a CQUniversity practitioner developed a close working relationship with the school, which included getting involved with school-based initiatives. Student and teacher reflections showed a positive change in student attitudes towards study, university and careers over this time. In addition, principal and teacher feedback from this particular school has been used to improve aspects of the program.



## Lessons

A by-product of involving whole school cohorts in aspiration-raising activities is that the number of teachers who attend these activities also increases. The teachers join students on their own self-discovery journey and receive up-to-date information about university pathways, entry, scholarships, etc. Fleming and Grace<sup>2</sup> identify that teachers, as a result of this process, are more likely to promote higher education to their students.

This project has also discovered that whole-of-school approaches to school outreach influence school culture. For example, widening participation programs become a natural part of the school timetabling processes. Principals, teachers and other student service staff such as Indigenous Education Workers and Guidance Officers create opportunities to embed the aspiration activities into the curriculum and find creative and innovative ways to support students. In addition, teachers and principals provide input into enhancing the university's programs.

## Conclusion

As programs are delivered more deeply into schools across the CQUniversity footprint, project staff have observed transformational change in school culture. In schools that have adopted the full suite of Widening Participation activities, students become familiar with the program and the university itself as they progress through the year levels. Students in these schools are more receptive to program messages in comparison to schools that have less involvement with the program. Not only does the school build and reinforce partnerships with the university, the students themselves form a relationship with the practitioner, which helps to dispel university myths.

### Endnotes

- 1 Robinson, S. (2012). 'Freedom, aspiration and informed choice in rural higher education: why they are saying 'no''. *Education in Rural Australia*, 22, 79-85.
- 2 Fleming, M & Grace, D. (2014), 'Widening the lens: Utilizing teacher perspectives to assess widening participation efforts in Australian higher education', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Volume 16, Number 2, 46-62.



# The Hero's Journey

**University:**

Central Queensland University (CQU)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

**Authors:**

Desley Pidgeon  
Widening Participation Officer

## About

CQUniversity's Widening Participation team developed and delivered an experience for Year 8 students to explore their futures, called *Hero's Journey* from 2012 to 2014. *Hero's Journey* was a creative film program that drew on students' imaginations to explore careers and pathways to university. The aim of the project was to provide a program that was inclusive to students of all academic ability levels regardless of their aspirations beyond school. The project was rolled out to a total of 20 prioritised schools.

## Strategy

*Hero's Journey* was a group film project that required students to identify their skills, personal qualities and career potential. Over a series of sessions, students worked together to write, edit and produce a film depicting how they would overcome potential challenges during the transition to university. Their work was filmed on a CQUniversity campus and was later showcased at a school presentation evening.

The underpinning key messages of the *Hero's Journey* were:

- my education is the ticket to the job or career I want in the future;
- I create my own future through the choices I make now;
- getting the right information helps me make the best decisions about my future;
- planning my goals and how to reach them connects me to the future I want;
- talking about my future plans with others helps me work out what I want; and
- university is something I can consider at anytime in the future.

## Program

The components of the *Hero's Journey* program included the program launch, a conference day, a campus visit, an editing day and the presentation event.

### Program Launch

The launch of *Hero's Journey* was conducted at each school a month or so prior to a campus visit. Students were stepped through

the process of identifying each stage in the journey of a hero:

1. the ordinary world;
2. the call to adventure;
3. the refusal of the call;
4. the meeting with the mentor;
5. crossing the first threshold;
6. tests, allies and enemies;
7. the supreme ordeal;
8. the reward.

Students began by identifying their journey from primary school to high school and then applied these same steps from high school to an imagined career. Research undertaken for CQUniversity asserts that when students have the ability to imagine their social position in relation to others, aspirations are shaped<sup>1</sup>. With this in mind, the *Hero's Journey* allowed students to express themselves as future university students and to identify their key influencers (for example peers, family members, teachers, lecturers, Widening Participation Officers, counsellors, employers etc.).

## Conference Day

The conference day allowed small groups of students to discuss their ideas with CQUniversity practitioners. Practitioners met with each group to discuss scripts, revisit aims and key messages, and identify equipment and venues for filming. Practitioners spent approximately 30 minutes with each group.

## CQUniversity Campus Visit

Students visited a CQUniversity campus for one or two days, depending on the location of their school. During the visit students were able to interact with staff and access various parts of the university campus (for example offices, lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, labs, student residences, the library, etc). Some students travelled over 20 hours (round trip) to participate in the program.

## Editing Day

The editing session allowed students to reflect on what they had learnt by ensuring their films followed the journey of a hero. Practitioners worked together with students to revisit the key messages and reflect on the film making process. Students also reflected on what they had learnt about themselves, each other, university and career pathways throughout the program.

## Presentation Evening

The school presentation evenings provided details about the program and showcased the films to students, teachers and families. The presentation emphasised the ability of every student who participated, and highlighted group achievements. On average, 35 parents, family members and other guests attended each presentation evening along with the student participants.

## Evidence of Impact

In 2012, 327 students from 13 prioritised schools participated in the program. In 2013, 398 students participated from 15 prioritised schools and in 2014, 507 students from 20 schools participated.

The positive aspects of the program can be seen in the responses by the students themselves and the teachers representing the schools.

### *One thing I learnt about myself is...*

“

*that I need to work with my group better.*

”

Year 8 student,  
Rockhampton State  
High School

### *One thing I learnt about university is...*

“

*that there are heaps of programs that help students getting to uni.*

”

Year 8 student,  
Biloela State High School

“

*it's so different to what they show on the movies.*

”

Year 8 student,  
Glenmore State High  
School



A teacher from Biggenden State School stated:

“

*There was one student with Asperger's Syndrome who has handled the experience incredibly well, I am very grateful that he was fully included in the class.*

”

And finally from a Glenmore State High School teacher:

“

*'It was a wonderful opportunity for rural students to interact with people from the university. Visiting the campus gives students a sense of what university 'feels' and looks like. It takes away the intimidation factor and the mysterious nature of university life.*

*Hopefully some students will be inspired to further their education..*

”

## Lessons

*Hero's Journey* challenged students' stereotypes and the limitations that students place on themselves or that are placed on them by others. Programs like this broaden aspirations as they facilitate self-awareness and enable students to identify their individual strengths.

Because the attending students are often vulnerable and are challenged to be creative outside their comfort zone, the team found that it was important to quickly build rapport and trust. It was also important that students were allowed to define what success was to them and to provide them with an experience that was both memorable and challenging.

Audio and visual resources enhanced the program by stimulating discussion and engagement, and included the students' own video clips and "TED Talks". By integrating iPads and movie making software technology into the program, students could record positive statements and images of themselves, which helped to reinforce their belief in their own potential. The range of tactile, visual and oral aids used enabled students from all ability and skill levels to participate in the aspiration-raising activities.

## Conclusion

*Hero's Journey* provides an environment for students to dream about their futures without the restriction of academic performance or expectations. Students were inspired to consider pathways they had never imagined before. Since the program began, past students have updated practitioners on their career plans, inspired by their imaginations as a result of being part of *Hero's Journey*.

“

*If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.*

”

Johann Wolfgang  
von Goethe

## Endnotes

1. Gale, T., Parker, S., Rodd, P., Stratton, G. & Sealey, T. with T. Moore (2013) *Student Aspirations for Higher Education in Central Queensland: a survey of school students' navigational capacities*. Report submitted to CQUniversity, Australia. Centre for Research in Education Futures and Innovation (CREFI), Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.





# ‘Now I have had this experience I am looking at studying...’

**University:**

Central Queensland University (CQU)

**Theme:**

Community engagement

**Authors:**

Bronwyn Fredericks  
Professor and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement) and BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) Chair in Indigenous Engagement

Tasha Lamey  
Project Coordinator, Community Aspiration Program (CAP-ED), Office of Indigenous Engagement

Marina Mikecz  
Executive Officer, Office of Indigenous Engagement

## About

The Community Aspirations Program in Education (CAP-ED) was started by CQUniversity’s Office of Indigenous Engagement in 2013. CAP-ED’s aim was to focus on building aspirations through small manageable learning projects, and to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ participation in higher education.

Initially the scope of the project was to develop and deliver an accredited certificate-level program to help Indigenous students transition into tertiary education by a) improving pathways and b) addressing their current knowledge gaps.

However, the initial investigatory process and community consultation found that a more localised, targeted and intimate approach would work more effectively. In addition, a free or affordable certificate course that would meet community needs was beyond the financial scope of the project. From here, the Office of Indigenous Engagement began to explore other possibilities.

## Engaging With Communities

From the start of the engagement process, the project team aimed to establish a two-way communication process with relevant individuals and communities. The team was interested in seeking stakeholder views on what might work best, rather than just ‘telling’ them what was going to happen. This early phase was important as it enabled the team to develop solid relationships and a shared understanding of what was needed in each community. Stakeholders participated in identifying roles and cultural protocols and making decisions about what activities were most suitable for their community. This two-way process enabled the project team to achieve community buy-in around the program design and delivery, and also helped them to understand the unique strengths and needs of each community.



The project team worked from the viewpoint that local knowledge plays an important role in keeping people and places together, and in co-creating new forms of togetherness. This created an understanding of how attitudes, cultural protocols and ways of sharing information and issues varied from community to community.

A key principle of the project team's practice was to build on what communities currently do, rather than imposing an external way of undertaking this process. The project team embedded Indigenous culture within the program and took an approach of working 'with' and not for the communities. What resulted was a short achievable five-week course (workshop mode) called *CQU and Me*. In addition, communities said they wanted a series of information events with guest speakers who would share stories of success and create networking opportunities for participants.

## How Was CAP-ED Implemented?

The CAP-ED program was designed to build capacity and inspire Indigenous people to:

- become role models for family members;
- gain respect from the Indigenous community;
- take steps to build a better future and career pathway;
- reconnect with Indigenous culture; and
- transition into enabling programs or undergraduate studies.

Each session focused on identity, culture, aspirations and a 'can do' approach to help participants discover that they had the potential to participate in higher education. Each session built in flexibility to reflect the needs of participants and presenters.

Participants also visited a CQUniversity campus to experience student life. They visited classrooms and a mock-hospital ward, sat at a student desk, took a tour of the library, and browsed the bookshop. Participants also met with Indigenous graduates who were working in their chosen career within their community. This affirmed the professional and community role of these graduates and in some cases a realisation of what they had

achieved. Sessions included a networking luncheon for working Indigenous people to learn about studying at university and to encourage university aspiration. Two keynote speakers with links to the local community were engaged at each networking luncheon to share their experiences and discuss the benefits of tertiary education.

## Evidence of Impact

CAP-ED has offered the Office of Indigenous Engagement a deeper connection to the communities in the CQUniversity footprint and enabled the university to be more responsive to community needs. There were 25 partnerships established with community organisations, service providers, and government departments during the project.

At the end of the program, participants could identify the pathway they needed to take to reach their education and career goals. The project team found that there were a high percentage of community members who had not completed Year 10 and therefore needed support and further education to improve their numeracy, literacy and/or computer skills before they would be eligible to enrol in undergraduate programs. The CAP-ED team have been investigating other options to assist these participants improve their skills.

Of the 221 participants, 13 are progressing towards completing CQUniversity's Tertiary Entry Program (TEP). Once they have completed TEP, students may either enrol in an undergraduate degree program with CQUniversity or at another university. One person has been readmitted to university and numerous people have enquired about studying at university. One of the main aims of the project was to plant the seed that study at university is possible. The project team expect that outcomes will take time to be realised with some participants enrolling at university at a later date when their circumstances are favourable.

## Lessons

Through this project, the project team discovered that to build trust and gain support for the program, first they had to build and sustain relationships with community members and service providers over the long-term. For example, initially the community members and service providers were hesitant to engage with project officers. Community engagement became easier when CQUniversity employed Indigenous staff with connections and local knowledge. This also helped to foster a more open dialogue between the communities and CQUniversity. Another vital link for participants was connecting with the Elders and Traditional Owners of each community.

## Conclusion

CAP-ED has demonstrated CQUniversity's commitment to Indigenous communities and has created learning opportunities that build on the strengths and capacity of these communities. In addition, it has provided Indigenous Australians in the region with a pathway to university education that was not available before this program was developed. The project team expects this will lead to an improvement in the educational outcomes for participants long after they have finished the program.

## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the contributions to the CAP-ED program made by the participants, Elders and community members along with Malcolm Jarrett and other CQUniversity staff. These people have all contributed to making the CAP-ED program what it is today.

### **Photo details**

**Top.** *Networking luncheon, 30 May 2014, Rockhampton.*

**Bottom.** *Networking Luncheon with Dean Jarrett, Tasha Lamey, Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, Professor Bronwyn Fredericks and Malcolm Jarrett along with students from North Rockhampton State High School, 25 May 2015.*



# Launch into Life at Logan

**University:**

Griffith University (GU)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

**Author:**

Suzanne Wilkinson  
Manager, Student  
Equity Outreach  
and Educational  
Partnerships, Student  
Equity Services

## About

*Launch into Life at Logan (LILAL)* is a regional careers development initiative which seeks to broaden the career aspirations of students from identified low SES primary schools. The concept was developed in 2010 at a consultation forum involving representatives of Griffith University, Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) executive and Logan state schools.

The program was initially delivered to ten Logan state schools in 2011. In 2014, nineteen state and non-state schools in Logan and Inala participated. Twenty-five northern NSW schools have also taken up the program. It has become a sustained, successful careers initiative overseen by a management committee comprising school and university representatives.



## The Program

The LILAL program includes:

- A full-day careers event at Griffith's Logan campus with campus familiarisation and hands-on activities facilitated by Griffith staff and student mentors, many of whom attended participating primary schools.
- Three in-school lessons: a preparatory lesson for the on-campus event; a lesson to design parent invitations to the event; and a post-event reflection and goal setting lesson.
- A careers-themed art competition, with student entries displayed at the careers event.
- *High Five Lessons* co-facilitated by Griffith mentors, the lessons support students' career development and transition to high school.
- *LAUNCH Awards* which recognise and reward Years 6/7 students who demonstrated significant academic and/or personal growth in the face of challenging circumstances.

- Development of innovative multi-media careers and parent/caregiver engagement resources.

The program is inclusive of students, parents/caregivers, Griffith staff and mentors from diverse cultural backgrounds, including from Griffith's Gumurrii Indigenous Support Unit. Griffith staff and student mentors with disabilities were actively involved in program delivery and 'good practice' accessibility arrangements were in place for students with disabilities.

## Participation Data

From 2011 to 2014, 2,693 Year 6 students, 285 parents/caregivers and 198 school personnel participated in LILAL on-campus events with 677 students submitting art entries. The team also delivered 112 in-school lessons to 5,015 Year 6 school students. Less than half of the students (42 percent) had someone in their extended family who had studied at university. In addition, almost three-quarters (74 percent) of participating parents/caregivers hadn't visited Griffith University (their closest community-based campus) prior to attending the LILAL event.

In 2012, a new career development activity, called *High Five Lessons*, was piloted with Year 7 students with the aim of building on the LILAL experiences those students had in 2011. Schools' take-up

increased by a remarkable 680 percent between 2012 and 2014. A total of 3,699 students participated between 2012 and 2015.

## Evidence of Impact

Detailed quantitative and qualitative data was collated and evaluated from 2011 to 2014 and activity/event reports were regularly provided to partner schools and other stakeholders.

Students' participation in LILAL has achieved its core goals of:

- raising students' awareness of future career options;
- raising students' awareness of what a university offers; and
- strengthening the capacity of parents/families to engage in their child's careers exploration.

The program has created an earlier awareness of the connection between school achievement and students' future careers and has challenged students' perceptions of their career potential. It has also encouraged some parents to consider or enrol in study as a result of their participation and interaction with adult learner mentors.

Griffith student mentors have benefited from participating in the program through development of effective communication and teamwork; social responsibility

and community engagement; and competence in culturally diverse environments. LILAL has enhanced Griffith's long-standing Uni-Reach program and has achieved professional and public recognition.

“

*Going [to a LILAL Careers Event] has changed my life. Now I have seen a university and met people who go there, I know I want to do it! Doing well at school will help me get there.*

”

Student participant, 2014

“

*Every primary student should have the opportunity to do this.*

”

Parent participant, 2011



“

*This project may be the only time many of these young people have a conversation regarding higher education.*

”

Teacher participant, 2013

“

*The students gained a lot by visiting the university but the most important thing I think they gained is that university is for everyone.*

”

Student Mentor participant, 2014

“

*This program does so much to go (in) to schools, find kids from low socio-economic areas and encourage them to go to university...'*

”

Ministerial mention by Dr Jim Chalmers, MP Woodridge, 2013

Program feedback has been very positive since inception. In 2014, pre- and post-event evaluation results showed that:

- 78 percent of student participants enjoyed visiting the University and 79 percent would like a return visit (97 percent response rate);
- the percentage of students who believe it is possible for them to go to university increased from 63 percent pre-event to 72 percent post-event (+ 9 percent);
- all 62 school staff (100 percent) *agreed or strongly agreed* that students enjoyed the on campus visit, information was provided at the right level, and that they would like the event repeated;
- 97 percent of parents/caregivers *agreed or strongly agreed* the day helped them to understand the importance of encouraging their child to achieve to the best of their abilities; and
- 95 percent *agreed or strongly agreed* that they had learned about a range of career and study options for their children and they intended to talk further with their child about future job and study options (96 percent response rate).

## Research

In 2011, the program implemented a research initiative titled *Building vocational aspirations in the middle years to enhance subject choice in the primary to secondary transition* in collaboration with the Griffith School of Education and Professional Studies and a partner school. This confirmed available research findings that children eliminate potential career choices early based on their gender and socio-economic status. Students' subsequent participation in LILAL broadened their career interests.

## National Award

In 2014 the Careers Development Association of Australia (CDAA) presented its Practitioner of the Year Award to Dr Tammy Muckert, Griffith's Careers Outreach Coordinator, for a “comprehensive, multi-level and collaborative approach to overcoming entrenched and challenging CD [career development] issues in areas of social disadvantage.”<sup>1</sup>

## Lessons

The value of undertaking career development activities in low SES primary schools; using student mentors for program delivery; and customising programs to local school and community needs has been affirmed both anecdotally and through program data and research. Many parents in the program schools had no prior experience of tertiary education and/or came from diverse cultural backgrounds where English is not their first language. Careers outreach staff have gained greater insight into the challenges these parents face in navigating the education system and supporting their children's education pathway.

## Conclusion

LILAL has delivered a curriculum-connected, in-school and on-campus careers education program focused on early intervention from Year 6, purposely aligned with DET policies and strategies<sup>2</sup>. It has successfully demystified university through a variety of 'hands-on' activities and engaged parents/caregivers in considering university as an achievable post-school option for their children and themselves.

Jon Sorohan, Cultural Development Worker, St Paul's School, summarises the benefits of the program as follows:

“

*[We} have found it highly beneficial to our young people and have noticed significant change in their conversation and thoughts towards the possibility of them going to university. St Paul's school has a total enrolment of 262 children. Of these, 72 percent are from ESL backgrounds, 10 percent identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders and very few have significant conversations with family members about career possibilities or indeed aspirations to higher education.*

*In the three years that we have been associated with LILAL we have watched our young people form very different opinions about*

*the possibilities for their future. They no longer see university as an option for other people or the lucky few but a very real possibility for themselves. This change has taken place through their interaction with the student mentors (many of whom are just like them!), their visits to the university, the introduction of 'The Real Game' program in our school and the integration of our leadership programs with the LILAL process [...] Many of our young people tell us they have never had conversations like this and their world view has been extended.*

”

Email communication,  
December 2014

### Endnotes

1 See <http://www.cdaa.org.au/default.aspx?Page=Practitioner%20of%20the%20Year>

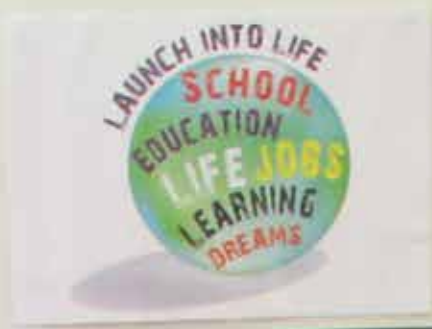
2 Department of Education and Training *United in Our Pursuit of Excellence agenda for improvement (2012-2016) and Learning and Wellbeing Framework (2012-)*



EMERGENCY  
ASSEMBLY  
POINT







# Engaging parents in career conversations with their children

**University:**

Griffith University (GU)

**Theme:**

Community  
Engagement

**Author:**

Suzanne Wilkinson  
Manager, Student  
Equity Outreach  
and Educational  
Partnerships, Student  
Equity Services

## About

The parent/caregiver engagement strategy was developed to ensure parents were involved in Griffith programs that aim to broaden the career aspirations of students from primary school onwards. A consultation forum (2010) between representatives of Griffith, the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) executive and regional state schools identified the need to: ***'provide parents with information that counters commonly held 'myths' about higher education as many parents in low SES areas do not value higher education'***.

## Strategy

Parents and caregivers have a powerful role in encouraging and supporting their children to aspire to and succeed at university. Contemporary career research attests to the significant influence that parents have on their children's vocational identity formation. Additionally, other external consultations and forums convened by Griffith (many involving parents) have affirmed the importance of parent/caregiver engagement in Griffith's widening participation strategy.

The parent/caregiver engagement strategy has become more nuanced across the grant duration to respond to the information needs of specific communities and cohorts.

## Activities

Parent engagement is delivered through four key activity areas:

1. customised parent outreach resources;
2. *Talking Careers: Making it Happen Together* program;
3. *Launch into Life at Logan* parent engagement activities;
4. *Tertiary Education Experience* (TEE) for students with disabilities.

## Customised Parent Outreach Resources

The parent outreach resources were developed for in-school and on-campus outreach and careers education activities, and also for community events.

## Parents with Impact

*Parents with Impact* is a series of web-based video stories profiling students from diverse backgrounds and pathways who describe the role their parents have played in supporting their academic success<sup>1</sup>.

## Postcards for Low-income Communities

These postcards seek to dispel myths and provide practical information for families about university as a viable study option for their children. Postcard themes were derived from focus group discussion with parents of children in The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program.

## Pasifika Postcards

The Pasifika postcards are part of a suite of resources that provide specialised information to Pasifika people (a term used to refer to Pacific Island and Maori peoples) on higher education. The postcards were developed as a recommendation from an on-campus Pacific Island and Maori Focus Forum (2011) and included the input of the Griffith Pasifika Association (2012).

These resources are used in church and other community outreach activities including Griffith's *Pasifika Families with Purpose Program*, a joint initiative of Student Equity Services, partner high schools and community agencies. This program provides a weekly themed workshop program for disengaged youth and their families focussed on strengthening connections within their family unit; improving the health and wellbeing of their families; and raising awareness of higher education and employment pathways. Up to 157 family members attended between 2011 and 2014 and their feedback has been very positive.

## Refugee Postcards

A similar series of postcards is being developed for refugee communities. Focus groups including Griffith University Refugee Student Association representatives and parent refugee students were used to identify content for this series.

## Resources for People with Disabilities

Griffith University's Disabilities Service developed a suite of innovative and accessible multi-media outreach resources including e-cards. The resources were designed to encourage people with disabilities to participate in higher education and explain how people with disabilities can access the support services available.

## **Talking Careers: Making it Happen Together**

This customised resource was developed for parents/caregivers of Year 9 students to engage in career conversations with their children before Senior Education and Training (SET) Planning in Year 10.

This initiative was designed collaboratively with Woodridge State High School in response to a need to stimulate parental engagement within its culturally diverse community to complement SET Planning activities. The *Talking Careers* workshop program

included facilitator training materials, workshop activities framed around stimulus picture stories in different languages, and resources for parents/caregivers. It provided participant parents/caregivers with a greater understanding of career pathway options for their children and raised awareness of available resources.

The pilot program – comprising two sequential workshops – was delivered to school staff in 2013 under a 'Train the Trainer' model and subsequently delivered to parents in 2013 (Year 10) and 2014 (Years 9 and 10). Significantly, in 2013:

- 51 percent of parents in Workshop One (n = 51) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they did not understand Senior School and available options for their child;
- following Workshop Two, 100 percent (n=32) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* they would start a conversation about future study and careers with their child after the workshop; and
- 91 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they felt more confident about talking to their child about their career options.

Similar outcomes were achieved in the two 2014 workshops, with 94 percent and 100 percent of parent participants respectively stating increased confidence levels and 100 percent saying that the materials provided would be useful in having career conversations with their child (n=96+).

## Launch into Life at Logan Parent Engagement Activities

This program included parent information sessions at its annual on-campus careers events. Between 2011 and 2014, a total of 285 parents attended these events (with numbers capped due to bus transport constraints). Positive parent feedback was received from participants:

“

*Feeling totally encouraged to pursue a future in learning and to be a role model for my daughter also attending today.*

”

“

*What I gained today is that university is for everyone who wants to further their studies.*

”

“

*I gained a great deal more understanding and it has removed some preconceived ideas and fears.*

”

## Tertiary Education Experience (TEE) for students with disabilities

The *Tertiary Education Experience* (TEE) program provided a suite of activities customised for different audiences and purposes, from raising tertiary awareness and ‘myth busting’ to transition support. From 2011 to 2014, 65 students, 48 parents/caregivers and 40 school staff attended these activities. A further 14 students, 10 parents and 2 school staff participated in new, transition-to-university activities in February 2015. Griffith sponsored travel and accommodation costs to enable the participation of students, families and school staff from regional and remote locations. The program was supported by 27 mentors, many of whom also had disabilities.

On average, over 50 percent of students reported:

- a positive change in their perceptions about their ability to attend university;
- being motivated by the presentations and working with the mentors; and
- that they had learned many practical strategies to assist them to manage themselves and their learning if they were to study at university.

Parent participants said:

“

*Thank you for this wonderful opportunity, which dispelled many myths and answered many questions.*

”

“

*Excellent on every level – many thanks for providing the opportunity. [Student’s] first comment was “these kids are great, they are just like me, I think I’m going to like uni” – so the first hurdle is well and truly over.*

”

## Conclusion

The parent/caregiver engagement strategy has been highly successful in engaging parents of children from different age groups, cultural backgrounds and abilities. Using a wide variety of activities and locally developed resources, the strategy has helped to address Griffith University’s widening participation goal to broaden the career aspirations of school students from Year 6 to Year 12. The strategy has contributed to the effectiveness and sustainability of widening participation programs through successful engagement with the key influencers of students’ career and education choices.

### Endnotes

1 Parents with Impact resources available at: [griffith.edu.au/student-equity-services/outreach-activities/parents-and-families](http://griffith.edu.au/student-equity-services/outreach-activities/parents-and-families)





# Charters Towers Education Hub: a partnership between James Cook University, Charters Towers Regional Council and secondary schools in Charters Towers

**University:**

James Cook University  
(JCU)

**Themes:**

Partnerships,  
School Engagement

**Author:**

Mikaela Dockrill,  
former Team Leader  
School Engagement

## About

James Cook University's (JCU) School Engagement team established a unique model to engage with secondary students in the Charters Towers region through the *Charters Towers Education Hub* project.

The main aim of the project was to provide students in Charters Towers with greater access to (and knowledge of) university opportunities and pathways. It was expected this would help raise students' aspirations towards achieving a tertiary education. A second aim was to promote stronger economic development and diversification in the Charters Towers region through awareness raising, partnership and education activities during the project.

This project was based on a partnership with the Charters Towers Regional Council and four secondary schools in the region – All Souls St Gabriels School, Blackheath and Thornburgh College, Charters Towers State High School and Columba Catholic College.

JCU adopted this approach because partnerships between universities, schools and communities have been widely documented to positively impact on:

1. the social and educational outcomes of school students;
2. the regional development of communities;
3. regional economic priorities; and
4. the academic community of the region.<sup>1</sup>

All project partners valued education as vital to the social and economic development of individuals and communities, and were committed to work in collaboration to achieve these aims.

After initial consultation with the Charters Towers Regional Council Mayor and the principals from the participating schools, JCU's School Engagement team worked with the schools to develop a comprehensive school engagement program with activities that were relevant and meaningful to secondary students.



## School Engagement Program

There were three parts to the school engagement program:

- **residential camps** – a three-day camp at JCU's Townsville campus for Year 10 students;
- **in-school activities** – delivered by JCU's School Engagement team; and
- **community events** – aspirational workshops and presentations in the Charters Towers community.

### Residential Camps

The Charters Towers Residential Camps were held on campus over three days at JCU Townsville to provide a first-hand experience of university life.

The aims were to:

- contribute to raising aspiration and awareness of tertiary study within Charters Towers schools;
- deliver activities to empower students and increase their self-esteem and self-efficacy;
- explore course and subject areas and match those with students' career aspirations;
- recruit interested camp participants as *Get into Uni* Ambassadors. Ambassadors became role models in their school and wider community to advocate for, and promote university education; and

- build upon existing partnerships between JCU, Charters Towers schools and the wider community.

The inaugural Charters Towers Residential Camp was held in 2014 and brought together a total of 40 Year 10 students from the four secondary schools. In 2015, the project was extended with 65 students attending the residential program. The additional places were funded collaboratively by the schools, the regional council, and a local industry partner, Evolution Mining. The increased interest from students and the financial commitment from local industry, the Council and the schools demonstrated the success of the program and the value that the opportunities and partnerships had within the community overall.

### In-School Activities

The JCU School Engagement team delivered weekly in-school activities and regular in-school sessions across Years 7 to 12. The program focused on raising achievement, awareness of, and access to, higher education; exploring the affordability of further education; and promoting the aspirations of all students. In some schools, activities leveraged off existing school programs and initiatives (where appropriate) and have since become embedded within the school career development curriculum.

### Community Events

Following the camp, students from the camps participated in a series of activities that were delivered in the Charters Towers community. These activities:

- reinforced the key messages of the camp program; and
- showcased the outcomes to parents, school staff and the wider community.

The events were attended by school staff; friends and family of camp participants; councillors from Charters Towers Regional Council including the Mayor; JCU staff; and JCU Student Ambassadors.

### Evidence of Impact

The aim of this partnership was to make a long-term impact on the educational choices made by the student participants and more broadly, to support the regional economic development priorities of Charters Towers. Long-term tracking of student choices will need to be measured, however early indicators have been promising. The impact and preliminary outcomes of these programs have been measured through: feedback from residential camp participants; feedback from parents, staff and students; an increased interest and participation in JCU facilitated activities (in-school and on campus); and sponsorship provided by local industry, council and schools to ensure higher numbers of students had access to these programs.

Camp participants were surveyed before and after the residential programs. Feedback confirmed the camp met its aims and objectives and provided participants with a meaningful and memorable learning experience. The camp also had a positive impact on students' higher education aspirations, with 82.7 percent of students surveyed after the camp agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were planning to attend university when they left school, compared to 58.4 percent before the camp.

In 2014, students were surveyed two months after the camp to measure the ongoing impact of the camp. Ninety-one percent of students indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, *'Since going on the Year 10 Camp I am more focused on subjects that will help me get into uni'* and 71 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the camp had given them more confidence.

Feedback from participating school staff was overwhelmingly positive with 100 percent of respondents strongly agreeing that the Year 10 camp was *'successful in raising awareness of the accessibility of university'* and *'successful in informing participants of the different entry routes into university'*. All respondents indicated that the *'aims and expectations of the Year 10 camp'* had been fully met.

Feedback from partners was also encouraging:

“

*I am very happy to be involved in assisting in creating outcomes for the students of Charters Towers and in North Queensland. We have a big future with regional centres such as ours and JCU in educating our students and supporting them onto university pathways. These ongoing collaborations will positively affect the whole region.*

”

Charters Towers  
Regional Council Mayor,  
Frank Beveridge

## Lessons

The *Charters Towers Education Hub* partnership provided a unique model for engagement and demonstrated how regional councils, schools, industry and universities can effectively work together to:

- help support the aspirations of young people;
- contribute to career development opportunities within communities;
- support and diversify the regional industry; and
- increase promotion of, and access to, higher education opportunities for all.

This approach to engagement could potentially be replicated in other regional areas because it is region specific; responsive to need; collaborative and consultative; and has mutual benefit to all involved. Further, it is a systemic and sustainable approach to engagement and works to embed the university into local schools and communities. It also ensures that the university has an understanding of and a meaningful commitment to specific regional priorities.

## Conclusion

Partnerships between universities, councils and schools can play an important role in advancing the academic, social, educational and economic priorities of a region. *The Charters Towers Education Hub* partnership project has worked well to demonstrate the value of partnerships and school engagement in the short term. It is expected that long-term outcomes will provide further evidence to support the success of this partnership.

### Endnotes

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2. Cooper, J.G., Kotval-K, Z., Kotval, Z., and Mullin, J. (2014) 'University Community Partnerships', *Humanities* 2014, 3, 88-101
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# James Cook University Partnerships: engagement through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference groups

**University:**

James Cook University  
(JCU)

**Themes:**

Partnerships,  
Indigenous Engagement

**Author:**

Janine Gertz,  
former Team Leader  
Indigenous Engagement

## About

James Cook University's (JCU) Indigenous Community Engagement project delivered higher education aspiration and awareness raising activities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across North, North West and Far North Queensland. The project engaged reference groups, community networks and organisations to ensure it was aligned with community driven, locally relevant initiatives.

An essential principle of James Cook University's Indigenous community engagement approach is collaboration with reference groups. This encourages mutually beneficial relationships through trust, cooperation and respect, and enables JCU to create partnerships with established Indigenous reference groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, government agencies, and industry partners.

## Program

This case study focuses on the partnership between JCU and the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance, a regional network of 22 groups representing approximately 20,000 Aboriginal people in North and Far North Queensland. The network provides a coordination point for native title, cultural heritage, natural resource management, and community development activities.

JCU's objective of raising higher education awareness and participation is aligned with the network's aim to develop human capital. The geographic region of interest for the Alliance includes the JCU identified community hubs of Cairns, Atherton Tablelands, Cassowary Coast, and Townsville. Member groups include:

- Western Yalanji
- Eastern Kuku Yalanji
- Muluridji

- Yirranydji
- Ngadjon-Jii
- Djabuguy
- Jirrbal
- Yidinji
- Mbarbarum
- Gunggandji
- Warangnu
- Mamu
- Warragamay
- Djiru
- Gugu Badhun
- Gulnay
- Wulguru Kaba
- Girramay
- Nywaigi
- Bandjin

The Indigenous Community Engagement Project relationship with the Rainforest Aboriginal Alliance was formalised in 2013 when JCU hosted traditional owner representatives on a three-day residential program. Ongoing activities arising from this partnership are detailed below.

## 1. University Pathways and Engagement Workshop (July 2013)

This workshop invited community role models and key influencers to learn about university pathways within the native title, cultural heritage and natural resource management sectors. Key messages included:

- Parents and grandparents can encourage primary and secondary school children to study science subjects, helping to open options for future employment and higher education in the cultural heritage and natural resource management fields.
- Indigenous role models working in these fields can showcase their higher education and career pathways.

The Alliance members identified future opportunities with JCU for school, community, careers and research engagement, and confirmed an agreement to channel project activity through the network.

## 2. Sustainable International Leadership in Indigenous Research Conference (July 2013)

The residential program provided an opportunity for participants to attend the conference and discuss strategies to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and researchers to engage in ethical, community-driven research.

This initial event with the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance provided the foundation for further engagement with individual traditional owner group members. This included:

### JCU's Rock Art Field School (July 2013 and July 2015)

Gugu Badhun Aboriginal Corporation hosted JCU students and participating community members (including a primary school group) on country for an introductory subject on the study of rock art, images and symbols encountered in an archaeological context. The program created higher education awareness and promoted university pathways to Ewamian Aboriginal Rangers. JCU provided Gugu Badhun with a cultural heritage management report as a result

of the students' assessment and recommendations. A second Rock Art Field School was conducted in July 2015.

## Meetings and Presentations

JCU partnered with the Ngadjon Choorechillum Corporation, Gugu Badhun Aboriginal Corporation, Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, and NQ Dry Tropics Natural Resource Management Body – Traditional Owner Management Group. These partnerships enabled JCU to regularly attend and report at board meetings and present information on career pathways to Elders, directors and employees/rangers. The meetings also provided opportunities to promote JCU on-campus events such as UniPrep, campus visits, open days, public lectures and information events. In partnership with Ngadjon Choorechillum Corporation, JCU promoted university pathways as part of the 2013 and 2014 NAIDOC Week activities.

## Workshops

Giringun is a cultural heritage, natural resource management body representing nine traditional owner groups in the Cassowary Coast region (Bandjin, Djiru, Girramay, Gugu Badhun, Gulnay, Jirrbal, Nywaigi, Warrgamay and Warungnu). Partnership with Giringun led to a research protocols workshop in June 2014 for Elders, directors, members and staff. A research strategy

document was drafted outlining priorities and strategies for the Giringun network. Discussion on human capital development needs within the workshop led to JCU sharing information, advice and guidance on relevant careers and university pathways.

JCU also facilitated a Community Research Protocols Workshop to approximately 60 participants at the Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance Summit in December 2014 and a Tableland Yidinji Community Research Protocols Workshop (Atherton) in August 2014.

## Careers Brochure

In partnership with the Gudjuda Reference Group, Djunbunji Ltd and Ngadjon Choorechillum Aboriginal Corporation, JCU developed a Cultural Heritage and Natural Resource Management Careers brochure. The brochure showcases local role models and their learning and career aspirations, and raises awareness of education pathways.

## Evidence of Impact

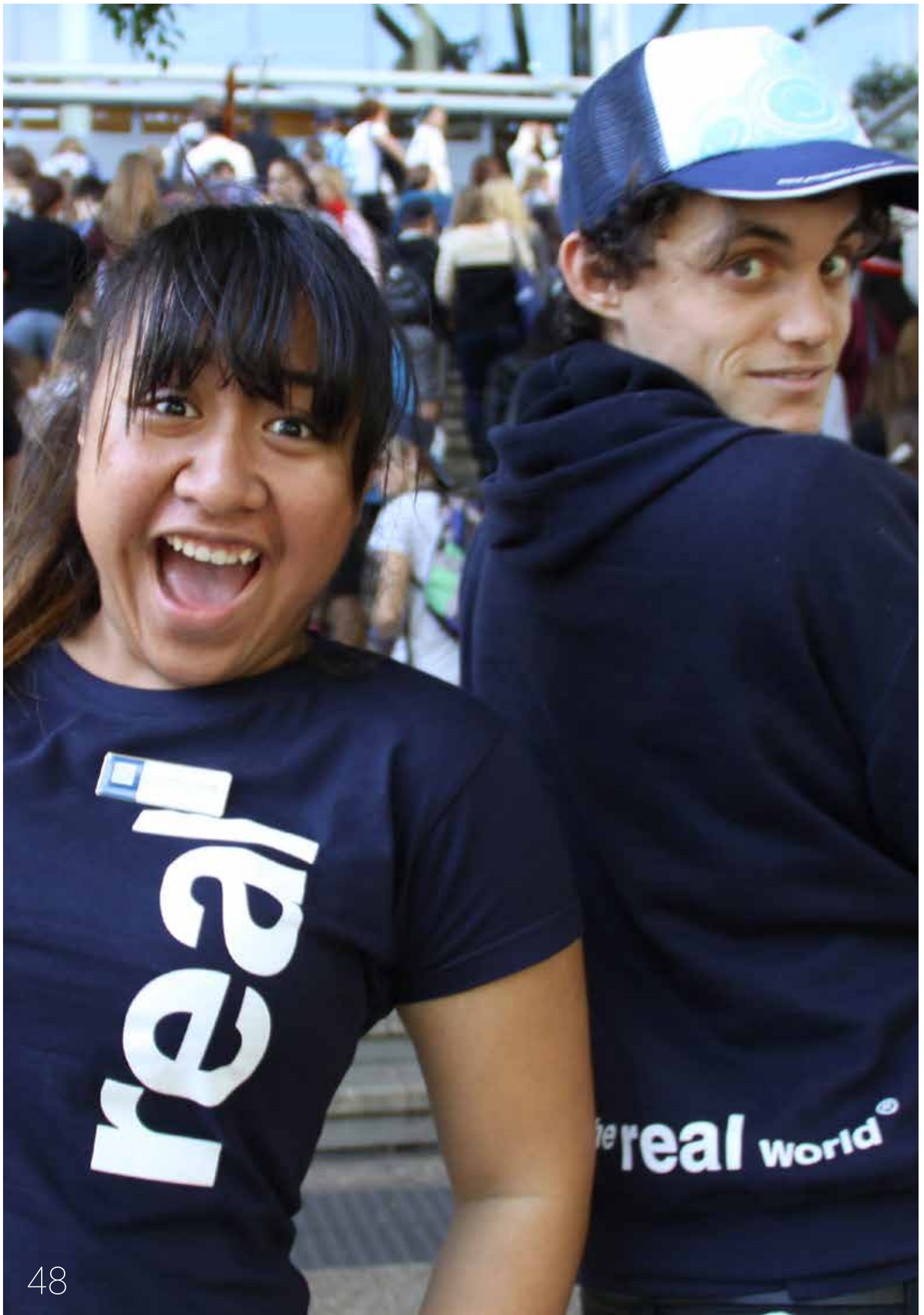
In 2014, a number of objectives were achieved with key stakeholder and industry groups. In total, 52 events and workshops were delivered to 17,550 participants across North, Far North and North West Queensland in 2014. This compares to 79 events delivered to 8,472 participants in 2013.

This model for engagement can be applied in other regions where existing Indigenous reference groups provide a channel and structure for collaborative and consultative industry engagement. The model works to embed the university in local communities as a resource, and builds university commitment to the priorities of its region.

## Conclusion

The JCU-Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance partnership provides a unique model for engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The model demonstrates how universities, traditional owner groups, native title representatives and natural resource management bodies can effectively work together to:

- support and facilitate native title and 'caring for country' aspirations of traditional owner groups;
- contribute to the community development goals of Indigenous groups through research partnerships;
- promote career opportunities within an Indigenous community-led regional industry; and
- raise awareness of higher education opportunities.





# Explore Uni

**University:**

Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

**Author:**

Gabrielle O'Brien  
Senior Equity Officer –  
Widening Participation

## About

*Explore Uni* (EU) is the signature program of QUT's widening participation strategy. It is a program of residential camps and on-campus days, which immerses primary and secondary school students from low socio-economic status backgrounds (LSES) in experiences that aim to build aspiration for post-school study; shatter myths and misunderstandings about tertiary education; and boost students' capability and confidence. These are essential pre-conditions for informed post-school choices.

Key elements of the EU program have included tertiary student ambassadors providing rich, personal narratives for students; an embedded career development philosophy that influences students' identity-formation by connecting their personal interests with future study and career options; and age-appropriate, curriculum-connected, hands-on workshops which highlight future opportunities.

Since 2011 over 26,000 students have participated in EU programs. Each year QUT has offered 40 to 50 one-day events for up to

300 Year 6 to 12 students per day. Additionally four three-day residential camps attract 500 to 600 Year 10 to 12 students annually. The program is free to students and schools, and students may attend multiple times over the course of their schooling.

## Program

The overall aim of the program is to improve the access and participation of LSES students in tertiary education.

Prior to 2011, QUT was running some day events and one camp for Year 10 to 12 students. Using Consortium and other funding sources, QUT was able to scale up the program to include Years 6 to 12; to concentrate on a specific cluster of 33 schools in the Moreton Bay region; to recruit and develop a dedicated cohort of Student Ambassadors; and to re-design the experience for maximum impact on awareness, aspiration and career development.

The days and camps are designed to be both a stand-alone experience and an experience nested within other school-based



career development activities.

They are designed to support the student and their family's journey over time.

EU is under-pinned by the philosophy and approach encoded in the Consortium Memorandum Of Understanding – working with whole classes, not selected students; taking a strengths-based, not a deficit approach; promoting all forms of tertiary study; and being inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The content developed was people-rich, narrative-based, and youth-oriented, and embedded career development philosophies around identity-formation and curriculum-based career competencies<sup>1</sup>. Existing beliefs such as 'uni is too expensive', 'you have to be a genius to go to uni' and 'people like me don't go to uni', are challenged by the use of tertiary role models from similar backgrounds (Student Ambassadors) telling their stories and facilitating activities. De-mystifying tertiary study and de-bunking myths through the power of role-model narratives is a strategy QUT has been pursuing since 2005<sup>2</sup>.

## Role Models

Student Ambassadors contribute strongly to all aspects of the EU program. They facilitate programs, share their personal stories, interact with the students in formal and informal ways and feature in publications and online resources. Extensive training is provided to Student Ambassadors to meet both program aims and to contribute to their personal development and graduate outcomes. Essential training components include: understanding the program's underlying philosophy, cultural awareness training, presentation skills, career development basics, behaviour management, and health and safety. Student Ambassadors also facilitate a range of hands-on activities designed by each of QUT's six faculties which highlight study areas and career options. All hands-on activities are age-appropriate with over 100 different sessions available so participants do not repeat sessions.

As well as the impact Ambassadors have on school students, they themselves benefit. Both qualitative and quantitative data reveals that Ambassadors develop enhanced communication and team skills; feel a sense of belonging at QUT; increase their employability; and improve their retention.

## Inclusivity

QUT partners have helped to develop an inclusive program. Partners include the Oodgeroo Unit (QUT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support unit); specialists in working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups; and disability support staff. Apart from being matched to the ages and career development stages of the participants, all programs include an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners; diversity within the EU staff; Indigenous and Pasifika Ambassadors; and overt references to the diversity of students and staff in higher education.

## Partnerships

The EU program has strong engagement from all faculties, who contribute to both the activities provided at EU days as well as an extensive suite of in-school curriculum-enhancing activities from robotics to dance<sup>3</sup>. This high degree of enthusiasm and engagement from staff and students across the University is a partnership that has been strengthened and supported by the HEPPP and the Consortium. Partnerships with schools have similarly become stronger.

## Evidence of Impact

Participant surveys that measure improvements in aspiration, awareness and motivation show that all participants experience increased interest in and aspiration for tertiary study after an EU event.

Over time there has been a significant shift in the impact of *Explore Uni* days – especially on repeat visitors. Only 17 percent of Year 7 students attending their first EU day agreed/strongly agreed that they knew a lot about uni compared with repeating participants (48 percent). For Year 11 and 12 students attending their first ever EU day 30 percent said they agreed/strongly agreed they knew a lot about uni compared with 64 percent of repeaters. The immediate impact of a single visit appears to have a residual positive effect over time. This is even more pronounced for students who attend camps. Prior to attending camps, interest in university was around 80 percent rising to 90 percent in a three month follow-up survey. Belief in the possibility of going to uni went from 88 percent to 95 percent between initial attendance and three month follow-up.

“

*If I hadn't attended an Explore Uni camp in Year 12 I wouldn't be at uni today. I grew up in a single parent family with Mum, the sole provider, on a minimal wage. As both my parents left school after Year 10 and no-one in my wider family network has been to uni, I had no idea what it was like. The camp was the turning point. Hearing the Ambassadors' stories made me realise some people had overcome far greater obstacles than mine and made it to uni; therefore I could too.*

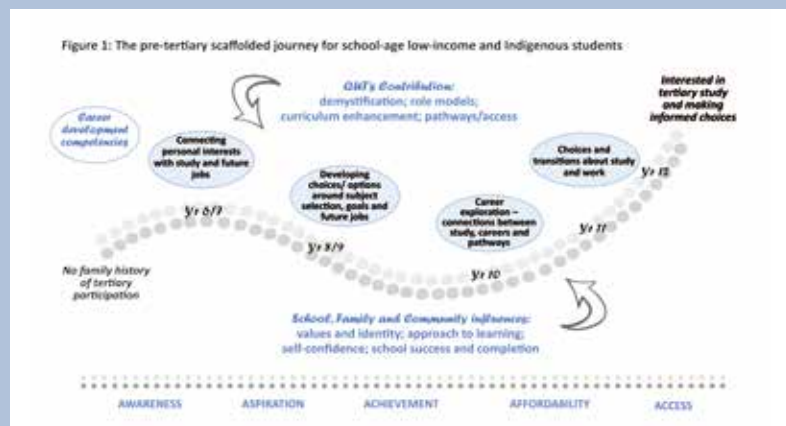
”

former *Explore Uni* participant and Student Ambassador, now graduated and working in Medical Imaging

## Conclusion

Overall, the EU program has successfully supported QUT's widening participation strategy of de-mystifying tertiary study and de-bunking myths through the power of role-model narratives. Program feedback has illustrated the value of *Explore*

*Uni* to build aspiration for post-school study; to shatter myths and misunderstandings; and to boost students' capability and confidence. QUT will continue to provide this program into the future as part of its widening participation strategy.



### Endnotes

- 1 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). (2010). *The Australian blueprint for career development*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.
- 2 Project U [www.projectu.com.au](http://www.projectu.com.au)
- 3 QUT Widening Participation Activities Guide for Schools <https://www.qut.edu.au/about/equity/widening-participation>



*Pictured: Barry Ryan, QUT Indigenous Careers Counsellor*



# Career Counselling and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

**University:**

Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

**Theme:**

Community Engagement, Career Development

**Author:**

Gabrielle O'Brien  
Senior Equity Officer – Widening Participation

**About**

Since 2011, QUT has employed a small team of careers counsellors, including a dedicated Aboriginal careers counsellor to work directly with schools and communities in the Moreton Bay region. This team provides free, impartial career services to school students and community members from low socio-economic status (LSES) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. This initiative is part of QUT's Widening Participation strategy which infuses career development thinking and relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all its programs.

**Career Development in Widening Participation**

The role of career development in widening participation is well-established. Career literacy helps people to make informed choices about post-school study and work options. Career professionals can assist people to:

- develop insight into their personal strengths and interests;
- help to connect personal interests and strengths to future goals;
- make informed choices about pathways and navigate those pathways; and
- manage the career building process over time.

In LSES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, academic achievement and post-school opportunities are impacted by a legacy of disadvantage and racism. For this reason, providing access to career skills and services is even more important.



Studies of career development and school-age children<sup>1</sup> suggest that school-based career development is essential for effective transition through school, especially for students from LSES backgrounds. They also recommend that access to career development commence from a young age (primary and early secondary school) and that parents and other key influencers should have exposure to career development fundamentals.

The *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*<sup>2</sup> identified considerable gaps in the education outcomes for Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students evidenced by participation in early childhood education, literacy and numeracy, attendance, retention, and post school transitions.

Several authors<sup>3</sup> have found that Indigenous students are often not encouraged to pursue academic pathways and tertiary education options; don't have sufficient information about pathways to higher education due to limited career counselling; do not have role models who have been to university; and may come from families that lack the knowledge needed to navigate the system.

## The Role of the Indigenous Career Counsellor

QUT's careers team is collectively referred to as the *Your Future Career Services* and works with school-age students, teachers and parents through schools; and with adults in the wider community.

For school-age students, the work of the Indigenous Careers Counsellor includes:

- providing advice and an appropriate framework for Indigenous-friendly, career-based content across all widening participation programs from Years 6 to 12;
- providing specialised career workshops and embedding Indigenous perspectives and culturally-appropriate career development competencies for *Explore Uni* immersion days and camps;
- capacity-building and professional development for Indigenous Community Education Counsellors;
- career mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Ambassadors; and
- collaborating with the *Oodgeroo Unit* (QUT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support unit) on shared outreach activities.

For adults, the Indigenous Career Counsellor's work involves a community engagement approach and requires a deep knowledge of both employment and study options and pathways. This includes:

- working with a range of community organisations to raise awareness of careers services available to adults and their families;
- providing one-to-one career counselling, with referrals to other services as needed;
- providing access to bridging and tertiary access programs;
- developing community partnerships that have led to Indigenous career expos and job expos;
- developing intervention strategies for at-risk youth and participating in community get-togethers through the Community PRIDE program;
- informing policy through collaborations with Indigenous community organisations and local, state and federal government agencies. For example, the *Moreton Bay Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Employment Summit and the Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan*<sup>4</sup>.

The Indigenous Careers Counsellor's approach has been to develop networks and partnerships with existing programs and providers to build capacity, and to promote careers services within these partnerships. These partnerships include:

- TAFE Queensland
- Moreton Bay Regional Council
- Job Services Australia (now called 'jobactive')
- Murri Pathways (Department of Education and Training)
- Murri Network
- Elders groups
- Disability Employment Services
- Police Community Liaison staff
- Carers Queensland and other Registered Training Organisations

As a result of community collaborations, career development has become a significant feature at events such as Community PRIDE (camps for young people and monthly community BBQs for families); Indigenous Job Expos; Rugby carnivals and NAIDOC events.

## Evidence of Impact

Around 1,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students attend QUT Explore Uni immersion days each year and these students also access additional programs such as Murri Pathways in their school settings.

Over the last three years more than 400 Indigenous adults have accessed QUT's Indigenous Careers Counsellor either through one-to-one counselling sessions or via a career workshop. Around 1,000 community members access career services through a variety of community events annually. Participants at these events discuss their own study and employment prospects or those of their families. These interactions have clarified personal goals for work and study including appropriate pathways to tertiary study and employment.

## Conclusion

Across Queensland significant changes in the provision of training and employment services are heightening the need for the public provision of career services. In the Moreton Bay region QUT's *Your Future Career Services* is building a sustainable, long-term, community-oriented careers service for low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The service is raising awareness of career development in the region and building career development skills needed to negotiate education and career pathways.

## Endnotes

- 1 Polvere, R. and Lim, P. (2015). *Career development supporting young Australians: A literature review*. NCVET in collaboration with the Brotherhood of St Laurence; <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Improving-the-Career-Literacy-of-Australian-Students-.pdf>; <http://www.isay.edu.au/publications/2285.html>; and <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/CICA-Response-to-the-National-Career-Development-Strategy-Green-Paper1.pdf>
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- 3 Craven, R. and Marsh, H. (2005) 'The centrality of the self-concept construct for psychological wellbeing and unlocking human potential: Implications for child and educational psychologists'. *Educational and Child Psychology*, Vol 25: 2; Lamb, S. and Rice, S. (2004). *Effective Strategies to Increase School Completion Report*. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria; and James, R. and Devlin, M. (2008). *Participation and Equity: A review of the participation in higher education of people from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous people*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education University of Melbourne.
- 4 The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). *Regional Education, Skills and Jobs Plan 2012 - 2014*.

# BEING A UNI STUDENT

- When I was accepted, I was excited but very nervous. I didn't know what to expect or what I wanted to study.
- Degree – Bachelor of Speech Pathology 1<sup>st</sup> Year
- First in family to go to university
- Living Arrangements – Home
- Challenges I overcame to get to university
  - Lack of Self Confidence
  - Deciding what I wanted to do when I finished school
- Financial Assistance
  - UQ Young Achiever Scholarship
  - UQ-Link Access Start-Up Bursary
- What I enjoy about being a uni student
  - Independence
  - Extra Curricular Activities ie Clubs & Sport
  - Studying what I'm interested in



# Uni – Yes I Can!

## An initiative to engage secondary school students in tertiary education

### University:

University of Queensland (UQ)

### Theme:

School Engagement, Partnerships

### Authors:

Katie Jackson  
Outreach Program  
Coordinator

Kellie Kayser  
Young Achievers and  
Outreach Program  
Manager

Alinta Brown  
Program Research  
Officer

### About

The University of Queensland (UQ) developed the *Uni – Yes I Can!* program to increase awareness of, and interest in tertiary study for secondary students in the Ipswich and Lockyer Valley regions. The program comprises a suite of campus-based university experiences and in-school presentations and workshops that were designed to de-mystify university and break down perceived barriers to tertiary study.

### Strategies

To initiate and build school participation, the program developed a number of strategies including:

- highlighting the long-term importance and relevance of widening participation;
- promoting the benefits of the program to participating students and linking the program to educational goals and the school curriculum;
- targeting communication towards gate-keepers and motivated school staff;
- distributing a program information brochure and simplified booking system; and

- offering free campus-based experience days.

### Experience Days

The experience days were designed to provide students with a positive encounter at a university campus, where they could experience both theoretical and practical learning opportunities. They were also designed to help students clarify their future education and career goals.

“

*It showed me how much I wanted to go to university.*

”

Student feedback

The UQ experience day included discipline-focused activities, campus orientation activities, and an activity at the end of the day to consolidate student learning. Program staff worked in close collaboration with UQ faculty staff to create and deliver interactive activities, drawing on discipline-specific information to stimulate student engagement.



## Student Ambassadors

The team of passionate Student Ambassadors were vital to achieving strong student engagement and contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the program. Ambassadors provided a realistic picture of university study from a current university student's perspective. They highlighted key messages about the benefits of university while sharing their own personal stories and transition to university. In later experience days, Student Ambassadors developed and delivered their own discipline-based activities that offered information about study areas and potential career options, while highlighting the differences between school and university education.

## Activities

The campus orientation activities included scavenger hunts and interactive tours so that the student groups could explore the large, unfamiliar campus in a fun, self-directed manner.

Students in groups created short films to demonstrate the benefits of university. This activity helped to consolidate their learnings for the day. These films were given to the schools to take back to share with the wider school cohort.

The on-campus experiences helped to establish stronger relationships with the schools and led to UQ developing a set of in-school activities to connect with a greater number of students.

This reinforced the *Uni – Yes I Can!* objectives of aspiration-building, myth-busting, and improving tertiary preparedness.

## In-School Activities

In-school activities were designed to develop students' skills in study, resilience, goal-setting, stress management and time management. Student Ambassadors were trained to deliver the in-school activities, which enabled delivery of presentations and workshops to a whole year cohort at one time. School staff responded well to this initiative as it minimised disruption to the school curriculum.

## Engagement Tools

UQ used a variety of modes of communication to cater for varied student learning styles, to capture interest and strengthen student learning. This included Student Ambassador stories, break-away exercises, workbooks, videos, and challenges.

“

*Students were given the opportunity to create their own goals and refine these. Students were engaged and the supplementary workbook was effective. I saw students really evaluating what they wanted at a deeper level.*

”

School staff feedback

## Evidence of Impact

Since the program started in 2011, the number of students who have participated in on-campus activities has more than tripled – 321 students participated in 2011 and 1,127 students participated in 2014. Both on-campus and in-school activities have grown significantly and in 2014, 116 activities were delivered, with 6,419 students from 15 schools engaged.

The program's activities were evaluated through surveying students, school staff, and Student Ambassadors. The in-school workshops and presentations were intermittently evaluated to improve and develop the program. UQ also measured the impact of on-campus experience days.

At the end of an experience day, students were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following two statements:

***BEFORE participating in the experience day, I believed it was possible for me to go to university***

***AFTER participating in the experience day, I believe it is possible for me to go to university***

Trends in the raw data indicated that participation in experience days did contribute to increased belief that it is possible to go to university. For example:

- Results from 2013 indicated that 92 percent of students *agreed/strongly agreed* that it

was possible to go to university 'after' participating in an experience day, compared to 74 percent of students who *agreed/strongly agreed* that it was possible 'before'. Of note is the increase in students who strongly agreed: from 36 percent 'before' to 61 percent 'after'.

- Similarly, results from 2014 indicated that 94 percent of students *agreed/strongly agreed* that it was possible to go to university 'after' an experience day, compared to 72 percent of students who *agreed/strongly agreed* that it was possible 'before'.

Qualitative and quantitative feedback from participating students and school staff was consistently positive. On average, 92 percent of students responded 'yes' to the question, "*Has participating in the experience day made you **more interested** in university as a future option?*"

Additionally, the benefits of an experience day most commonly selected by students were consistent with the key program objectives: seeing what a university campus looks like while having a positive experience; gaining more information about university and study options; and learning about new possibilities for their future.

Survey results indicated that students were returning to the university campus for a second or third time, consolidating their

interest in university. Therefore, all engagement activities required annual updating to ensure learning opportunities remained fresh and dynamic and that returning students were exposed to new experiences and varying study areas.

The summaries of student feedback were provided to schools promptly after on-campus experiences. This feedback was used as a tool to demonstrate the program's value to students and, consequently, build deeper engagement with schools.

### Anecdotal feedback

High school staff were highly receptive to the experiential, on-campus activities:

“

*The students were thoroughly engaged throughout the day. The program was interactive and hands-on which kept the students interested. Both campuses exposed them to a variety of courses and career options, which they weren't aware of prior to the excursion. Overall it was an educational and successful day.'*

”

School staff feedback

A secondary benefit of the program was that activities contributed to updating the knowledge-base of participating school staff:

“

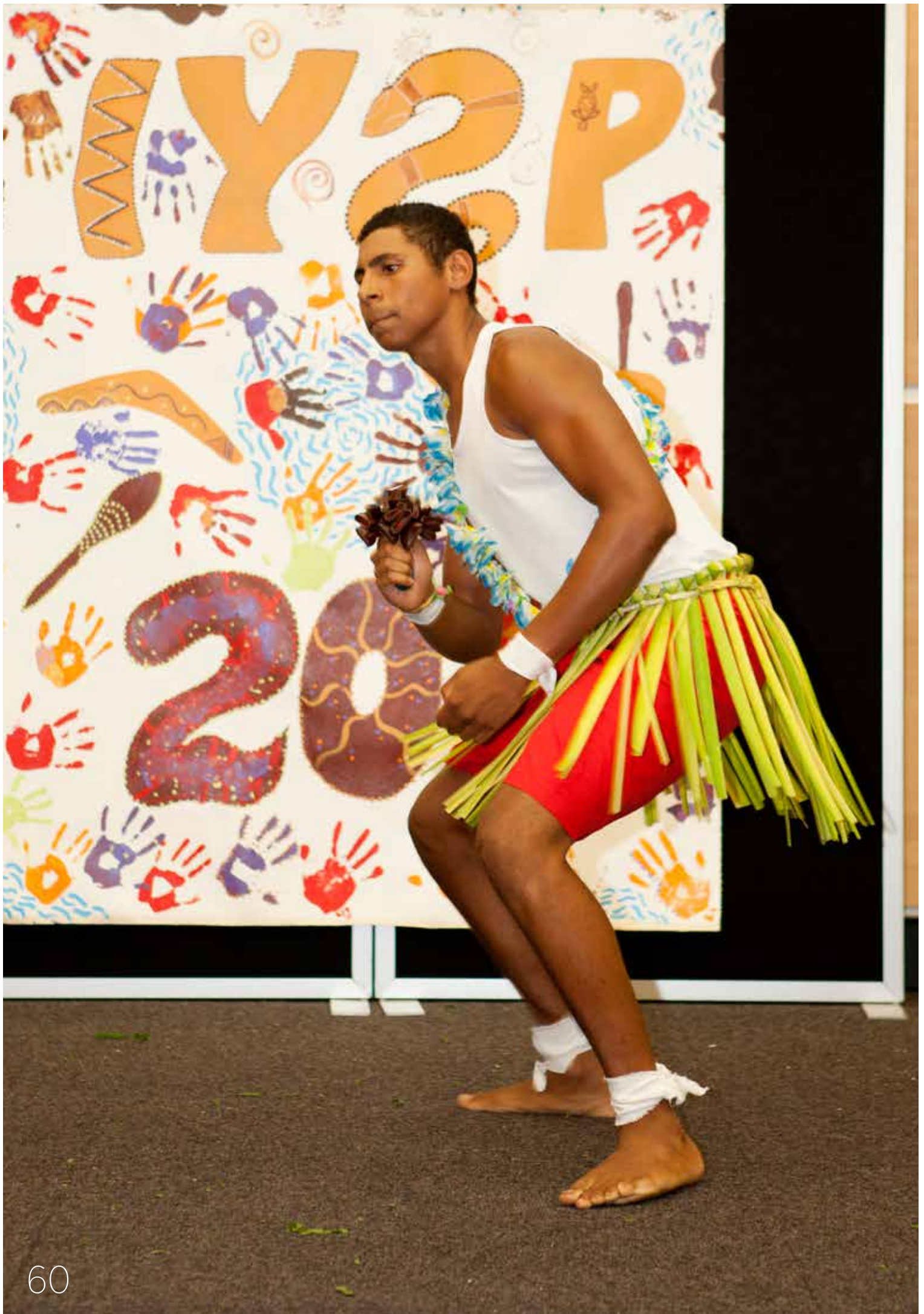
*The young people came back telling others what a great time they had and all the things they discovered. Your program really helps demystify university for them. And thank you from me too as I was not up to date with all of the information that could be so relevant to young people here in the future.*

”

School staff feedback

### Summary

Collaborative partnerships with school staff, UQ faculties, Student Ambassadors, and program evaluation staff ensures the continued success of the program. Overall, the broader program approach contributed to substantially increasing the engagement with schools and created opportunities for multiple university-related experiences for participating secondary school students. This enabled the program to meet its aim of demystifying university and helped to break down the perceived barriers to tertiary study for those students who attended the program.





# Motivating Indigenous Students to Succeed

**University:**

University of Queensland (UQ)

**Theme:**

Community engagement

**Author:**

Shane Drahm  
Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit

## About

This paper will discuss the strategies The University of Queensland's (UQ) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit (ATSISU) are using to provide opportunities for Indigenous students to access direct pathways into higher education. The paper will identify some of the barriers that exist and how to overcome them. It will also provide a description of the programs UQ is implementing in the schools and the outcomes achieved to date.

## Programs

In order to achieve our desired outcome of increasing the number of Indigenous students attending university, we have focused our outreach activity into two major programs:

- *Deadly Choices Pathways to Success; and*
- *InspireU.*

## Deadly Choices Pathways to Success

The *Deadly Choices Pathways to Success* (Pathways) program currently targets Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students across seven schools in South-East Queensland. The aim of the program is to transition students straight from school into university studies.

The *Pathways* program covers the steps involved in the process of applying for and attending university. The steps include:

- setting high expectations/goals;
- acquiring the motivation to achieve in the classroom;
- achieving good academic results leading up to and including Year 10;
- selecting OP subjects/tertiary pathway in high school;
- achieving required result for entry into selected course(s); and
- applying to and attending university.



Current data shows that only 15-20 percent of Indigenous students undertake OP pathways (the traditional academic program undertaken by Year 11 and 12 students in Queensland) and therefore limit their opportunity to transition directly into higher education. The *Pathways* program aims to build Indigenous student's motivation to engage with existing programs and resources available to them by identifying their role as students, members of the community, and potential leaders. The program provides incentives and rewards to motivate them and also academic support such as an after school tutoring/mentoring program.

Positive role models from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are used as a source of inspiration and leadership, while student teachers from UQ's School of Education deliver the educational component to *Pathways* students. Parents also form part of the role model network and provide the foundational support for the students. Students are also offered tangible rewards such as Deadly Choices and Broncos merchandise, as well as attending Broncos games and theme parks.

When communicating the importance of higher education to the *Pathways* students, UQ compares the gap in outcomes for the most common post-school pathways for Indigenous students.

These include:

- the chance of getting a job after completing Year 12 increases by 53 percent, however 10.4 percent of these same Year 12 graduates are unemployed compared to the non-Indigenous Year 12 graduate unemployment rate of only three percent;
- there is 'NO GAP' in unemployment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with a university degree; and
- further study leads to better health and lifestyle.

## InspireU

The aim of the *InspireU* program is to capture students on an OP pathway and provide a detailed insight into their study area of interest. Currently UQ holds five *InspireU* camps for students interested in Health, Law, Science and Engineering (Junior and senior camps). During the week-long camps, students are exposed to the university environment; industry environment; networking opportunities; and career options and benefits. A follow up engagement program is also implemented, which includes local and regional student and parent events; social media engagement; and online tutoring and support.

## Evidence of Impact

The *Deadly Choices Pathways to Success* program is still in its early days of delivery, however student feedback and teacher observations have provided some key indicators that the program is successful. These include:

- students, when provided with incentives, are more motivated to achieve in the classroom;
- when students are presented with real life scenarios of success (i.e. Indigenous role models), they get a sense of self-belief; and
- Raising the expectations of the students empowers them with self-confidence.

Throughout the program, *Pathways* students are regularly reminded that there are no boundaries as to what they can achieve, and that academic success is a combination of hard work and self-belief.

Below are some examples of feedback that highlight the benefits of the *Pathways* program:

“

*After one term in the program, a student from Albany Creek achieving Cs in Year 8 has told her parents that her dream is to be a doctor. She has identified problems with her maths knowledge and is now seeking homework assistance to help fill in the gaps.*

”

Tutor

“

*Thanks for being such a great bunch of teachers! You're teaching so many incredible things that have been really helpful for my attitude with school work, and that it is important to try that little bit more when it comes to my education. Deadly Choices has been fun and helpful and I'm so glad I have the awesome opportunity to come to these lessons.*

”

Student

The *InspireU* program is in its second year under a new *InspireU* structure. In that time, there have been eight camps with over 100 students attending. Of the students that graduated in 2014, nearly 60 percent applied to university. Empirical evidence supports that continuous engagement with the student and providing a sense of belonging to university will result in the continued aspiration of the student to attend university.

“

*It allowed me to establish a better understanding of engineering and to figure out which subsections of engineering I enjoy.*

”

Student survey, *InspireU*  
Engineering 2015

“

*The most valuable aspects of the camp for myself was learning the options and pathways of how to apply for the courses and the types of support groups/ individuals which are here at UQ.*

”

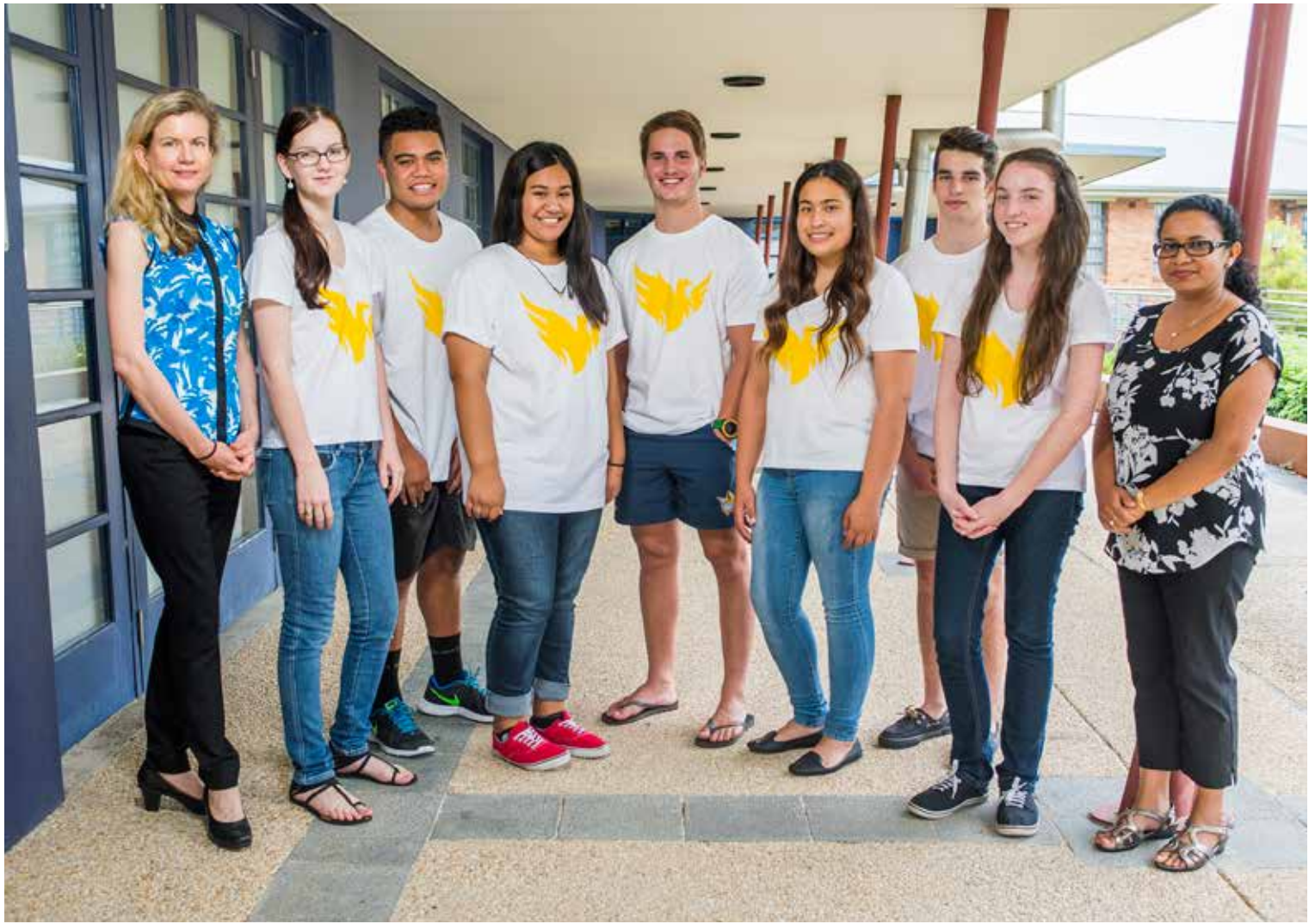
Student survey, *InspireU*  
Health Sciences 2015

## Lessons

Considering that in 2008 only 21 percent of Indigenous people aged 15–64 had completed Year 12, there is not a history of higher education in many Indigenous families. For this reason, there is a limited number of strong Indigenous role-models and family members with experience of higher education. As such, the focus and push for the current generation of Indigenous high school students to attend university is not as strong as it needs to be.

In order for us to change the outcomes of Indigenous students, we have to first change their pathway. We have learnt that students lack the knowledge about OP pathways and university in general. Currently, very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertake OP subjects and therefore this makes the pathway into university more difficult. It is also evident that once the students are provided with the incentive to achieve in the classroom and therefore be more motivated, they are capable of achieving fantastic outcomes and having the choice to go directly from school to university.





# USQ's Intensive Tertiary Preparation Program: a pathway to university for Year 12 leavers

**University:**

University of Southern Queensland (USQ)

**Theme:**

Community engagement

**Author:**

Ms Charmaine Davis  
Lecturer, Tertiary Preparation Program,  
Open Access College

## About

The *Tertiary Preparation Program Intensive Pathway* (TPPIP) is offered to Year 12 school leavers from low socio-economic, rural, regional and remote backgrounds wishing to begin an undergraduate program. By focusing on developing generic skills essential for successful undergraduate study and by providing a positive university experience, this free program aims to raise career aspirations and to remove the barriers to starting university for these students.

## Program

TPPIP provides a direct pathway into USQ undergraduate programs for students who otherwise would not meet entry requirements. Students undertake career planning activities and access USQ career development practitioners and admission services to streamline their application and enrolment process as they move into their selected undergraduate program.

There are two courses that make up the core component of USQ's mainstream *Tertiary Preparation Program* – a *Studying to Succeed* course and a mathematics unit. The *Studying to Succeed* course focuses on developing academic writing and study management skills. TPPIP students are also streamed into an appropriate mathematics subject based on their diagnostic assessment results. The courses run over two, two-week intensive blocks on-campus over December and January.

During the two residential blocks, students attend timetabled classes each day, and access university facilities such as computing laboratories and library services to complete much of the work normally timetabled over a whole semester. Residential students in Toowoomba also have access to a supervised evening study hall. Following the intensive on-campus component, students have approximately two weeks to study online at home in the lead up to their end of semester exams.



The program also incorporates extra-curricular activities, and students are introduced to a range of support areas across the university, including Student Services, Student Relationship Officers, Faculty information, Recruitment and Admissions, the Learning Centre and the Library.

## Collaboration

TPPIP also fosters close collaboration between USQ and secondary schools to ensure a coordinated approach to identifying and engaging with students from target groups. Principals and Guidance Officers in schools in the region were provided with information about the program. Relationships with the schools had been previously established through USQ's Opening Doors project, where USQ had delivered activities tailored to each school's needs such as individual career counselling sessions, information sessions with selected students, or sessions with Year 12 cohorts.

## Evidence of Impact

TPPIP was initially offered at the Toowoomba campus in 2012, and involved 20 students. This number increased to 42 students in 2013. In 2014, the program was expanded to include Fraser Coast, Ipswich and Springfield campuses, and 156 students participated. Students from remote locations were offered fee-free residential college places to attend Toowoomba classes.

Progression data reveals that TPPIP has made substantial inroads towards its goal of increasing access to undergraduate programs for students from diverse backgrounds. Twenty students enrolled in the 2012 inaugural TPPIP program and the completion rate was 85 percent. Sixteen of these TPPIP students enrolled in USQ undergraduate programs in 2013, and nine of these students are still active in their selected undergraduate program.

In 2013, 20 students (from a total of 42) transitioned into undergraduate studies at USQ in Semester 1 2014, while a further seven joined USQ undergraduate programs in subsequent semesters. Twenty-one of these students were still active in their programs in 2015. Of 156 students in 2014, 76 accepted places in undergraduate programs in 2015.

Thus, over the three years of the project, a total of 112 students enrolled in undergraduate places at USQ in the semester following their completion of TPPIP, with other students taking up USQ undergraduate programs in later semesters.

An analysis of progression data also indicates other notable trends. Several students entering undergraduate programs at USQ through TPPIP have since changed their academic programs; some have not been successful in all courses undertaken; while some have moved in and out of study in their selected programs. It is worth investigating the extent to which factors that impacted upon the success of these students at school are still affecting their success at university. Nevertheless, TPPIP has effectively provided students with access to undergraduate programs at USQ, thus widening participation in higher education for students who would not have otherwise attended university.

## Lessons

The TPPIP program presented academic and professional staff in the Open Access College with several challenges. Aside from the rather gruelling pace of the program, there was a clear imperative to tailor the curriculum, teaching practices, admission procedures and student communication processes to meet the often unique educational and social needs of TPPIP students. However, student feedback indicates TPPIP does effectively address many of these needs:

“

*Not only does it prepare you for uni and give you the confidence that you can succeed at uni but also gives you the confidence that you can tackle anything that life will throw you.*

”

Kyle Mayocchi, TPPIP student

A challenge for the future is to continue to address the needs of the program's younger cohort while ensuring students are adequately prepared for undergraduate study.

### **Photo details**

*Top: Ipswich TPPIP students Linda Godfrey, Jeff Fualau, Naima Ama, Jordan Hicks, Chelsea Kraschnefski, Manning Field, Jessica Suffolk, with their lecturers, Dr Susan Hopkins (left) and Aruna Devi.*

*Bottom: Toowoomba TPPIP students Kyle Mayocchi and Alice Sunzu with program coordinator Charmaine Davis.*





# DARE: Dream Aspire Reach and Experience

**University:**

University of Southern Queensland (USQ)

**Theme:**

Community engagement

**Author:**

Megan Darr  
Senior Indigenous Engagement Officer

## About

The University of Southern Queensland's (USQ) DARE (*Dream Aspire Reach and Experience*) Indigenous Secondary School Student Mentoring Program models best practice in Indigenous engagement through the development of cultural knowledge and inter-generational knowledge sharing. The DARE program was run across rural communities in the Moreton, South West and Wide Bay regions of Queensland in 2012 to 2014. The program was designed so that students could gain an understanding of cultural knowledge and knowledge sharing in a distinctly Murri worldview. A holistic approach underpinned by Indigenous protocols and knowledge was integral to establishing school engagement, building rapport and trust.

## Aims

The program aims were to:

- raise the aspirations of Indigenous students towards higher education;
- improve secondary school attendance and completion rates of Indigenous students;

- improve English literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students;
- promote healthy and positive lifestyles for Indigenous students to improve their participation in education;
- promote and foster cultural respect and understanding; and
- bridge the gap between schools, communities and universities.

## Program

The features of the program included:

- Year 10 secondary school students targeted to coincide with Senior Education and Training (SET) Planning;
- 16 week program conducted in group sessions in schools;
- mentor program – Indigenous and non-Indigenous undergraduate university students, Indigenous elders, Indigenous community leaders, business owners, health service employees, Community Education Counsellors, Queensland Police officers and Indigenous Liaison Officers engaged as mentors;



- cross-cultural awareness training and ongoing support provided to mentors via face-to-face, telephone and online platforms;
- cultural understanding, historical awareness and self-identity development incorporated to benefit both mentors and mentees;
- DARE *Traditional Indigenous Games* school competition;
- DARE *Leadership Camp* involving guest speakers, leadership and motivational workshops, team building and cultural experiences; and
- DARE *Awards Ceremony* to celebrate participation, academic and attendance achievements.

## Mentoring

The presence of Indigenous mentors including elders and local leaders from the students' home communities enhanced students' cultural knowledge development. As well as providing local cultural connections, their engagement has been key to the effective delivery of the program in regional, rural and remote locations where the nearest university is an eight-hour drive away. These Indigenous mentors also worked together with USQ student mentors (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to deliver the program.

The USQ student mentors provided a link between the university and Indigenous secondary school students and were able to “interpret” university student life. This was reinforced by one principal stating:

“

*The big plus has been the connections that our students have been able to build with young people from a tertiary setting. As far as the kids are concerned DARE's about them staying on in school and doing their best. But it has given our students a relationship with someone at a tertiary institution who has ambitions and this has raised their aspirations. We are seeing improvements in our retention from Year 10 to 12 as a result and more students are seeing it as acceptable and normal to be staying in school.*

”

School Principal

“

*It's been a real positive in terms of achieving a more positive outlook for the students. Certainly the level of confidence and self-awareness has gone through the roof. So I'm very happy with the outcomes. It's made our students braver and stronger.*

”

School Principal

## Engagement

By engaging holistically with the students, school communities, families and the wider community, the DARE Program was able to facilitate cultural exchange and enhance the students' cultural identity and knowledge.

DARE's 2014 evaluation report recognised that the cultural awareness features of the program enhanced connections with Indigenous elders and community members. *Hidden Histories* (cultural awareness program) and the DARE *Leadership Camp* contributed to Indigenous students' growth and confidence. This was reflected in one Community Education Counsellor's feedback:

“

*I think it's being stronger in their culture that has helped (with retention and completion). The booklet (DARE to be a Deadly Leader) has really helped foster understanding in the whole school...and I think they just feel stronger in themselves.*

”

A Year 12 student who had previously completed the Year 10 program and remained involved as a peer mentor stated:

“

*I know when the program first started that a lot of students didn't know their history or their culture and I know I learnt a fair bit. I've always grown up knowing my culture and where my people have come from but it's good to watch other students grow and know about their culture. We talked about hidden histories for example and talked about the Stolen Generations and other stuff. I think it's about breaking the stereotypes that people have always followed.*

”

## Evidence of Impact

The success of the program has been demonstrated through school participation, secondary student enrolment patterns and attendance rates, academic improvement records from schools, surveys, focus groups and reflective journals. Results have reflected a positive and meaningful program with:

- 17 engaged targeted schools across the Toowoomba and Fraser Coast catchment;
- 45 mentors (USQ students, Indigenous elders and community members);
- 204 secondary school students from Year 10 to Year 12;
- 180 attending participants for the DARE *Traditional Indigenous Games*;
- increased enrolments in IHEPP (*Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program* – USQ) from DARE community members;
- reported attendance increase of secondary school students;
- reported increase in completion of secondary school for Indigenous students; and
- reported increase in progression from secondary school to university as based on evaluations.

Community mentors are also enrolling in the university and the DARE Program has contributed to a greater awareness of the Indigenous presence within the university prompting an Elder to say:

“

*By talking to us, we (the community) are beginning to understand that it's not taboo; universities. The (DARE) Program has helped build relationships between the schools and the community and the university.*

”

Community Elder



# Beyond Year 10 Camp: career development for rural and remote students

**University:**

University of Southern  
Queensland (USQ)

**Theme:**

School Engagement,  
Career Development

**Author:**

Jenny Ball  
Career Development  
Practitioner and  
Educator

## About

The aim of this project was to provide Year 10 to 12 students in rural and remote communities with applied learning initiatives including career education.

The career education activities culminated in a number of Year 10 students attending a three-day, on-campus residential camp experience at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) in Toowoomba.

Rural and remote school students often live vast distances from tertiary education, which can limit their access to education opportunities when compared to their metropolitan peers. This Widening Tertiary Participation project sought to address the tyranny of distance and the scarcity of local education opportunities for rural and remote students.

## Rationale

Many Year 11 and 12 students in rural and remote areas travel an hour and a half (or more) to school every day. In addition, on weekends, students in many parts of South-West Queensland typically travel over three hours to participate in competitive sport. The long-distance travel and the attraction for students to stay within their knowledge limits (the 'knowns') is more comfortable than extending themselves by travelling to the distant 'unknown unknowns'<sup>1</sup>. In addition, many students within these communities are at a further educational disadvantage because of their low socio-economic-status (SES), and significant numbers of students are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This project aimed to address these issues by engaging and connecting with students through activities that sought to demystify university and raise students' awareness of, and aspiration towards tertiary study.



## Strategy

USQ's strategy supports research that argues that career education and counselling may assist students to overcome disadvantage by a) ensuring that they know which career path they want to pursue and b) highlighting how they might achieve their goals through tertiary education<sup>2</sup>.

Year 10 to 12 students in rural and remote schools were offered the opportunity to explore a range of aspects of career education. In addition, Year 10 students were invited to attend a three-day residential camp. The camp included sessions about campus life and the opportunity to attend on-campus activities including a *Careers Day*. Students also visited relevant industry sites off-campus in Toowoomba.

The aim was to build rural and remote student's self-efficacy by firstly teaching them about professions and pathways that they had not previously known about, and by secondly helping them to believe that it was indeed possible for them to achieve these careers with a university education. This aim is supported by evidence that shows career education can positively influence high school students in their career decision-making self-efficacy and confidence<sup>3</sup>.

## The Project

USQ built relationships with 38 low SES State and Catholic secondary schools and 11 external agencies and businesses within South-West Queensland. Each of the agencies and businesses appointed a 'career development champion'. Sourcing and connecting with the right person in each school and business was paramount to the success of the project.

USQ's team has many years of school and career development experience and provided their expertise as a visiting resource for each school. The team was well-positioned to support schools and was a valuable resource in rural and remote locations where career education expertise is often limited.

The school engagement activities were tailored to the needs of individual schools, and varied from one-hour presentations to full-day workshops with parent and professional development sessions. The USQ team took a current USQ student to the schools to offer information from a peer perspective. Almost two thirds (24) of the schools were prep to Year 10 schools and benefited significantly from the breadth of the engagement activities on offer which catered for students of different ages.

## Residential Camps

Students from Year 10 were then invited to a three-day residential camp experience at USQ's Toowoomba campus called *Beyond Year 10 Camp*. The camp was a practical and hands-on experience and culminated in a graduation ceremony with eminent guest speakers such as the Vice-Chancellor, the City's Mayor and university alumni.

Each camp was capped at a maximum of 60 students to ensure a high quality experience for attendees. Over three years, USQ held four residential camps with 19 different schools. The camps were held on-campus and students stayed in the residential colleges to add to the university experience. The experience was timed around the on-campus Years 8 to 10 *Careers Day* organised by the USQ School Engagement team. This event attracts up to 1,000 students from Toowoomba and rural and remote schools annually.

As well as on-campus activities, students visited relevant industry sites such as the local Performing Arts complex, the local Magistrates Court, the rural Medical Education facility, large businesses, engineering works, the local newspaper and the TAFE. Long-standing and new relationships with these businesses were strengthened through the project.

## Evidence of Impact

There is ample evidence to demonstrate that career interventions produce positive outcomes for students.<sup>4</sup> Of the 165 students who attended the four *Beyond Year 10 Camps* in 2013 – 2014, 60.5 percent of the 137 students who responded agreed or strongly agreed with the question, ***'I believe it's possible for me to go to university,'*** before the camp. After the camp, 98.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the question. USQ will now track those students through enrolment data and through continuing relationships and engagement activities with the schools.

## Lessons

It has been three years since the start of this project and USQ now has widened its footprint into more schools and communities, allowing the university to inform and raise the aspirations of more students each year.

There were several lessons learnt from the project:

- **Culture** – although all schools were rural or remote schools, each had a different culture that had to be considered. The USQ team made an effort to understand each school culture by visiting every school in person, which contributed to building good relationships. The aim was to take the students on a journey from their own environment to the university setting.

- **Credibility** – it was important for the USQ team to establish a reputation as credible, well informed, engaging career development practitioners and educators. The team did this by using best-practice resources and well-informed presentations and engagement activities. This allowed the team to gain repeat access to the schools.

- **Personalisation** – time is very precious in crowded school curriculums, so being mindful of schools' needs was an essential aspect of being invited back again. The team also kept in mind that the activities were a public relations exercise for career development, post-school education and the University. It was also clear that working with families (brothers, sisters and parents) over the long-term would contribute to a greater longitudinal impact in raising aspirations of rural school communities.

## Endnotes

- 1 Rumsfeld (2002) Retrieved 22 July 2015 from: <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2636>
- 2 McIlveen, P., Everton, B., & Clarke, J. (2005). 'A university career service and social justice'. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 14(2), 63-71.
- 3 McIlveen, P., Morgan, T. & Bimrose, J. (2012). 'A longitudinal study of the experience of a career development program for rural school students.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 21(1), 22-30.
- 4 Brown, S.D., & Ryan Krane, N.E. (2000) 'Four (or five) sessions and a cloud of dust: Old assumptions and new observations about career counselling.' in Mcilveen, P., Morgan, T. & Bimrose, J. (2012). 'A longitudinal study of the experience of a career development program for rural school students.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 21(1), 22-30; Bimrose, J & Barnes, S. (2006). 'Is career guidance effective? Evidence from a longitudinal study in England.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 15 (2), 19-25; Whiston, S.C., Sexton, T.L., & Lasoff, D.L. (1998). 'Career intervention outcome: A replication and extension of Oliver and Spokane (1988).' *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 45, 150-165. In Mcilveen, P., Morgan, T. & Bimrose, J. (2012). 'A longitudinal study of the experience of a career development program for rural school students.' *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 21(1), 22-30.





# My Tertiary Education Day (MyTED): encouraging primary school students to consider tertiary education opportunities

**University:**

University of the  
Sunshine Coast (USC)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

**Authors:**

Dr Ruth Greenaway  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow

Dr Uwe Terton  
Project Manager

**About**

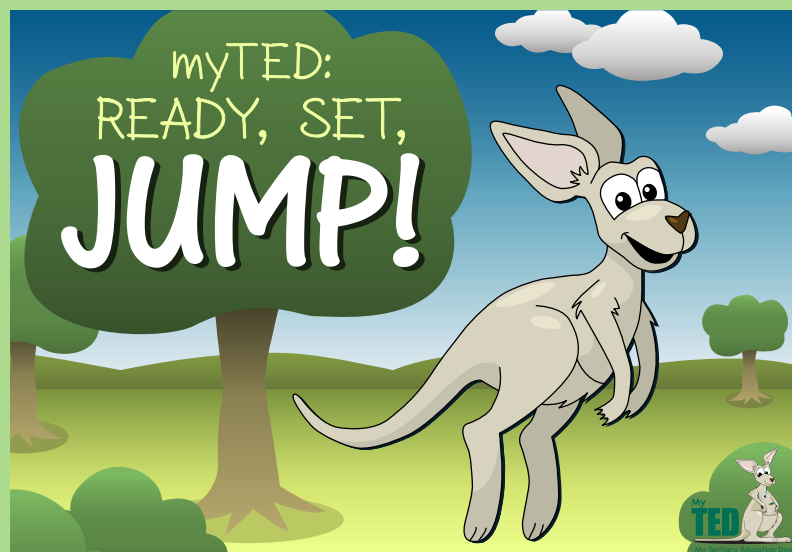
*My Tertiary Education Day (MyTED)* provides an innovative framework to encourage primary school children to participate in higher education. It is a multi-strategy project, and aims to enhance the aspirations of Year 4 students and their parents from low socio-economic backgrounds to aspire to attend university.

In an effort to inform, guide and encourage students to reach their potential, programs should be put in place to awaken the aspirations of young people at an early age. According to Gale and Tranter<sup>1</sup>, interventions to encourage students to consider their

aspirations are more effective when aimed at primary school students than when traditionally aimed at Year 10 students onwards. The literature indicates that the prime developmental time to begin discussions about aspirations is between the ages of eight and ten.

**Strategies**

The strategies used in the *MyTED* program target this particular primary school age group. They include an interactive eBook *MyTED: Ready, Set, Jump* that has embedded Indigenous perspectives and focuses on literacy and language, particularly digital literacies. The eBook





contains the support materials for all phases of the program and aligns with the Australian Curriculum to assist with the development of language, literature and literacy skills. The eBook is based around the life of an Eastern Grey Kangaroo named Edwina (nicknamed TED) and her struggle to overcome adversity with knowledge, curiosity and the development of aspirations. Students engage with Edwina whose adventures are intertwined through all phases of the program.

## Program

Edwina is introduced to students during four lessons delivered by the *MyTED* team. During the lessons students investigate their aspirations and represent them using Photovoice and MyVoice. Photovoice requires students to take a photograph that represents their aspirations and to answer some questions to contextualise their response. Similarly, MyVoice requires students to draw a picture that represents their aspirations. Students investigate the aspirations of others and apply that knowledge to themselves by watching video narratives found in the eBook and through interaction with Edwina's story. These initiatives are called the *Awakening Aspirations* phase of *MyTED*. After discussing the *MyTED* program with Indigenous community leaders, we borrowed the concept and language of *awakening* from the Indigenous culture as it reflects

the essence of the program. Many of the underlying principles of the *MyTED* program align with Indigenous cultural understandings and storying around awakening and dreaming. *MyTED* serves as a good example of how to embed Indigenous perspectives in learning experiences for primary school students.

During the *Awakening Aspirations* phase we also use the *Tree of Life* to enhance the students' understanding of the three phases of education. Primary school is identified as the roots, secondary school as the strong trunk, and tertiary education is identified as the branches and leaves and as one way that people flourish in their future life. It signifies natural progression and tertiary education as a positive next step after secondary school.

The program culminates with an excursion to USC Sippy Downs where students experience hands on activities, meet University staff and maybe see Edwina. After this experience, students investigate their ambitions with their enhanced knowledge of a tertiary environment by completing an Aspirations Pathway. Students use Photovoice and MyVoice to represent their medium and long-term aspirations and then load their responses into the Aspirations Pathway Application. This then produces a document for the students to keep and refer to later.

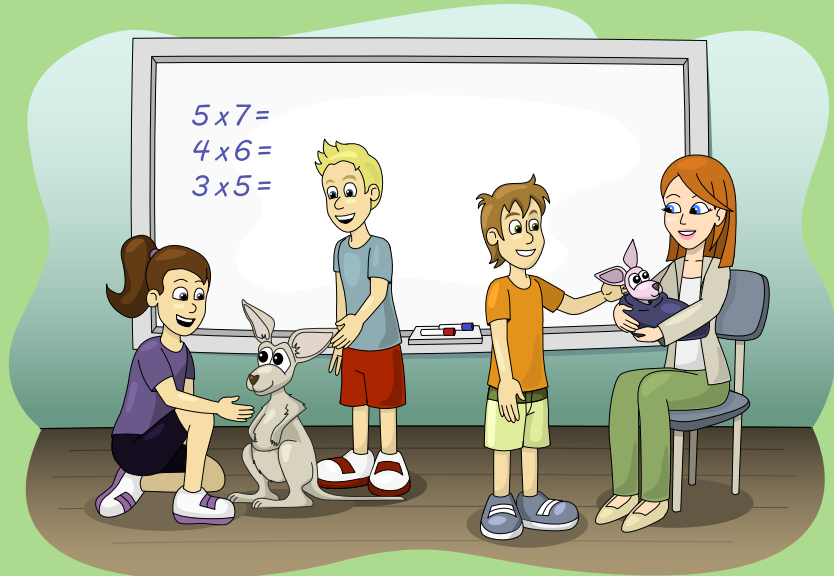
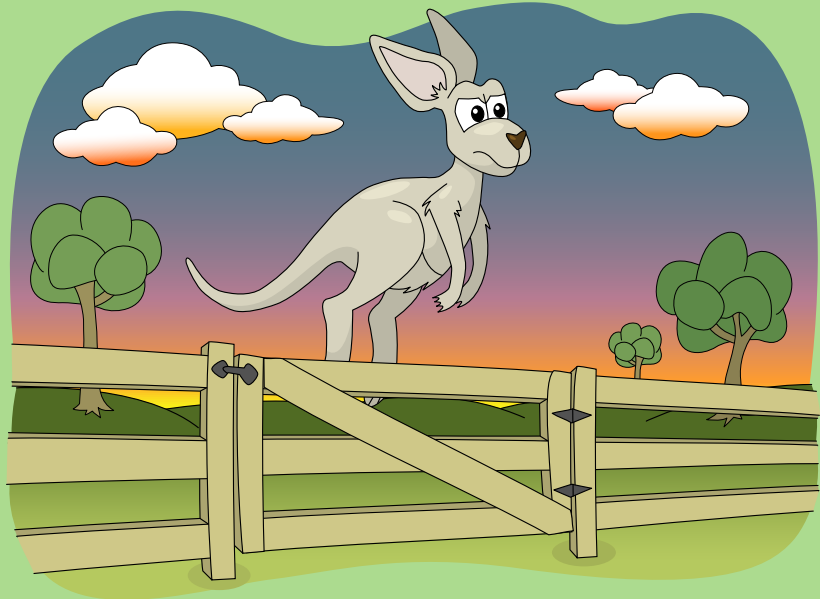
As the literature suggests and from what has been evident in *MyTED*, students begin to gain insight into their aspirations and capabilities in primary school. These insights are guided by interactions with their family members and members of the wider community.<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of parents and caregivers is considered paramount to the success of the *MyTED* program as they provide the most significant guidance and in the majority of cases, influence their children's aspirations. Parents and caregivers provide support for the *MyTED* program initiatives long after the program has ended. They are invited into the classroom to engage with their children in the program and are encouraged to attend the excursion day. The adults are asked to reflect on their own aspirations and complete the Aspirations Pathway and Photovoice or MyVoice activities in the same way as their children. They are encouraged to reflect on their pathways and discuss the barriers that they faced and the enablers that helped them reach where they are today. By completing the activities, conversations are stimulated between the adults and their children during the activity and at home. Some parents mentioned that *MyTED* started conversations about the future that would not have occurred until later in life.

## Evidence of Impact

Overall, 60 percent of students stated that their aspirations had changed and 64 percent had an observable change in their aspirations. The results of the program delivery over three years has informed the development of further outreach programs supported by eBooks for students in Year 4 to Year 6. We now know that teachers and principals more readily accept programs that are embedded in the curriculum. For example, *MyTED* assists students to reach the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum and the cross curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

The impact of the Indigenous perspectives is difficult to measure. However, the students responded to and asked questions about the meaning of certain Indigenous terminology and were able to form connections with their own dreaming, wishing and awakening of aspirations.

*MyTED* started in 2013 with two schools and grew to six schools in 2014 and 2015 and has reached over 550 students. Many positive university-school-community relationships were established and are ongoing between all stakeholders. Changes in Year 4 student aspirations during the course of the program demonstrate the initial aims of the project have been achieved.



### Endnotes

- 1 Gale, T. and Tranter, D., (2011). 'Social justice in Australian higher education policy: an historical and conceptual account of student participation', in: *Critical studies in education*, 52(1), pp. 29-46.
- 2 Lee, H., (2012). 'What do you want to do when you grow up? Occupational Aspirations of Taiwanese Preschool Children.' in: *Social Behavior and Personality*, 40(1), pp.115-128.



# Here there be no dragons: establishing pathways to tertiary education through creative practice

**University:**

University of the  
Sunshine Coast (USC)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

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## About

In fairy tales, dragons often guard the enchanted castle. For students from low socio-economic status backgrounds (LSES) and regional/rural communities, university may appear as an enchanted castle; while distance, isolation and the resulting undervaluing of higher education, may be seen as the dragon. The University of the Sunshine Coast's (USC) *Creative Writing Excellence Program* (CWEP) is an initiative that seeks to counter these barriers by involving students in a university-style course that enhances learning, nurtures success, and acknowledges achievement in order to develop student confidence and build aspirational pathways toward tertiary education.

## Program

The CWEP is delivered over nine weeks in a lecture/tutorial format to familiarise students with the learning environment of a university. During the program, students write and edit a short story, which is published in an anthology and presented

to students at a graduation ceremony, further replicating the university experience. This format fits well with the objectives of the CWEP, which are:

- to enhance the creative writing and literacy skills of students, thus assisting academic performance and increasing confidence in achieving success; and
- to promote and develop educational aspirations.

The success of the format is evident in comments by students and teachers reflecting on the program:

“

*The [CWEP] is a great opportunity for teenagers, like me, to better their understanding of story writing, and it encourages learning.*

”

Year 8 student,  
Nanango SHS, 2015



“

*The greatest advantage of the course for our students is in developing their skills and gaining confidence in creative writing, leading to improved results in the imaginative writing section of the Senior English course... Additionally, our students benefit from engaging with staff from the tertiary sector, which [fosters] a greater interest in pursuing tertiary education.*

”

Paul Hutton, Head of Department for English/LOTE at Kingaroy SHS, 2015

An important aspect of the CWEP is taking ‘the university to the students’ at their school. A recurring theme in discussions with students, parents and teachers from the Wide Bay-Burnett region is the sense of isolation experienced by students in LSES/ rural areas. Engaging students in their school environment sends a strong message about their value within the education sector, and cultivates the notion that tertiary education is not beyond their reach. The effectiveness of this strategy is recognised by Heather

Hamilton, Head of Department for English/Humanities at Murgon SHS:

“

*As a result of [the CWEP], attending university is not the daunting idea it had previously been, especially for students who would be first in their family to attend tertiary education.*

”

2015

Similarly, the CWEP has been successful in establishing pathways to university, as noted by Bree Moyls, Head of Department for English at Urangan SHS:

“

*The University of the Sunshine Coast has gained popularity... over the past few years, [with] more and more seniors applying for courses at USC as their first choice.*

”

2015

A similar experience is evident at Aldridge SHS in Maryborough, with English Head of Department, Rayna Morris, stating that:

“

*Many students talk about attending [USC] because they hear positive comments from students who either visited or have siblings attending. [The CWEP] has gone a long way in building this bridge.*

”

2015

An example of this bridge-building occurred in 2014, when students from Aldridge SHS visited USC for their CWEP workshop and a tour of the campus. The visit acquainted students with the university, and helped raise their awareness of higher education as a feasible opportunity.

Educational aspirations are further developed by the positive rapport established between CWEP students and university staff:

“

*'I very much enjoyed [the CWEP]. I am improving my writing and am getting higher marks in my English. Thanks a lot. Loved it.*

”

Year 10 student,  
Murgon SHS, 2015

Developing rapport encourages students to view universities as welcoming places where their contributions are valued. Furthermore, the CWEP facilitates positive relationships between USC staff and teachers at partner schools, which also benefit students. As Danielle Goddaer, Head of Department for English/LOTE at Hervey Bay SHS, writes:

“

*The partnership Hervey Bay SHS has developed with USC has been incredibly advantageous for both students and teachers... We have had students go on to tertiary education at USC and other regional institutions who might otherwise have not pursued tertiary education...[while] teachers who have worked with students in [the CWEP] have enjoyed professional development that only serves to better help us engage with our students.*

”

February, 2015

## Lessons

Although the CWEP has been successful in achieving its core objectives, challenges have arisen during the program's implementation. These challenges are similar to those faced by students living in regional/LSES communities – namely distance and access to resources such as technology. USC's partner schools range in distance from 80 to 250 kilometres from campus and for students, these distances, compounded by family circumstances and finances, can be substantial obstacles to fulfilling tertiary aspirations. Nevertheless, the 'tyranny of distance' is somewhat diminished for students through engagement initiatives such as the CWEP.

Distance also plays a role in the difficulties associated with accessing technology. As teaching contact during the CWEP is limited, feedback and student support occurs via email. Although USC's partner schools have internal email systems, issues surface when students cannot access their school email accounts. Further frustrations arise for students when they have limited – or no – access to the Internet at home, which can make completion of the program more difficult. When these situations occur, parents, teachers and university staff work together to find alternative avenues for students to complete the program, thereby assuring their sense of achievement.

## Conclusion

Despite these difficulties, students from LSES and regional/rural communities are clearly keen to engage with learning initiatives, such as the CWEP, which enhance their academic performance and develop their aspirations for tertiary education. The best evidence of the success of such initiatives is when former CWEP students arrive on USC's campus as first year university students, indicating that the dragon is slain, and that the pathway to the enchanted castle – and the future – lays open.







# Developing Digital Literacies

**University:**

University of the  
Sunshine Coast (USC)

**Theme:**

School Engagement

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## About

Access to the Internet and the use of technology is an essential part of the everyday school environment for young learners. In disadvantaged communities, confidence in using technology is particularly relevant because technology is a valuable learning tool for engaging students and developing literacy skills.

A partnership initiative focusing on digital literacies was undertaken in a primary school located in an Indigenous community in Queensland. Around 170 of the students (99 percent) and over 65 percent of staff at the school are Indigenous.

## Aim

The central aim of the initiative was to build capacity and to develop aspirations for learning beyond the school context. The two focus areas were:

- engaging primary students in literacy activities using iPads. This is because competency in English and literacy is beneficial to academic achievement, capacity building and developing aspirations; and

- visiting the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) to gain an understanding of the university environment and interacting with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students.

## The Project

The *Digital Literacies* project team included six pre-service teachers in their second year of study and a local educator from the Aboriginal Kabi Kabi people. The project team worked together to prepare literacy activities on iPads to reinforce the learning that was being carried out in the classroom. They then made regular visits to the school to work alongside the classroom teacher to implement the activities.

A real favourite of the students was the app, Book Creator, which allowed them to create eBooks. Students learned how to use the app to take photos, draw and record speech and sounds to help them write narratives and poems. They would record themselves reading their texts and then played them back to each other amid much giggling



at hearing their own voices. With frequent use of the app, students developed confidence in reading and creating texts. The Kabi Kabi educator, who has familial ties with the community, made regular visits to the school and worked alongside the project team to support the students' cultural literacy by engaging them in Indigenous painting, drama, music (didgeridoo) and storytelling activities. Activities generally finished with a coda linked to respect, working hard at school and achievement.

After several months of regular contact, strong relationships were established and the project team's visits and contributions became part of a routine the students and indeed the whole school and the wider Indigenous community were familiar with. The learning and teaching interactions between the pre-service teachers and the school students were positive for a number of reasons:

- the pre-service teachers were young and enthusiastic and they arrived at the school with interesting digital literacy activities that were fun and engaging for the students;
- the pre-service teachers also spent time encouraging students to engage in social communication;
- the shared communication included conversations about what a university was, why people went to university, and what the pre-service teachers did at USC; and
- the pre-service teachers talked to the students about their career aspirations and encouraged the students to participate fully in the literacy activities and achieve successful outcomes with their work.

## On-Campus Visits

The visits to USC provided students with first-hand experiences of a university environment. They sat in a lecture theatre and listened to a respected Kabi Kabi woman welcome them to USC. As she was from the same Indigenous community, much of her welcome was familiar to the students. She told students it was her personal wish that they work hard at school because she would like to see them return to USC to complete a degree (just as her own son was doing). The students also spent time at the University's Burunga Centre, which provides a social and study space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at USC. At the Burunga Centre the school students connected with USC's Indigenous students who spoke about their career aspirations and what they had done to become a university student.

The school students were especially interested in 'seeing' what the university students had to do in class. When shown some examples of work many commented that it didn't look too different to the work they were doing at school except that it was harder. They also commented that while it was probably harder, it looked like more fun than being in a classroom because you could be at a computer all day! However, the more significant comments included the students' interest in coming to USC to study teaching, drama or sports science.

## Lessons

While the visits to the school and to USC were extremely successful, the project team experienced challenges that required them to adapt to the school and community context. Changes in the composition of the classroom, student absences, visitors to the classroom, family bereavement, community events and student disengagement all had impact on what had been planned and the extent to which the learning activities could be undertaken.

## Evidence of Impact

The *Digital Literacies* project helped to build students' literacy and supported students to build aspiration. The two-tiered approach of making regular visits to the school to implement digital literacy activities and the visits to USC provided the students with lived experiences about aspirations beyond the school context and the necessary learning and application that is required to achieve successful outcomes.

Of particular significance was the contribution of the local Kabi Kabi educator in engaging the students in cultural learning. His cultural knowledge was invaluable in supporting the project team's understanding of the cultural protocols necessary for working in the community. The success of the *Digital Literacies* project can be attributed to the support of the school community and the local community who work tirelessly to build capacity and develop aspirations through quality experiences that are embedded in a rich cultural context.







