Submission in response to the Review of Higher Education Discussion Paper

University Of Western Sydney
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I was extremely proud to graduate from university and walk along that stage and receive my certificate, because everything in my life would have provided me for an excuse not to do that... Despite everything I’ve been through and the barriers that I’ve had, I’ve been able to secure a job at... a top-10 law firm in the country. And that’s been my whole purpose of the things that I’ve done over the years, is to convince society that these things don’t have to be shackles. And perhaps having this achievement among all the others that I’ve done is one of the final steps in shaking those shackles off my own past...

Heath Ducker, who studied on the roof of his house to escape the chaos of nine brothers and sisters, topped his UWS law class and has been recognised by the Prime Minister as a potential national leader. His success is in spite of enduring significant personal adversity and a troubled past, as reported in the ABC’s Australian Story.

A climatic time machine at the UWS Hawkesbury Campus mimics a world facing new environmental conditions. Twelve giant chambers house individual, living trees in controlled environments as part of a multi-million dollar experiment to help predict what will happen to the Australian bush over the next century. The Hawkesbury Forest Experiment is not only an Australian first, but one of the most ambitious studies of climate change to be undertaken in the Southern Hemisphere.

An example of excellence, collaboration, and meeting essential challenges for the nation, the Hawkesbury Forest Experiment draws together world-leading expertise from UWS, the University of NSW, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the University of Technology, Sydney, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and the Australian Greenhouse Office in the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage.
There has never been a more critical time for a re-thinking of Australian higher education. The economic and social sustainability of a relatively small nation and its capacity to compete and flourish rests on its education system and the extent and equity of participation by all groups in society.

The Australian tertiary sector in 2008 is the product of the cumulative decisions and compromises of successive governments in addressing the complex policy and funding issues of institutional need, national priorities, student access, research capacity and innovation.

The University of Western Sydney could be taken as a bellweather for the future standing, excellence and equity of Australia’s higher education system. Formed in 1989 from three colleges (CAEs), its six campuses span a catchment of almost two million people in a rapidly expanding region sometimes described as the crucible of modern Australia. Its 36,000 students reflect the character, history and diversity of its communities: 170 countries of origin, half the first in their families to attend university, almost half from non-English speaking backgrounds and more than half of mature age. It is arguable that the growth and accomplishments of UWS in the years to come will be a test not only of the institution itself but of Government policy, informed in part at least by this Review.

It is almost 20 years since the Dawkins reforms doubled the size of the sector, greatly expanding its disciplinary base and access to a higher education. It is a testament to the Dawkins reforms that over 100,000 students have graduated from UWS since its formation. However, these reforms are still working their way through the system. The remnants of the pre-1990 tertiary sector are still evident in the patterns and qualifications of staffing, disciplinary foci (especially nursing, teaching and business), the level of research intensity, dependence on government resources and the characteristics of the student intakes. Stratification of the system reflects the configuration of the sector prior to this reform and the relative age of successive waves of new universities.

In principle, these differences should fade over time as has been the case with institutions such as UNSW or Monash University over the last half century. In reality, the preconditions for the robust and rapid capacity development of the younger institutions are absent. The all-of-sector transformation promised by the injection of targeted growth funds in the years between 1990 and 1995 was abruptly curtailed with the end to indexation in the mid-1990s and the parallel imposition of costly monitoring mechanisms and small application-based funding sources. At the same time student fees (HECS) began to climb and eligibility for financial support tightened.

Seeing the impact of a financially straitened sector, and perhaps anticipating worse to come, those institutions already in the vanguard invoked the spectre of a nation without one or two world class universities. The middle tier countered with the innovative and enterprising nature of their teaching and research, and the late entrants made a virtue of their youth, relevance and outreach to their communities. Nevertheless the stratification in terms of age, rankings and resources broadly remains.

All this raises the question of whether Australia needs 40 excellent, strong research-led universities which can hold their own internationally. Our view is that with the economic growth and level of educational investment in Asia and the European Union, there is no risk of Australia over-investing in universities. (China, for instance, doubled domestic higher education participation between 1999 and 2007, and is offering 5,000 PhD scholarships per annum for its students to attend the best universities abroad.) Australia needs to be insulating itself now against its dependence on a resource economy by increasing participation and building a successful knowledge economy for a future in which knowledge intensive industries and qualified labour are the regional norm. The most effective insulation is the quality, coverage and competitiveness of our education system, at all levels.

There has been, however, an energetically propounded countervailing view which advocates the concentration of research in a few elite universities. One component of this argument has been the creation of a California-style tiered system and the legislated relegation of most universities to the middle and community tiers. The relevance and validity of national and international rankings have also been a key plank in the countervailing view. As Ellen Hazelkorn of Dublin Institute of Technology, who has written extensively on research development, especially in younger universities, points out,1 there is a wealth of criticism of the current ranking systems, most of which focus on (bio-science) research. She argues that they do great damage to the research enterprise because they make implicit judgments about the worth of different kinds and fields of research and fundamentally misunderstand the dynamic of the flow of ideas and the research and innovation process. Moreover, few institutions or their governments can afford the level of expenditure implied in being ‘world class’ without sacrificing other policy objectives such as technological innovation, regional

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1 Personal comment, IAU Conference Utrecht, July 2008
economic development, and the enfranchisement of the disadvantaged.

The focus on the institution (or a handful of institutions) as the locus of excellence fundamentally distorts and misrepresents how areas of enquiry grow, diffuse and drive technological innovation, social policy, public debate and economic enterprise. A small elite cadre of universities would serve Australia badly, not just in terms of social equity, but in the neglect of talent, potential and national benefit. Institutional boundaries are artefacts of history. Research activity in particular fields is facilitated by, but never contained within, a particular university. Disciplinary conversations and intellectual loyalties are always pan-institutional and generally international in nature. Research chemists’ primary loyalties and intellectual interests are with other research chemists, wherever they may be.

No single university or small group of universities can contain or support research and teaching across the full spectrum of research or teaching specialties within a discipline, nor do any try to do so. It takes a large system to cover the fields of intellectual endeavour, and even Australia does not have the scale to be all-inclusive. It has to collaborate, borrow, harness and share the educational and research expertise available locally and internationally to support a robust and adaptable economy, the formulation of public policy, the fostering of an open social order, and individual and organisational enterprise.

The critical challenges are to ensure that:
(a) the Australian research landscape is representative of the international spectrum of research activity and therefore able to recognise, capture, interpret, build on and utilise new knowledge;
(b) all institutions are supported to develop depth and excellence in those research niches which they choose to colonise; and
(c) the potential of the whole system is fully mobilised and amplified through fiscal, legislative and policy means and the benefits of its teaching and innovation are available to society at large.

If research were to be concentrated by fiat or default in, say, ten universities, three quarters of the system’s capacity would be wasted.

The Review of Australian Higher Education provides a rare opportunity to step outside the paradigm which has shaped the sector for the last 20 years and to review critically the policies and decisions which have – intentionally or inadvertently – determined its trajectory. These institutional trends and tactics need to be understood in the context of government policy. In Simon Marginson’s words:

The essence of Australian government strategy in the university sector, under both sides of politics, has been the rolling reforming method devised by the Thatcher government: destabilising the existing publicly funded system; introducing bits of the market at a time; imposing … principles of competition piecemeal on an unwilling university sector and creating the conditions for further reforms; while ensuring that no reversion or reversal, and no other line of policy development, can come onto the agenda.  

The belief in the applicability of market principles, amplified by the rhetoric about the private benefits of a university education has enabled governments to drive up student fees, made universities captive to international student income, set up maladaptive inter-university competition for students, prestige and profile, and led to a fractionation of the sector into self-defined and often exclusive alliances. This has created a political environment in which other purposes of universities are neither prominent nor resourced. Marginson’s conclusions about the impact on the system of quasi-market pricing are worth quoting at some length:

First, it lowers our expectation about universities. It deflects our attention from the role of universities in creating common goods from which we all draw benefits: the sustaining and advancing of the intellectual disciplines; the concentration of scientific expertise, and a pool of experts who can be drawn on for a great range of private and public purposes; custody of the development of the professions; the conduct of a varied range of cultural activities, and

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2 The influential and widely promoted Shanghai Jiao Tong index, for instance, is heavily weighted towards high-end performance in scientific research and, by the compilers’ own report (Ying Cheng, Institute of Higher Education, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, speaking at the International Association of Universities Conference, 18 July 2008, Utrecht, Netherlands) does not focus on the education of students or community service, does not capture the diversity of institutional purposes, is biased towards large size and faces technical problems in data availability and quality. It does not, for instance, attempt to rate performance in humanities and the arts and has only recently included the social sciences. However, universities do respond in their planning to rankings of all kinds and direct resources towards ranked functions (Hazelkorn personal comment).

3 Marginson, S, 2004 They Make a Desolation and They Call It F.A. Hayek, Australian Book Review, April p.31
the stewardship of cultural and scientific resources, such as galleries, museums and collections; knowledge of a diverse range of cultures; the conduct of a multitude of networks and relationships with individuals and institutions.

There are also the common benefits we draw as the threshold of literacy and vocational skill is lifted; the open-ended potential created by a basic research infrastructure that spans all fields of study; the role of universities in the pastoral care of students, and their indispensable function in the formation of personality, and as sites of social and cultural experience. These are not benefits captured by one individual to the exclusion of another; the kind of benefit that is bought and sold in a market. The language of exclusively private benefit – for that is what the reform agenda implies – excludes these common benefits. If they are not recognised, then they will not be funded, and they will wither.4

The mantra of ‘diversity’ has often been used as a euphemism for differentiation in terms of the classical components of prestige: funded research, age and institutional wealth. The university sector is already highly diverse and does not need encouragement or incentives to drive or amplify the differences. The issues are whether all universities:

» are funded and equipped, regardless of age or profile to fulfil the mandate of providing an education of equal quality to students of any background, attract equally excellent academics and be a source of enquiry, inspiration and academic opportunity to their communities, however conceptualised; and

» have the means to specialise in research relevant to their educational mandate, broader mission, and to regional and national economies and communities.

We hope the Review of Australian Higher Education will take a systemic view of the Australian university sector, its value to the nation, its potential to create a diversified economy, to address social inequity, to create a soft defence against destructive global forces and ideologies, and to be a force for cultural integration and economic co-operation within the Asia Pacific region, where the nation’s future lies.

Professor Janice Reid
Vice-Chancellor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia must have a world-class higher education system in which universities can be research active and their teaching research-led. The nation’s long term growth, productivity and international competitiveness require significant investments in both teaching and research. Higher education is an investment in the future prosperity, stability and adaptability of the nation.

The policy and funding focus of governments and the strategic and operational functions of universities must have a dual focus on opportunity and excellence for the whole sector, as a platform for the development of our communities, industries and regions.

To meet the challenges ahead all universities need to develop an intentional and focused set of academic strengths, take a more integrated and engaged approach to research and teaching, act collaboratively rather than competitively and tap into external sources of knowledge and expertise.

To amplify and embed their contributions, universities must purposefully embrace partnerships with communities and organisations to co-generate and exchange knowledge in ways that strengthen and accelerate economic, social, cultural, human, and community development.

Purpose, Functions and Characteristics

UWS believes that governments must affirm in tangible ways the critical social and economic importance of higher education for individuals and the nation and particularly for growing metropolitan regions such as Greater Western Sydney.

We strongly support the aspirations for higher education encapsulated in the views of the UK Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills5:

- "Higher education is beneficial to the economy. But it is not just about jobs and the economy. …Supporting people to experience higher education and gain high level skills has benefits to society in ways which go beyond economic prosperity"

- Higher education should be accessible to people whatever their background to unlock their talent and change their life for the better."

Universities have a positive record in meeting high level skill needs. The employment of graduates is high and local employers believe job skills are improving and graduates are satisfied with their generic job skills.6 But it is UWS’s view that the role of a university is far broader than meeting skills needs. It encompasses also personal development, lifelong learning and the creation of social capital.

Such a concept of higher education is fundamental to the mission and purpose of institutions such as the University of Western Sydney and vital to the regions they serve. UWS has a goal to be an exemplar of the kind of university which Australia needs to widen participation, build communities and connect people across cultural boundaries, as well as increasing national prosperity and productivity.

The current level of demand for highly skilled workers, the international skills shortage and a highly competitive drive for knowledge which has useful social or economic applications, means that a key national priority must be to increase the number of accomplished university graduates who are also able to transcend ideologies and divisive identities and contribute to community wellbeing and a sophisticated economic base.

As the Discussion Paper acknowledges, this will only be possible through a deliberate and well funded policy to widen participation and to reach those groups in the community who have hitherto considered a university education to be out of their reach.

In addition to focusing on the traditional purposes and functions of higher education as outlined in the Discussion Paper, UWS believes the Government should:

- significantly improve government funding levels for universities;
- take account in funding regimes of factors that militate against the achievement of higher levels of participation, particularly for people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, those who are first in their family to go to university and Indigenous Australians;
- acknowledge in policy and funding terms the life-changing impact of a higher education for individuals and its value to social integration and the national economy;

5 Higher Education at Work, High Skills: High Value, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, p. 8,10, 2008

6 Loc. Cit.
implement meaningful programs to support both opportunity and excellence and to widen participation;
explicitly recognise the value of university-led innovation and research-led teaching;
support and reward universities engaging with their communities in a spirit of partnership and reciprocity;
recognise that the nexus between teaching and research is a defining attribute of a university, integral to a distinctive university experience and pivotal to the sector’s contribution to Australia’s development and international relationships and partnerships;
affirm that the quality and breadth of the student experience is a fundamental driver of sector-wide reform – all students should have access to a vibrant and challenging learning environment no matter which school or university they attend or where they grow up.

Commitment to a Knowledge Nation

For Australia to make a real commitment to becoming a ‘knowledge nation’ and to an ‘education revolution’ it needs to:

- meet or exceed international benchmark targets for the percentage of the population who have graduated from university or have the educational equivalent of at least an associate degree by setting a target of 50% of the population by 2020
- meet a target of government investment in higher education of 2% of GDP
- meet or exceed international benchmark targets for gross expenditure on research and development (GERD) with a target of 2% of GDP by 2010 and 3% by 2020
- ensure that all students with ability have access to higher education regardless of their school, family or financial circumstances
- broaden and increase the participation of those under-represented at university with nationally co-ordinated and funded efforts to increase the aspirations and ability of people to attend university (low SES, Indigenous and mature age students) and to graduate.

An Alternate Funding Model

The factors which drive costs vary among universities; some (salaries, research support, teaching) are similar while others (number of campuses, models of teaching, student profile) may differ.

Any alternate funding model should recognise the differing mandates and demands on universities, the vital roles of higher education in society and the economy, the diversity in the sector, and the need to improve participation. Bearing in mind the targets above, Commonwealth funding for the sector must increase significantly.

- Universities should be compensated for the historic lag in indexation and indexation in future must fairly reflect the real costs. It should include:
  - Wage Cost Index for salaries; and
  - CPI for non salary costs
- A new funding model should ideally:
  a) Include core funding based on a per student allocation, with a reduced number of funding categories (from the current 11 to 5);
  b) Take into account a range of factors funded through loadings on the cluster funding per student; including
     - the nature of the student profile;
     - the nature of the institution and its reach;
     - geographic factors (such as those affecting rural, regional and outer urban universities.)
  c) Include individual institutional agreements which would enable additional funding to be negotiated relating to factors such as:
     - national priorities
     - institutional mission and location
     - institutional and national research goals
     - modes of learning and teaching
     - the needs and nature of the students served by each institution
     - community and industry engagement
     - incentives to become more environmentally sustainable
     - outreach activities to improve participation of key disadvantaged groups
     - major targeted development projects
     - the location, number and size of campuses
     - encouraging cooperation between universities
  d) Encourage and reward regional and community engagement and social inclusion by providing sufficient core funding;
e) Continue current separate funding only for specific major programs, and roll others into core university funding;  

f) Allocate the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund funding to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) or use it to fund national development projects to address key areas for improvement affecting the sector as a whole;  
g) Provide for:  
» up to a 5% variation in load  
» triennial funding  
» no university to pay State payroll tax, and  
» improved tax treatment for research and development; and  
» funding to compensate for the impact of VSU on university facilities and services.

The greatest weaknesses of the current funding regime are that it is insensitive to the cost-drivers for universities, it is weighed down by accretions of small schemes which are expensive, unpredictable and opaque and it is not underpinned by an explicit and simple statement of national purpose. However, if a new model is designed it should be simple, as well as sufficient for the declared purposes of each institution and for the sector's health and development.

Student Income Support

The current student income support from the Government is grossly inadequate and forces students into low-paid casual jobs and long hours of work, jeopardising their progress and eroding the benefits and opportunities offered by a university education.

There must be a fundamental policy shift to ensure students have sufficient income during their studies to enable them to:  
» focus on their studies  
» meet the basic costs of living and studying  
» have the full experience of being a student  
» avoid debt other than the HECs debt without having to work long hours to support their education.

The structure of student income support must fairly recognise the real costs of studying and the parental support that can be expected.

We propose that:  
» a new comprehensive student income support payment should be formulated which recognises the cost of living, rent, transport and study costs, is available to undergraduate and postgraduate students; reduces the age of independence and increases any parental income threshold;  
» a specific Indigenous income support payment (ABSTUDY) should continue but the level of payment should be significantly increased;  
» the level of student income support should be well above the Henderson poverty line and significantly higher than the current Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY.

Education Continuum

While the focus of this review is higher education, there is no doubt that aspirations to participate in and the capacity to perform at university are informed by the students' experiences with family and school. A government commitment to encourage excellence while widening participation in higher education will require innovative and purposeful strategies to ignite the enthusiasm for tertiary study and life-long learning early in school education. This should also encourage families' involvement in the life of the university in ways that support the aspiration and life chances of their children.

UWS believes that:  
» a university is a distinct institution which can and should be distinguished from other tertiary education providers in legislation and policy. Universities have a unique role as research-led institutions where new knowledge is generated, applied and transmitted.  
» vocational education and higher education should continue to have distinct missions, despite the fact that there may be some overlap and sometimes contestation of missions.

There is an important and complementary role for vocational education and UWS believes that there are many areas where universities and VET providers could and should work more collaboratively. To facilitate diversity and meaningful differentiation UWS recommends an umbrella body be established to support the distinct but complementary role of the different sectors (university, TAFE and private providers), with clear and effective articulation between them.

Movement between the sectors needs to be better facilitated in several ways. This will require funding being made available for developing and implementing good practice in VET-higher education articulation. There is a cost to providing VET pathways. We therefore recommend that funding be allocated in the form of a loading to be added to Commonwealth funding of those undergraduate places taken by VET students entering with credit to allow for the extra transitional and support costs.

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» students should be encouraged and allowed to work and save during university breaks without being financially disadvantaged through a reduction in their allowance and should also be allowed to earn greater income from part time work without adverse effects on their allowance;
» scholarships should be enhanced in number and conditions;
» income support for students with a disability should be increased;
» students should be entitled to the Low Income Health Care Card;
» HECS should not be expanded to cover living costs

Higher Education’s Role in the National Innovation System

The University of Western Sydney holds strongly to the view that all universities, by definition, must be research-led. Whatever the level of intensity or focus on research the institution chooses or is able to achieve, the best way to foster a sustainable innovation culture in Australia is to embed a culture of research-based innovation at all levels of higher education and to strengthen the interconnection of teaching and research.

The notion of a teaching-only university is an oxymoron. This term belies the internationally accepted concept of a university. The fundamental advantage of a university is the presence of teaching staff who are also scholars and researchers and can embed the methods of critical enquiry, the culture of research based innovation and new knowledge as it emerges in the undergraduate program, as well as passing the baton of research capability to next generation.

Widening Participation

Australia must have a comprehensive and codified commitment to widening participation. Only with well-crafted and evidence-based policy and funding initiatives will the higher education sector achieve the increased number of graduates necessary to sustain national growth and productivity and to underpin a highly skilled, inventive and culturally competent workforce.

UWS strongly supports the approaches outlined in the UK paper Higher Education at Work. There should be both a national strategy and local approaches to improving participation and the success of Indigenous and low SES students especially. This would include initiatives to improve aspirations, confidence, educational achievement, retention and awareness of university. Effective programs must begin during or before upper primary schooling and target parents and communities.

Assuring the Quality of the Student Experience

UWS recommend that a comprehensive and clear framework for tracking, proving and improving the quality of the student experience and its outcomes be developed. A four level quality evaluation framework provides one model of how this could be achieved. It would focus on the quality of:
1. design
2. resourcing and support
3. implementation
4. impact

The dramatic increase in student:staff ratios over the last 15 years is both an indicator and a major inhibitor of the quality of the student experience and must be addressed.

It needs to be recognised that no model will compensate fully for the funding hole ($9.8M for UWS) left by voluntary student unionism and its impact on services for, and the representation of, students. If Australian students are to enjoy an experience of university comparable to the best available internationally and international students are to be attracted to Australian universities in the years to come this must be addressed.

Internationalisation in Higher Education

Australia sits geographically at the margins of the most rapid economic transformations of our times; those of east and south Asia. Few Australian-born students, however, have the linguistic or cultural skills to work and live successfully in a region that is becoming educationally sophisticated, multilingual and economically self-sufficient. This is a major challenge in securing Australia’s place in the region’s future.

In our view the Government should:
clearly articulate the value of internationalisation of universities for the economic, social and political future of Australia;

facilitate increased international exchange and educational programs (e.g. languages);

work with universities to overcome the financial and other barriers to greater numbers of Australian undergraduates and postgraduates attending overseas universities as part of their programs;

make a long-term commitment to the Endeavour Scheme;

expand the University Mobility in the Asia-Pacific (UMAP) program;

recognise the long-term economic value to Australia of increasing the number of scholarships available for international postgraduate research students;

support collaborative schemes which enable increased numbers of Australian students from primary school onwards to study Asian languages and study in Asian and other overseas schools and universities.

Community Engagement in Australian Higher Education

The rising focus on community engagement reflects the changing values and role of higher education in society and the broader community's changing expectations of its universities.

The term is now generally taken to describe the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

Greater levels and more diverse modes of engagement are one element of a world-class, responsive and innovative tertiary sector. The rise of targeted investment in community engagement by universities and governments overseas is evidence that the intellectual exploration of critical societal issues and challenges is increasingly connecting university teaching and research with sources of external industry and community-based knowledge, expertise, assets, and opportunities.

Community engagement is not only a legitimate and appropriate role for contemporary higher education institutions but one powerful means of addressing national priorities and contributing university-generated knowledge to the solution of issues that affect our nation. Engagement is a force for strengthening and diversifying the intellectual capacity and strategic agendas of universities and should be explicitly recognised in resource allocation.

Connectedness to our communities is a key aspiration for UWS. This was acknowledged by AUQA in 2007:

"this commitment to its immediate communities is a significant distinguishing feature of UWS, which may well be termed a "university of the people"."

In Australia a hybrid funding model for engagement may be most effective. While third stream funding creates a separation of engagement from teaching and research, the visibility and accountability it confers has some usefulness. At the same time, quality and impact require an integrated view of engagement as core business.

Because engagement involves external partnerships, it is time intensive and requires facilitation across academia and the community. Effective engagement requires investment in staff development, curricular reform, and evaluation and monitoring strategies. These features represent the essential infrastructure that must be in place to support university engagement with communities, and these costs must be reflected in any funding scheme.

An Australian approach to funding engagement might have at least four aspects:

» Attention to the role of engagement in research funding and teaching quality schemes;

» A specific fund for engagement, driven by national and regional priorities, that is distributed to universities to develop the core infrastructure and capacity for engagement, and to launch specific initiatives;

» Institutions would monitor and report progress according to their individual agreements and agreed upon performance indicators and benchmarks. Universities meeting their impact measures would have engagement funds move into base funding;

» The Commonwealth could establish programs to recognise the achievements and impact of university-community collaboration.

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8 Australian Universities Quality Agency, Report of an audit of University of Western Sydney, January 2007, p3
Meeting National and Local Needs

We believe that a comprehensive approach to the supply and demand of graduates is required. This will enable universities to:

- develop excellent programs which meet national priorities;
- develop pathways programs which improve the aspirations of school and mature age students, increase their confidence and facilitate their transition to university;
- actively promote community engagement as a core part of their teaching;
- realign courses and academic programs;
- provide salaries, incentives, and facilities to attract leading academics and other professional staff required for the relevant disciplines;
- address the significant shortage of science, technology, engineering and mathematics students and teachers;
- increase access to work-integrated learning and internship schemes.

University Governance and Sector Regulation

The best way of regulating universities and ensuring their compliance with legislation, regulations and policy is for institutions to be autonomous but responsible and accountable for achieving their mission, for the appropriate use of public funds and for achieving their purposes within the national system. At present, there is far too much reporting and regulation without a productive outcome or meaningful purpose.

UWS supports the establishment of an independent, determinative and integrative Commission or Council that would administer and ensure the effective use of the funds allocated to post-secondary education, develop policy positions and provide advice to Government, and perform other functions outlined in section 3.9 of this submission. The creation of a sector-wide Commission would involve the states signing over their higher education mandates and negotiating responsibilities for VET. We would support the Commonwealth taking over responsibility for higher education through negotiation of an appropriate framework with the States and universities.

The University of Western Sydney does not favour a single model of university governance. By virtue of their histories, profiles, and communities, universities have different needs and expectations with respect to the model of governance that suits them best.

All universities would agree that the long period of over-regulation and micro-reporting imposed on universities by the Federal Government has been to their detriment, undermining university independence and draining university resources. These resources could more fruitfully be allocated to educational delivery, research and community engagement. In the longer term, the most substantial opportunities for reform to reporting requirements could flow from fundamental change in the relationship between the Commonwealth and the universities. The submission makes a number of other recommendations to reduce over-regulation.
Higher education around the world is transforming to meet the changing knowledge needs of the twenty-first century. Global issues – climate change, economic instability, food security, energy, educational access, health, and intercultural understanding, among other pressing challenges – require new and evolving approaches to research and teaching, as well as our expectations for our graduates.

Universities will need to develop a more intentional and focused set of intellectual strengths, take a more integrated approach to research and teaching, act collaboratively rather than competitively and tap into external sources of knowledge and expertise. This shift in emphasis and expectation carries with it an expanded and shifting conception of knowledge transfer.

The wide diffusion of knowledge across all sectors of society will shape the way universities interpret their roles. They are no longer the primary source of innovation or the privileged repositories of expertise. Contemporary questions and tasks require networked approaches to the discovery and exchange of information between the university sector and its professional and community partners.

In addition, major providers of research funding in the US and Europe have recognised that collaborative and engaged research linking academia and external organisations and communities accelerates discovery and application. The future research of global coalitions of scholars will be based on networked models drawing on diverse sources of expertise and working together across disciplinary boundaries to generate, disseminate and apply new knowledge. Engagement with communities of various kinds will accelerate the exchange of knowledge in ways that strengthen and accelerate its impact on critical issues of development, equity and social cohesion for regions and nations.

At the same time the pervasive rhetoric of higher education as an industry and export commodity and of institutional and sector-wide efficiency and effectiveness belies the critical importance the sector plays in the development of aspirations of Australia and its people. The UK White Paper Higher Education at Work, High Skills: High Value, comments on the significant evidence that highly skilled graduates are beneficial to the economy but also that wider participation and success in higher education has benefits that go much further than economic prosperity.

This Review provides an opportunity to articulate and describe the transformative impact of a higher education, to recognise the great value of university-led innovation and to acknowledge the contributions of universities which engage with their communities in a spirit of partnership and reciprocity.

**Functions of Higher Education**

The functions of higher education, as described in the discussion paper, are appropriate insofar as they argue that modern universities have two core functions: developing, using or fostering the use of new knowledge; and sharing and disseminating knowledge more broadly.

However the functions described are neither broad nor bold enough.

There is a need for an explicit recognition of the role that higher education should play for Australians whatever their backgrounds, to realise their abilities and aspirations and change their lives for the better by providing wider perspectives on their place in society and opportunities to contribute and prosper.

There is also the need to recognise the key role that universities play in:

- contributing to economic, social and environmental progress and new ideas
- enhancing social inclusion and reducing social and economic disadvantage
- acting as an informed and critical voice
- contributing to a democratic and civil society
- community and regional engagement

UWS believes that the Government must affirm the critical importance of higher education for individuals and the nation and particularly for growing urban regions such as Greater Western Sydney, Western Melbourne and geographically

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9 Higher Education at Work, High Skills: High Value, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, p. 8, 10, 2008
distinct semi-urbanised regions such as the Hunter (University of Newcastle) or northern Queensland (James Cook University).

Characteristics of Higher Education

UWS supports the characteristics of higher education as articulated in the Discussion Paper but they should be broadened to recognise:

» a future for universities which focuses more explicitly on interdependent knowledge relationships internal and external to academic institutions;

» that the nexus between teaching and research is integral to a distinctive university experience and pivotal to the sector’s contribution to Australia’s development, international relationships and partnerships;

» that the quality and breadth of the student experience should be a fundamental driver of sector-wide reform and all students should have access to a vibrant and challenging learning environment no matter which school or university they attend;

» community engagement as a fundamental and funded facet of contemporary higher education;

» that the sector must be organised so as to give emphasis and priority to widening access and promoting success in higher education.

What is a university and does it have distinct roles compared with other post-secondary education providers?

A core question that needs to be answered by the Review is, ‘What is a university?’ A university in our view is a research-based institution where new knowledge is generated, applied and transmitted and where the focus of graduate attributes and staff skills is building social capital and national capacity for the knowledge economy. Other post-secondary education has the complementary features of applying and transmitting knowledge where the purpose is to develop a labour force in specific areas. The former drives the national agenda, the latter serves the national agenda.

While the post-secondary sector (public and private) can be differentiated on epistemological grounds there is always blurring at the boundaries. The best sector differentiator remains the nature of academic awards offered.

Clear distinctions between the sectors are evident in the National Protocols and the policies covering higher education approvals processes. Fundamentally, these distinctions arise from the contrasting mission of higher education in discovery and scholarship in teaching for professional employment and vocational education meeting industry training needs.

The Australian Quality Framework has served the sector well and provides an opportunity for this sector differentiation to be more finely tuned and more broadly understood. The nature of awards should be linked to institutional capacity to support them. Consequently, post-secondary foundation, RTO and VET training should continue to be linked to those awards that are directed to competency development from certificate through to advanced diploma level.

Awards that generate new knowledge or prepare professionals for independent practice requiring high levels of judgement and specialised knowledge should be restricted to those institutions that focus on capacity building through the generation and application of new knowledge, i.e. universities. Research awards at doctoral and masters and professional bachelor degrees such as medicine and pharmacy level are and should remain uniquely university degrees.

The development of bachelor and masters coursework awards in the private sector (eg colleges of divinity and business colleges) have taken ground previously occupied exclusively by universities, ground which has been formally ceded by governments with the changes to National Protocols, allocation of HECS places, FEE-HELP and state accreditation measures. This trend will only continue, but will need close monitoring for quality and depth of educational programs. We would argue that the intellectual sophistication, opportunities and insights of learning in a research active environment are significant features of a university education.
In tomorrow’s world a nation’s wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract and retrain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster – making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large.  

3.1 Meeting Labour Market and Industry Needs

Question 2: Are there impediments to the higher education sector being able to innovate in the development of courses and programs? What are these impediments and how could they be removed?

Main points

- Over-regulation by government and professional bodies limits innovation
- Overall inadequate funding levels and rigid funding model

The development of innovative courses and programs is time consuming and necessarily involves a long lead time to develop changes, conduct consultations and gain approvals both internally and externally, and then communicate the changes to students, industry and the community.

The capacity of universities to invest in significant change in courses and programs has been hampered by the reduction in Government funding in real terms which has led to significant increases in student to staff ratios and consequent workloads. (Refer to section 3.8 of this submission regarding a proposed funding level and model.)

The Commonwealth has sought to drive the provision of places in the system in part by allocating new places to areas on the skills shortage list used for assessing skilled migration. This has caused some frustration because:

- the new places do not always align with student interests (eg engineering);
- the new places and their location may distort the provision of clinical places (eg nursing); and
- the funding for the new places does not meet the real costs of provision (eg clinical psychology).
Nevertheless, the Commonwealth expects universities to account for the new places strictly with little allowance for the vagaries of student demand. The student load targets set for each of the large number of funding categories have been a major difficulty in efforts to offer flexible interdisciplinary programs which respond more quickly to changing student interests. Recent changes to reduce the number of separate funding categories for the Commonwealth Grant Scheme are welcome but should go further.

Continued Commonwealth and HECS funding does not cover the full average costs of running programs in any university. There is no explicit allowance for, or anything spare, to fund the start-up of new courses or to offer valuable but expensive boutique courses such as drama or fine arts. This accentuates the difficulties caused when the limited funding for growth is tied to inflexible outcomes.

Over-regulation by government and professional bodies limits innovation

The Commonwealth requires very detailed information on programs for its ‘Going to Uni’ website. This adds to the lead-time for introducing new programs. The website adds little to consumer protection which is, in any case, a higher risk in parts of the private sector than it is for public universities. Moreover, in attempting to fit a great diversity of offerings into a single template, it fails to reflect the flexible opportunities offered by universities. For example, it gives the impression that some disciplines in science are only available at a few universities simply because they happen to offer a named degree in the particular area.

The Commonwealth also requires universities to seek approval for terminating programs in many areas. In addition to being another piece of red tape, this stifles innovation.

Postgraduate programs are largely deregulated with a range of flexible modular programs emerging to meet market demand quickly. This has been facilitated by the flexibility to offer fee-paying programs. However, in this context, ongoing program innovation requires the capacity to recover the full costs of development.

Quality assurance is another costly burden. Elaborate and overlapping standards and uncoordinated accreditation requirements set by government and professional bodies add to the cost of education and work against the provision of professional programs.

Question 3: What are the appropriate mechanisms at the national and local level for ensuring higher education meets national and local needs for high level skills? What is the role of state and territory governments in this area?

Main points

Universities have a positive record in meeting high level skill needs. Employment of graduates is high and local employers believe job skills are improving and graduates are satisfied with their generic skills. However the role of a university is far broader than a narrow focus on meeting skills needs. It encompasses lifelong learning, career development and personal fulfilment. Regional innovation, technology transfer, business development, community service, building social capital and addressing inequalities and international linkages have become embedded in thinking, strategy and rhetoric, but not, as yet, in government policy or funding regimes.

To ensure higher education meets the needs for higher level skills and social development we believe the Government should:

1. ensure funding levels for universities are adequate (through core funding, loadings and University Agreements as outlined in section 3.8 of this submission)
2. recognise the need to increase participation of mature age students, and other groups with low participation in higher education, including Indigenous, low SES and other equity groups
3. commit to community engagement as a core function of universities
4. establish a national Australian Tertiary Education Commission or similar body

The provision of additional set up funding will be critical for some universities to be able to establish new fields of study to meet growing local demand and economic development.
The role of a university is far broader than a narrow focus on meeting skills needs

The Discussion Paper states: One key expectation of the higher education sector is that it will assist in meeting Australia's needs for highly skilled and capable people.  

While UWS agrees that universities play a critical role in providing graduates who are highly skilled and capable, we are concerned about a tendency to over-emphasise this role. We prefer a broader view of the main function of higher education, as identified in the Dearing Report on higher education in the UK: "to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfillment".

Universities do much more than meet current labour market and industry needs. Highly skilled and capable people committed to lifelong learning are vital to ensure long-term Australia's economic growth and international competitiveness.

Universities nationally have a positive record in meeting high level skill needs

Nationally, graduate employment is high. In 2007, 85% of new bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time work were employed full-time within 6 months of finishing their degrees and only 5% of those available for work were not working. These are the strongest employment results since 1990.

The national course experience survey of graduates, conducted six months after they finish their degrees, shows students recognise the generic skills gained through their university education. Most graduates acknowledge that they gained the skills of: written communication (70%), analytical skills (71%), problem-solving (68%), tackling unfamiliar problems (70%), self-management (68%), teamwork (55%), valuing other points of view (71%), and transferable skills (70%).

The success of universities in meeting needs for high level skills is demonstrated by the UWS Employer Survey 2005 and 2007 about employer perceptions of the key capabilities of UWS graduates:

» Employers view UWS as friendly, relevant, practical, progressive, flexible and workplace-focused

» Recurring comments expressed satisfaction with the quality of graduates, especially their practical experience, and noted improvement over the period from 2005 to 2007

» The five most important graduate capabilities identified in the survey were effective communication, flexibility and adaptability, commitment to ethical practice, willingness to learn from errors, and effective organisation and time management

» Performance in all these areas was rated highly by graduates.

The real challenge for universities is to look beyond immediate job skills to lifelong learning and career development. Too often, the focus from business is on skills graduates need on entry into the labour market and ignores the adaptive skills and continuing career development to keep them productive and meeting new challenges.

2007 BIHECC Report Recommendations

UWS endorses the recommendations of the 2007 BIHECC (the Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council) Report to meet national and local needs for high level skills, particularly:

1. establish an employability strategy fund for universities to review their work on developing employability skills and address gaps

2. improve and increase access to Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Streamlining WIL processes and increasing WIL access would help employers to meet short term skills shortages. The National Internship Scheme reinforces this recommendation and states that there should be a commitment by the Commonwealth Government to take a more active role in promoting an expansion of internships and WIL to address Australia's skill shortages and to improve linkages between university study and workforce readiness

3. encourage businesses to provide structured cadetships and for Commonwealth and State Governments to expand internship opportunities within their own departments and agencies.

14 Graduate Course Experience 2006 (Graduate Careers Australia, 2007).
15 http://staff.uws.edu.au/staff/adminorg/coserv/opqa/stats
The need to increase participation

A key aspect of meeting future skills needs and for national innovation and prosperity is to increase participation in higher education. In particular, the participation of groups underrepresented in higher education (including Indigenous, low SES and other equity groups) needs to increase.

Universities need to be funded and supported to enable this to occur, with intervention from school level onwards. Section 3.2 considers ways to improve participation in higher education.

A recognition of commitment to community engagement as a core aspect of universities (see section 3.7)

Critical to improving skill levels, innovation and economic and social prosperity is community engagement as a core aspect of the role of universities, integrated into their teaching, research and other functions.

The last decade has seen a dramatic rise in the articulation and codification of the role of higher education institutions globally in rural and urban regions. A parallel set of expectations has formed among communities and organisations in their catchment areas that ‘their’ local institutions will assist, partner with and involve them in knowledge transfer and professional education for young and old. International mobility and information exchange simply amplifies these demands. Universities are expected to be connected, flexible, responsive and committed in their contributions to their communities.

The recent OECD international study of universities in their regions17 based on case studies of 14 regions in 12 countries, concludes that

Higher education institutions have a significant impact on the local and regional economy… (as) … employers and customers as well as suppliers of goods and services … income and employment … regional gross domestic product … enhancing the human capital (and) pool of knowledge […] HEIs are becoming a key resource … through attracting and retaining talent in the region … (and providing) local gateways to … inward investment (p2).

However,

In centralised systems, mainline allocation of core funding to public HEIs is often based on criteria such as population or number of students that do not reward regional engagement (p3).

In Australia regionally focused universities, like UWS, take seriously their mandate; however there are few structured incentives for this role and most pursue community and industry development and partnerships despite the lack of dedicated, long-term resource support.

The OECD concludes, inter alia, that

OECD countries that want to mobilise their higher education system or part of it in support of regional development need to ensure that their higher education policy – which embraces teaching, research and public service – includes an explicit regional dimension (p6).

What is the role of State Government in this?

Unfortunately, the NSW universities’ experience of the State Government is largely one of disconnection and a lack of support or funding. For example, the NSW Government identified key market demand areas of logistics, financial services and the coal industry, but does not include any reference to the role that universities can and must play in providing graduates to serve innovation in these sectors18. The State’s explicit and often-stated position has been that the Commonwealth is responsible for funding universities and that the State has no obligation or capacity to contribute to their development or running costs. NSW and ACT universities have lost competitive tenders and philanthropic opportunities that would have brought major research and development initiatives to the State because of a lack of preparedness to co-fund these.

UWS believes State Government should:
» seek universities’ input into and support for innovation
» act as a partner with universities in identifying and addressing high level skill needs and gaps
» promote the importance and value of students studying in identified current and emerging areas of priority or labour market need

17 OECD, Project on supporting the contribution of higher education institutions to regional development Final Report, 2007. http://www.oecd.org/document/48/0,3343,en_2649_35961291_39872432_1_1_1_1,00.html

not charge payroll tax to universities (in NSW the only education institutions required to pay this tax [6% on payroll] are universities)
provide funding and other support to universities consistent with State and national priorities, especially where it enables institutions to leverage philanthropic, industry and Commonwealth funds and programs.

Question 4: How adequate are the mechanisms for aligning supply and demand of graduates? How do pricing and labour market signals impact on student choices?

Main points

» the current mechanisms are clearly not sufficient as the gap between supply and demand for university graduates in some key professions is already large and growing.
» universities have a key role to play in the supply of graduates but also in engagement and pathways activities which help to shape aspirations, attitudes and career development for school students and within the community for potential mature age students.
» encouraging greater participation in university and improving participation is critical. This requires extensive and long term efforts within schools, industry and within the community.
» universities need more resources to provide pathways, improve retention and build engagement.

Clearly the current funding mechanisms are not sufficient as the gap between supply and demand for university graduates in certain professions is already large. Severe shortages in health, engineering and accounting are being filled by migration. Shortfalls of up to 19,000 scientists and 51,000 engineers by 2013 have been predicted, although a recent detailed audit suggests the demand can be met if existing capacity available through university places and migration is filled. At the same time, industry has significant training needs at all levels as it adapts to new technology and new challenges such as climate change (which were not considered in the earlier studies).

Factors Affecting Student Choice of Course or Career
Efforts to address the supply of graduates with appropriate skills to meet changing and evolving demand must address the range of factors affecting student choice of course and career.

As an example, a major study of attitudes to science, engineering and technology careers was conducted by Macquarie University in 2005. It confirmed that students are highly career-focused. The most important considerations of high school students in choosing a career are community benefit, interaction with different people, variety and challenge, and opportunities for career advancement. Their school experience, especially the enthusiasm of their teachers, shapes their attitudes. The majority of respondents believe science is exciting, relevant and of community benefit, but does not offer the other characteristics they seek in a career. University students value the same things but attach more importance to money and job security. They believe science careers offer neither of these.

Contrary to all these perceptions, the experience of science professionals matches the job characteristics which students indicated they were seeking. To add to the puzzle, employers do not believe that a science degree delivers the most important graduate attributes in communication and teamwork, although it does give good training in analysis and problem-solving. All groups believe universities have a key role to play in promoting science.

Current Government Efforts to Address Supply of Graduates
Looking at the success of each of these in turn:

Tuition prices (HECS) – clearly price and opportunity cost will have some impact on student choice on whether to enrol in university at all, whether to study full time or part time, whether to continue and potentially what field to study.

However, lessening HECS levels alone will not have any meaningful effect unless it is coupled with information to potential students which contextualises the course, promotes its purpose and graduate outcomes and uses other measures to address the range of factors affecting student choice.

[19] Bob Birrell and Virginia Rapson, ‘Clearing the myths away: higher education’s place in meeting workforce demands’ (Dusseldorf Skills Forum, 2006).
[21] Macquarie University Science, Engineering and Technology Study (Macquarie University, 2006). http://www.mq.edu.au/SET/MQ-SET-Study.pdf which canvassed the views of 1,300 high school students, 300 university students, 70 science professionals and 50 employers.
When flexible HECS was introduced in 2005, Macquarie University promoted its science courses with reduced HECS and even set HECS to zero for some courses, but saw little impact on the demand for science.

Additional CGS student places – where there is sufficient student demand for a field of study, the provision of additional CGS places in that discipline cluster is beneficial as universities will promote this field of study and work to attract students to enrol.

However, the Government has declared some areas as national priorities and provided additional CGS places, as for nursing and teaching. This approach is sensible, provided the priority areas match the demand as these students graduate, the universities are adequately resourced to meet their needs (including the practicum), and can address retention issues. It is also important to continue to address the other factors affecting student choice and to consider retention of graduates after they enter the professions.

Extra funding for some areas such as Medicine
The provision of additional set up funding will be critical for some universities to be able to establish new fields of study to meet growing demand. In establishing a medical course UWS has had to provide a major cross-subsidy for at least 7 years to establish all five years of the course, with capital grants for buildings and equipment but no transitional assistance with operating costs from the Commonwealth government.

Approval being required before universities can cease a program
The current requirement for universities to gain approval before they can cease a program is an unnecessary constraint which impedes the ability of universities to move into new programs with the funding available. Universities do not make any decision to terminate a course lightly; only a significant drop in student demand, cost or a rationalisation of overall programs would prompt such a decision. Where a program is not financially viable and the government still regards it as a priority, then the provision of additional funding would be required to enable the university to continue that program. At UWS it proved impossible to retain drama and the spectrum of fine arts because of the expense of small classes and studio teaching, but their cessation has left a gap in creative arts education in the West which all, including the University, lament.

Provision of labour market information to universities and students
While the provision of this information is important and has some influence on student choices, it will not be sufficient alone. For example, the IT industry has identified skills shortages in programming, networking and technical areas but students are not currently being drawn to IT courses and IT programs have lost staff.

The main problem is that labour market analysis usually presents relatively short-term information for particular professions rather than an accurate longer term picture. Lists of needed skills are primarily used to target professionals for immediate migration to satisfy immediate demand. They have little value in helping students choose university courses tied to particular careers because of the time lag to graduation. In some professions, with a cycle of demand, workforce planning has suffered from promoting areas after the boom has passed.

The broad liberal education of a first degree at university is a strong foundation for a career. It fosters maturity and transferable skills. Fast track options have been tried, but deliver neither academic knowledge nor greater maturity.

Proposals to Address the Supply and Demand
UWS believes that a comprehensive approach to supply and demand is required. This will involve a combination of the actions above, as well as sufficient resources to enable universities to:

- engage in outreach activities to improve the aspirations and confidence of school students and potential mature age students and to give them a sense of the courses they could study and possible careers (see section 3.2 of this submission)
- actively promote community engagement as a core part of their activities (see section 3.7 of this submission)
- improve retention of students
- provide sufficient salaries, incentives and facilities to attract leading academic and other professional staff
- revise or redevelop courses (bearing in mind the additional costs of phasing out current courses and developing new courses which may include costs of redundancies in some cases, attracting leading academics in the new field, market loadings to retain staff, and infrastructure costs for buildings and laboratories or other developments to meet the new field of study).

Employers do not in their allocation of resources rate universities as an important source of professional education.
and innovation. Universities only attract about 16% of the money business spends on higher level training. Australia has only 9 PhDs per 1,000 in the workforce, compared to 11 in the US, 20 in Germany and 28 in Switzerland. This suggests strongly that employers require incentives to become more involved with universities and reap the benefits of lifelong learning and innovation.

Universities Australia has made the case for a national internships scheme. Such a scheme would enable many more Australian university students to undertake structured work-based learning with benefits to government through a reduced need for student support and to industry through enhanced productivity. The crux of the scheme is a network of internship officers in universities and industry to coordinate placements and remodel curricula.

The following recommendations address the needs of universities in order to build on current initiatives.

- Government should fund the infrastructure to support business engagement with universities through a broad-based education and innovation strategy fund and a network of liaison positions.
- Business should receive tax incentives to encourage sponsorship of professional development programs in universities, innovation projects and workplace experience for students.
- A new scholarship and fellowship scheme should be created, similar to the Endeavour Scholarships, to encourage internships and secondments and staff exchange between universities, government agencies and business.
- Government must increase the funding for university teaching to recognise the full costs of teaching and the related contributions of research in innovative teaching, the costs of web-based technology to support innovative teaching methods, and the important work in schools outreach and business engagement which connects university teaching to the community and industry.

Question 5: Are there particular examples of good practice where you can demonstrate either rapid response to skill shortages or successful initiatives to improve generic skills?

Science in the Suburbs is one example of a pathway activity at UWS which aims to improve the aspirations of students in the region by promoting science as an area of study in school and university. More than 1,100 students from 44 Greater Western Sydney schools explored the wonders of science at UWS Hawkesbury campus in 2007. The program is a partnership between UWS and the Australian Museum. Scientific activities included ‘Fun with Reptiles’, ‘Smart Foods’, ‘Bees and Bugs’, ‘Crime Scene Investigation’, ‘Galactic Encounters with Galileo and Jellyfish’ and ‘Genes and Muscly Mice.’ The workshops were designed to give students a hands-on experience of what it is like to be a scientist. Activity booths were staffed by Museum and University staff and students, and attracted a stream of primary and high school students who fondled reptiles, marveled at chemical reactions, learned to take blood pressures and explored the region’s ecology.

Other examples of successful pathways activities by UWS are outlined in 3.2 of this submission.

Bachelor of Health Sciences

The allied health programs at UWS are being reshaped to incorporate multidisciplinary perspectives in medical science, client service, ethics, workplace communication, cultural understanding and professional activity as part of their professional health specialisations. The new program provides a foundation for capable health practitioners working in a diverse community with increasing complex and chronic conditions and a strong base for specialised development and lifelong learning. Evidence-based practice informs the theory and applications.

The health competencies are developed through a structured sequence of units:

- Health Communication - Students are encouraged to develop self-awareness of their professional, interpersonal and communication skills, enhancing their ability to develop appropriate professional relationships and talk with clients of all ages, circumstances and cultures.
- Indigenous and Cultural Perspectives in Health - The unit focuses on the generic knowledge and skills required for understanding Indigenous approaches to and experience of health, working in diverse communities and team

22 ‘A National Internship Scheme: enhancing the skills and work-readiness of Australian university graduates’ (Universities Australia, 2008).
building in a health sector where the workforce is also highly diverse.

- Ethical and Multidisciplinary Competencies - This unit enables students to explore and develop an understanding of the ethical and legal dimensions in contemporary health care. Through the use of case studies students analyse profound ethical and legal challenges facing current health care practitioners that are equally important to health professionals, consumers and society at large.

Careers & Cooperative Education

Web design, marketing plans and scientific research are some of the services offered to regional businesses under the UWS Coop Program which has matched over 1,000 students with hundreds of small businesses and community organisations since its inception 13 years ago.

‘Coop Ed’ links high-achieving students with local companies and community organisations in need of short-term professional assistance. The dual aim of the program is to add value to an organisation and provide students with practical professional experience while they are still at university.

The success of this program is well established:

- over 60% of students gain ongoing work based on their placement, and
- over 90% of students report they have gained key skills by participating in the placement programs, in particular communication, computing, teamwork, interpersonal, planning and organising skills.
- there is a high level of satisfaction reported by all participants
- the program won the 2002 Vice-Chancellor’s award for excellence
- the program was commended by AUQA in 2006.

Successful professional Coop ‘alumni’ are now taking students into their own organisations, passing on the benefits to those who follow them.

The UWS School of Communication Arts and the Television Technical Operators College jointly developed the Graduate Certificate in Television Technical Operations to address the chronic shortage of skilled television technical operators in Australia's broadcast sector.

The concept for the course came from the broadcast Innovation and Business Skills Council (IBSA) and UWS academics who were concerned by the lack of highly skilled broadcast trained staff and absence of relevant technical training. Industry forums were organised to discuss strategies to address the critical skills shortage. DEEWR was approached to co-fund with the broadcast industry an innovative vocational course. UWS was able to establish and design the curriculum within three months of the industry forums.

The course is based on practical workshops and on-the-job experience, recognising that classroom based teaching does not suit broadcast operational training. The pooling of industry resources across the broadcast sector is required to supply the multimillion dollar equipment needed to properly equip students with these skills. Students attend practice based workshops and then work for two days in-field or in-studio on Australia’s top television programs. They learn by observing and working with experienced professionals and participating in the establishment of technology-based television transmission systems. Every weekend students work on a range of live programs.

Bachelor of Business and Commerce

UWS has developed a new Bachelor of Business and Commerce course after extensive research with regional businesses on what new graduates were lacking and what key skills they seek. As a result the course has been completely rewritten to ensure all business graduates have:

1. a broad understanding of business: a common core to the degree ensures a broad exposure to all areas of a business to ensure students understand where and how they contribute to an organisation and its changing needs and are able to navigate different areas and portfolios within an organisation.
2. generic business skills: Business Academic Skills is a core subject which focuses on literacy skills (from basic grammar to academic referencing); analysing situations, identification of problems and decision making; communication skills such as
structuring communication and writing reports; business ethics; and business etiquette.

3. the ability to apply their learning to the real world: to ensure students are ‘business ready’ on graduation, each student has to undertake an engaged learning unit which might involve working in class on a real business case for an organisation such as a marketing or business plan. These activities not only give students the valuable experience of applying their knowledge in professional contexts, but also help organisations to gain knowledge they would not have the staff or skills to develop in the normal course of their operations.

4. Substantial numbers of students have worked in their breaks in the developmental stage of the ‘SMExcellence’ project, which will be a web-based UWS resource for small to medium enterprises in Western Sydney and beyond. The project involves students interviewing small business owners, researching relevant financial, legal, business and regulatory information and developing and maintaining a website to help community members to set up, plan, monitor and build small to medium enterprises.

Question 6: How effectively are Australian higher education institutions responding to demographic change, especially in providing lifelong learning to meet the challenge of the ageing population and the need for upgrading of skills and re-training?

Main points

Metropolitan universities, such as UWS, have a distinctive role in meeting the challenges of demographic and social change and in shaping innovative education programs and regional development initiatives which meet diverse community needs.

UWS is, however, limited by the funding arrangements and the residual effect of the binary divide. Older universities can call upon significant accrued assets and financial resources, whereas newer universities such as UWS do not have these historical endowments. Community engagement and pathways activities essential to meet these challenges are not funded.

The best way to respond to the challenges of demographic and social change in developing urban and rural regions is to focus on engaged learning and research which delivers:

- graduates with the knowledge and higher order skills to find future business or community solutions and generate regional employment and social cohesion.
- a rich and broadening experience of university education.
- programs which foster creativity, leadership, lifelong learning and career development.
- heightened aspirations in the community to tackle broad-based first degrees and postgraduate professional pathways.
- pathways to university at any stage of life.

Demographic Challenges for Greater Western Sydney

Greater Western Sydney is a powerhouse of growth and development and is predicted to account for 25% of all national population growth over the next 25 years. The region has 242,000 businesses and generates more than $72 billion (gross regional product) in economic output a year, making its economy the third largest in Australia after the Sydney CBD and Melbourne.23 Employment growth in the region over the last 10 years has been 16% compared to 11% for the whole of Sydney. UWS draws 68% of its students from Greater Western Sydney.

Yet, Greater Western Sydney is underprovided for and underrepresented in higher education and the professions. The higher education participation rate in Greater Western Sydney is 3% compared to 5.2% for the rest of Sydney and the gap is increasing. The percentage of the population with post-secondary qualifications is 44.6% in GWS compared to 48.5% in the rest of Sydney.

Penrith, Parramatta and Liverpool are major regional city employers. There are major centres at Bankstown, Blacktown and Campbelltown and planned major centres at Leppington and Rouse Hill, all served by UWS campuses. The Western Sydney employment hub centres on the M4/M7 intersection. Major business parks are located at Blacktown, Penrith and Bankstown. The University has campuses at Campbelltown, Bankstown, Parramatta, Blacktown, Penrith and Richmond. The NSW Government-sponsored Sydney Metropolitan Strategy for the next 25 years envisages an extra 500,000 jobs in Sydney, with half of them in GWS. Nonetheless those who live in Greater Western Sydney face alarmingly long trips to work and study.

23 ‘Regional Economic Profile’ (Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board, 2006).
As the local university, UWS has a major role in raising aspirations in its community and educating able professionals. Among the characteristics graduates will need to find future solutions and generate regional business and services are creativity, leadership and a capacity for lifelong learning and career development. ‘The skills agenda can have the unfortunate effect of diverting us from the fact that universities are not about narrow competencies. They are about producing people who have powerful analytical and critical capacities . . . which can then be applied to any area of the economy.’

Academic programs must expose students to research and scholarship and provide experiential problem-based learning in the community. Teaching, research and community engagement are intertwined in this endeavour.

Question 7: What is the relevance and applicability of the findings and approaches proposed in the United Kingdom paper, Higher Education at Work, for increasing skills levels in the workforce to Australia?

Main points

The UK paper Higher Education at Work resonates with many of the problems and challenges facing higher education in Australia.

UWS agrees with the recognition in the UK paper of the significant benefit of higher education to the economy and believes the benefits would be similar in Australia:

1. increase participation in higher education to 50% of those aged 18 to 30 with a growth of at least a percentage point every two years (p11).
2. increase the proportion of working age adults with a degree (level 4 and above being equivalent to a 2 year Diploma/Degree and above) from 31% to 34% by 2011, 36% by 2014 and 40% or more by 2020, noting that Japan, Canada, Russia, Israel and the US are at 40% or more currently (pp11-12).
3. address inequitable participation based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, social background and region (p12).
4. address the significant concern in the up stream supply, equitable participation and numbers of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Provide funding and develop a nationally coordinated strategy to encourage more students to enrol in science technology, engineering and maths courses (pp16-18).
5. improve information, advice, and guidance for primary and secondary school students on careers, aspiring to university and university curriculum.
6. promote the study of languages and periods of study and work experience abroad in recognition of attractions and demands of a global economy.
7. work to attract mature age students, noting that many people already in the workforce would be interested in enrolling at university if they were given time off work and could afford it. (p25)
8. work to attract non-traditional students and address issues such as a lack of confidence, cost, lack of time and not knowing where to begin.
9. address set-up costs for new courses to enable universities to develop a range of new courses (p26).
10. develop schemes to encourage academic interchange with business and secondments to and from business.

UWS supports the following findings and approaches in the paper and recommends this Review also considers their adoption:

- increase participation in higher education to 50% of those aged 18 to 30 with a growth of at least a percentage point every two years (p11).
- increase the proportion of working age adults with a degree (level 4 and above being equivalent to a 2 year Diploma/Degree and above) from 31% to 34% by 2011, 36% by 2014 and 40% or more by 2020, noting that Japan, Canada, Russia, Israel and the US are at 40% or more currently (pp11-12).
- address inequitable participation based on gender, ethnicity, disability, age, social background and region (p12).
- address the significant concern in the up stream supply, equitable participation and numbers of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Provide funding and develop a nationally coordinated strategy to encourage more students to enrol in science technology, engineering and maths courses (pp16-18).
- improve information, advice, and guidance for primary and secondary school students on careers, aspiring to university and university curriculum.
- promote the study of languages and periods of study and work experience abroad in recognition of attractions and demands of a global economy.
- work to attract mature age students, noting that many people already in the workforce would be interested in enrolling at university if they were given time off work and could afford it. (p25)
- work to attract non-traditional students and address issues such as a lack of confidence, cost, lack of time and not knowing where to begin.
- address set-up costs for new courses to enable universities to develop a range of new courses (p26).
- develop schemes to encourage academic interchange with business and secondments to and from business.

UWS is also open to the idea of foundation or associate degrees co-designed by universities with individual employers and for accreditation of employers’ in-house training where appropriate (pp22-23 of the UK report).
3.2 Opportunities to Participate in Higher Education

Every student in the nation should have the opportunity to pursue post secondary education. We therefore recommend that the [government] commit to an unprecedented effort to expand higher education access and success by improving student preparation and persistence, addressing non academic barriers and providing significant increases in aid to low-income students.

A few years ago one of our students was named “NSW Adult Learner of the Year”. Her name is Freweyni Tesfahuney.

Freweyni left school at the age of 12, when she fled from Eritrea to Sudan with one of her brothers after being separated from her family. In Sudan she found work as a house servant. Eritrean social pressures however, dictated that she must marry – by the age of 14, she was a wife. Freweyni and her husband were granted refugee status from the civil war in Sudan and came to Australia in 1996. Not long after her arrival, she enrolled in an Intensive English Centre in Sydney. In 1997, Freweyni enrolled in the Access English for Migrant Youth Course at Bankstown TAFE and in 1998 she completed the Certificate in Adult Foundation Education. She then went on to complete the Certificate in General Education (Year 10) in 1999 and in 2001 she completed the Tertiary Preparation Certificate (Year 12 equivalent). In 2002, Freweyni finished her Nursing Assistant Certificate at TAFE. In 2003 she was accepted to the Bachelor of Nursing Program at the University of Western Sydney and she graduated in 2007.

Question 8: Should there be a national approach to improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success in higher education?

Main points

- There should be both national and local approaches to improving the participation and success of Indigenous and low SES students. The most effective approach would be to develop an integrated and funded national strategy for improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success in higher education, with the scope for universities to develop initiatives to respond to identified local needs.

- A holistic approach needs to be taken for improving aspirations, confidence, educational achievement, retention and awareness of university study as an option on a continuum from primary school to university.

- A comprehensive national commitment for widening participation, with strategy, funding and actions similar to Widening Participation in Higher Education Strategy in the UK (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/) is needed including:
  - a national peak body (eg Higher Education Equity Advisory Council) working alongside the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council - with broad cross-sectoral representation from government, universities, schools, VET and employers, including practitioner and student representation
  - funding provided through the core funding to universities, a loading for disadvantaged students, as well as additional funding negotiated with each university in recognition of the nature of the students enrolled and the efforts to improve participation levels (see section 3.2 of this submission)
  - encouraging the development of centres of excellence focused on researching, developing and evaluating strategies to increase participation for disadvantaged students at particular universities, with the benefits of their best practice and research being provided to all universities.

- While the participation of Indigenous and low SES must be a priority, other disadvantaged groups should not be ignored. In addition to the current equity groups (low SES, NESB, students with a disability, remote and isolated students and women in non traditional areas of study), mature aged students, first in family to attend
university, and refugees are all groups with significant educational disadvantages or challenges.

- Funding for students with a disability also needs to be increased to cover direct costs, staffing and assistive technology. One approach would be to have dedicated per capita funding and to have assistive technology centres.

Indigenous Participation

The low participation level of Indigenous students in higher education (and in senior high school) is a critical issue which must be addressed. This is a significant issue for UWS given the demographics of our region:

- Greater Western Sydney (GWS) has the highest number of Indigenous Australians of any region in Australia outside the Northern Territory.26
- 1.4% of GWS residents are Indigenous Australians with 58% being less than 24 years of age.
- Indigenous residents in the region are two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than non Indigenous residents - i.e. 16.4% compared with 6.7%.

(Source – ABS 2006)

Low SES Participation

According to the report Socioeconomic Background and Higher Education Participation – An analysis of school students’ aspirations and expectations,27 Australians from lower SES backgrounds have roughly half the likelihood of participating in higher education as Australians from medium and higher SES backgrounds. This degree of inequity has remained relatively stable for over a decade, despite extensive equity initiatives across the system as a whole. The report attributes much of this inequity to the attitudes, aspirations and expectations of students from low SES groups, which are formed from an early age.

More recent research by Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd (ACER) indicates that once students with a lower SES enter university, their background does not negatively affect their chances of completing the course. To improve equity in university graduation rates, however, more needs to be done to assist students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to complete Year 12 and go on to university.28

Measures to Address Indigenous and Low SES participation

The attitudes, aspirations and lower Year 12 participation rates of Indigenous and low SES background students appear to be the major impediments to improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success in higher education. If this situation is to change, then these must be changed. This is neither a simple nor a short term process. Attitudes and aspirations are developed over a long period, being influenced by a wide range of factors such as parental example and expectations, role models, social and peer group influences and a person’s self image.

Overseas and Australian research indicates that to have any significant impact on the attitudes, aspirations and actions of Indigenous and low SES students, effective programs must be instituted much earlier in students’ education than senior school years. These programs should target upper primary and junior secondary students, their parents and communities. (The 2005 ACER Report 41 of the LSAY Project Attitudes, Intentions and Participation by Siek Toon Kho & John Ainley found that intentions to complete schooling and go on to university study were largely established by Year 9).

This implies a longer term investment in creating an awareness of the value of higher education in enhancing opportunities and employment outcomes, lifestyle and choices for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is important that universities improve their capacity and by being resourced and encouraged to develop stronger relationships with their local schools and communities; to identify particular groups who may be at risk of not attending university; to identify groups at risk of under-achievement, failure and early withdrawal from school or university study and to implement appropriate strategies to address these issues. For example, the UWS Students at Risk Project has identified Mature Age Part-time students and young males as particular groups at risk of under achievement and early withdrawal, and is developing a series of responses to enhance outcomes for these students.

An example of best practice in this area is the Widening Participation in Higher Education Strategy in the UK.29 This

26 25,697 Indigenous Australians using the 2006 Census figures
28 ACER CEO Prof. Geoff Masters commenting on Completing University: Characteristics and Outcomes of Completing and Non-completing Students by Gary N. Marks Report 51 Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) April, 2007
29 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/
is an integrated strategy which provides funding at different levels for:

1. A national aspiration-raising strategy (Aimhigher)
2. University initiatives for outreach, retention and success
3. Research and the identification and promotion of good practice, and
4. Lifelong Learning Networks to improve progression to higher education.

The UK National Audit Office report on the strategy indicates that, while still in the early stages, the various programs appear to be having some impact on increasing participation and success rates of targeted groups. For example, the participation of young full-time students from low SES backgrounds has improved by 2% in the past 4 years, and young people living in deprived areas have increased participation by 4.5%, compared with a general increase of 1.8%.

In 2008-2009 £364m will be provided by HEFCE (UK) to support students from non-traditional backgrounds. A further £100m p.a. has been spent on the Aimhigher initiative since 2005-06. A number of commentators are arguing that the funds are needed at preschool, primary and high school and the vocational sector to raise expectations, develop academic ability and pave the way to a university education.

Definition of low SES

Another issue which needs to be addressed nationally is the development of a more accurate definition of low SES than the current postcode-based measure, which assumes a student is low SES if he or she comes within a post code that is defined in the sector as low SES using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Index of Education and Occupation. The problem has always been that a low SES individual may live within a high SES post code which means his or her status as low SES is not recognised.

It is recommended that:

- The definition of low SES is reworked, as the definition based on post code is too blunt.
- The definition should relate to an assessment of the student’s income, whether either of their parents went to university, or whether the parents are on a benefit.
- If the assessment is based on location alone then it should use the tighter area of the local Census district.


The Bureau of Statistics’ Index of Education and Occupation, which is used to make the assessment of low SES status, would need to be amended to include as one of the factors whether the person holds a university degree or not, as this question has recently been deleted as a factor in this index.

An assessment of the individual student is incorporated into the definition, e.g. that the student is the first in family attending university (namely that neither parent attended university).

The 2008 Universities Australia review of the participation in higher education of people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and Indigenous people found that parental educational levels and parental occupation levels are both superior indicators of individual SES compared with postcode of home address and recommended a measure for SES that is based on parental education levels. UWS strongly supports the development of a definition of low SES which is not based on postcode.

Other Disadvantaged Groups

It is also important that other disadvantaged groups are not overlooked in terms of funding and initiatives to improve their participation. Many people experience multiple disadvantages and low income or barriers to access are often a by-product of several factors. Fortunately, many potential strategies to address the issues facing low SES and Indigenous people could also benefit many other disadvantaged groups and individuals. In addition to the currently identified equity groups (i.e. low SES, NESB, students with a disability, remote and isolated students and women in non traditional areas of study), mature aged students (particularly from low SES backgrounds), those who are first in their family to attend university and refugees are all groups with significant educational or social disadvantages in Greater Western Sydney. In addition, students who speak a language other than English at home also continue to require specific intervention strategies.

Question 9: If you support a national approach to improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success how do you see it being structured, resourced, monitored and evaluated?

Main points

Any national approach to improving Indigenous and low SES participation and success in higher education needs a comprehensive, evidenced-based and appropriately resourced strategy designed to identify and address the factors that discourage or prevent greater school completion and participation in tertiary and higher education. Such a strategy would be best developed by a national peak body with broad cross-sectoral representation from Government, universities, schools, VET and employers, including practitioner and student representation. The Government should commit to providing appropriate levels of funding for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

An integrated participation strategy would include:

- A national outreach program to raise the awareness targeted to upper primary and junior secondary students
- A national program to raise the aspirations of disadvantaged communities and parents of disadvantaged students on the importance and value of higher education in enhancing employment, financial and personal outcomes for students
- Funding for university-based outreach, participation, success and retention initiatives
- Negotiated agreements with individual universities on strategies to enhance recruitment, success and retention of disadvantaged groups with KPIs to measure outcomes
- Strategies to encourage mature age students to pursue higher education and to enhance articulation from employment and VET into higher education
- Research into issues, outcomes and the effectiveness of various strategies to improve participation and success, plus the development of a clearing-house to identify, disseminate and support effective strategies and good practice
- Appropriate financial support and supplements for individual students from the various groups.

Indigenous Participation

- The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) is the appropriate national body to address specific Indigenous issues and already has a plan which is supported by the broader education community
- DEST completed a 2007 review of best practice models and this should be released and acted on in conjunction with the Government requiring universities to develop and apply best practice models or plans
- The experiences of other international efforts to improve Indigenous participation should continue to be assessed and learned from – in particular the first nations of Canada and New Zealand
- Base funding for universities should include as one of the factors Indigenous student enrolment and catchment
- Universities should be able to submit applications for additional funding for specific projects to meet the IHEAC current and best practice models/plans
- The Individual Support Package (ISP), Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) and Away from Base funding should be increased to meet the real costs of the programs
- Universities should be able to seek additional funding through the University Agreements process.
Possible Integrated Student Equity Model

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

» Develop integrated equity strategy and funding models
» Monitor progress

Higher Education Equity Advisory Council
» DEEWR HE Equity Branch
» Universities
» School sector
» VET
» Employers
» Practitioners
» Community
» Students

VET/Employment progression and articulation

National Aspiration raising program
(e.g. UK Aimhigher)
Outreach program to raise awareness, aspirations and educational achievements of disadvantaged groups

University outreach, success & retention initiatives
(Negotiated commitments KPIs)

Research, evaluation, good practice
(National Student Equity Centre)

Clearing House/support
(e.g. ADCET, UK Action)
Resourcing

Such a long term, national strategy would require a significant ongoing funding commitment from the Federal Government to succeed. It is important to recognise that in the short term it is unlikely there would be a substantial shift in the higher education participation and success rates of targeted groups. Their progress through school into higher education will take time. There would be many interim indicators of success that could be identified, measured and tracked, such as students’ attitudinal and aspirational changes and improved school retention rates.

It is difficult to estimate how much funding is needed for success without a clearly articulated strategy. However, the UK National Audit Office\(^\text{33}\) review of the Widening Participation in Higher Education strategy provides the following figures as a comparator:

From the Funding Council:

- £240 million to meet the additional costs of improving retention: £184 million based on the number of full-time students in risk categories associated with entry qualifications and age, and £56 million based on numbers of part-time students
- £92 million to meet the additional costs of widening participation: based on institutions’ recruitment of students from areas with low rates of participation in higher education or the average educational achievements of their home areas
- £87 million to Aimhigher partnerships to raise aspirations
- £21 million to Lifelong Learning Networks to improve progression
- £1 million to fund research, evaluation and identification and spreading of good practice: used to inform and support policy development and fund bodies such as Action on Access and the Higher Education Academy
- £13 million to meet the additional costs of disabled students based on numbers of students in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance to reflect additional costs in recruiting and retaining students with disabilities

From higher education institutions:

- £21 million for outreach
- £95 million on bursaries for maintenance (Living Allowance)

Clearly, the UK has made a significant commitment to its Widening Participation strategy and a similar commitment, commensurate with the size and number of Australian students and higher education institutions, would start to address the difficult task of changing attitudes and access in underrepresented segments of the population.

UWS believes that it is important to maintain the existing Commonwealth Government’s Higher Education Equity Support Program (HEESP) and Disability Support Program (DSP) funding arrangements (with modifications), since these programs provide dedicated funding to enable the universities to develop effective participation and equity initiatives. They could constitute a platform from which to increase funding and initiatives.

Participation of People with a Disability

Statistical data indicates that the higher the educational attainment of people with disabilities, the better their employment and independence outcomes. It is in the national interest, as well as that of the individuals concerned, to help people with disabilities achieve their educational potential.

The current Disability Support Program (DSP) funding needs to be expanded and modified to effectively meet both the needs of students with disabilities and their universities. The present program is under significant pressure due to the increasing costs being claimed under the Additional Support for Students with Disabilities program, which in turn reduces the funds available for the DSP Performance Funding component. The amount of DSP funding allocated towards the direct costs of support for students with disabilities needs to increase to meet this increased demand.

Additional resources are needed to address two of the most important access issues for students with disabilities – staffing and assistive technology.

Recent years have seen a significant increase in students with disabilities attending university and registering with disability services. Many of these students have complex and episodic disabilities, such as mental illness and chronic illnesses that require more frequent interventions and support from disability service staff. They may not require significant direct expenditure for adjustments, but they do require more staff time. Currently, the dedicated Federal Government funding only covers direct expenditure and project funding, not staffing or infrastructure. Because disability staffing is funded by universities, there is significant variation in the level of staffing provided and all disability staff are under substantial pressure to meet increasing work loads. The growing numbers of students with disabilities are also placing all academic and professional staff in other areas such as the examinations branch, under additional pressure.

\(^{33}\) United Kingdom Widening Participation Funding (UK National Audit Office Review, June 2008)
If, as in the UK, New Zealand and other countries, the Federal Government provided dedicated, per capita funding this would contribute to improved and more consistent staff and services to meet these increasing needs.

Direct expenditure tied to support will continue to be required but funds should also be needed to encourage the development of more inclusive teaching and learning practices and more universal access initiatives, which over the longer term may see a decrease in the need for specific support funding.

Assistive technology is potentially a very effective tool in fostering independence and access to education, employment and independent living for people with disabilities. Presently in Australia, there is significant variation in the levels of support available for people with different disabilities to be assessed and to acquire and be trained in the use of appropriate assistive technology.

A network of regional assistive technology assessment and training centres should be established and a program of government funding for the acquisition and regular upgrades of recommended technology should be established. This would enable people to acquire and develop the necessary skills in using the technology. They could take the technology and their expertise with them in transitions through education, employment and community. Variations on this type of system are operating effectively in the UK, New Zealand, the USA and Canada.

The issue of personal care costs while studying needs urgent attention. Many people with disabilities requiring personal care have limited hours provided by government. There are currently few options if they need further personal care hours to be able to pursue their studies. A personal care education supplement would help to address this shortfall.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The actual monitoring and evaluation processes for equity and access programs would depend on the particular strategy developed. However, some possible strategies would include:

- Tracking the aspirations, attitudes and educational progress of participants in targeted programs;
- Continuing to measure the higher education enrolments of targeted groups over time;
- Continuing to track the access, participation, success and retention rates of equity groups by institution, state and nationally;
- Measuring individual institution performance against agreed KPIs under negotiated agreements;
- Ongoing research and data analysis by institutions, a National Student Equity Centre, DEEWR, etc.;
- Student entry and exit surveys.

**Question 10: What institutional initiatives have proved successful in increasing low SES or Indigenous participation and success?**

UWS engages in a wide range of outreach, information, orientation and support programs and initiatives for low SES and Indigenous students in Greater Western Sydney.

**Indigenous Initiatives**

UWS has a mosaic of approaches to Indigenous participation. In summary the key aspects are outlined below (See also Attachment 1).

An embedded and whole-University approach that includes:

- the appointment of senior and specialist Indigenous positions;
- a strong Indigenous policy commitment as a foundation;
- detailed policies on Indigenous education and employment;
- specific resources for Indigenous marketing;
- Indigenous scholarships;
- an alternative entry program;
- residential programs;
- Indigenous student support services, and
- a Advisory Council and Employment and Engagement Board.

The alternative entry program, Indigenous scholarships and residential programs have been the most successful in improving participation. From 2003 to 2008, Indigenous student numbers increased by 113 (from 157 in 2003 to 270 in 2008 preliminary figures). The current participation rate is 0.91% which is 0.03% higher than 2006 and 0.36% higher than 2003.

**Indigenous PhD Student**

Laura Parker is an Indigenous PhD student at UWS working on the impact of ocean acidification and temperature on the development of the Pacific and Sydney Rock Oysters in partnership with NSW Fisheries. She has presented at an international conference in Spain. She is an outstanding student and holds the Indigenous scholarship within the College of Health and Science assisting her to continue with her doctoral studies. Laura has also been invited to speak at a conference in Monaco after her conference abstract was one of the 25 selected from 140 submitted.
Low SES and General Outreach initiatives:
The most successful UWS initiatives have included:

1. The Fast Forward transition program for Year 9-12 students in 25 priority schools in Greater Western Sydney (See Attachment 3)

   This program was developed by UWS and it has been running for four years. It focuses on able students identified as having little exposure or aspiration to go to university.

   The feedback has been extremely positive.\textsuperscript{34} For instance, Chifley Senior College High School at Mt Druitt in 2004 only had one student going on to university. By 2006 and in 2007, 26 students went on university. One of these students, now studying arts at UWS said: Fast Forward was really helpful – it teaches you how to structure your study to get the best results, motivation, and stress management. The program definitely helped me. It just opened my mind to thinking about a life at university. This student now participates in Fast Forward to mentor other high school students.

   Some extracts from the evaluation by participations included:
   \begin{itemize}
   \item 100 per cent retention of targeted students into Year 11....increased confidence, improved focus and group support of targeted students toward each other. (Senior Principal, Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
   \item there has been a clear concentration of focus by the cohort toward tertiary education with increased rates of school attendance, assessment task completion, homework centre attendance….this cohort positively impacted upon their peers. (Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
   \item The majority of students involved in the program have now indicated a belief that they can pursue tertiary education...All students involved will continue with schooling into Years 11 and 12 (Shalvey High).
   \end{itemize}

2. UWS Day for Year 11 students

   Students in Year 11 from across the Greater Western Sydney region are invited to participate in UWS Day each year. This event gives students an experience of the campus facilities, teaching styles, university culture and support services available to students. The program includes lectures, displays, demonstrations, lab sessions and workshops, all of which include an interactive component. There is also entertainment and information about courses, career pathways, scholarships, student services and sporting programs. In 2007 over 3,000 students attended the event.

3. Mature Age Information Session, Buddies Program and Network

   Information sessions are designed to help non-recent school leavers and mature age students make informed decisions about university study. The program covers: courses and career pathways, admissions and entry options, fees, HECS-HELP and scholarships, student support services, accommodation, child care and university life. The mature age student buddies program has been successful and mature age students’ networks at Bankstown and Penrith established.

4. Parent Information Evenings and Workshops

   These provide parents and guardians of year 10–12 students and their children with an opportunity to become actively involved in decisions about further education study options. The program caters for those with little or no experience in dealing with universities and covers topic such: why consider university, what parents should consider, cutting through university jargon and language, how to apply, entry requirements, facilities and support services for both students and parents. This is supplemented by workshops for parents that address differences between school and university, what parents can expect and how they can support their children or dependants.

5. Fair Go Project

   This is an action research partnership with the Priority Schools Program (PSP), NSW Department of Education and Training which links UWS researchers, schoolteachers, education consultants and community members. It has developed and successfully applied a model for engaging students in low SES school communities.

6. Students at Risk Project

   This project has combined benchmark practice, a detailed analysis of UWS student enrolment, retention and progress data, as well as exit surveys and staff and student focus groups to develop a clearer understanding of the various factors that place students at risk of early withdrawal, under-achievement or unsatisfactory progress.

7. Sharing Experiences

   A key resource to assist transition is to bring together students from particular equity categories who have succeeded at university to develop a Planet Guide for each group. These guides, written by those who have successfully trodden the path before them, are a distinctive and efficient approach to peer support. We
have evidence that if such guides are available to help new students from each equity group to learn how higher education works, retention and success are optimised.

Several of these programs and many others not described here, have been incorporated into, or initiated as part of the UWS Building Better Relationships with Schools 2008-2010 Strategic Plan (Attachment 2). These were developed through a year-long internally funded ($100K) project across the Region (GWS) and within UWS drawing together, developing or planning over 100 individual partnership projects with 280 GWS schools. The initiative is governed by an advisory panel, which includes NSW State Regional Schools Directors, Catholic and Independent School representatives, principals, teachers and senior UWS staff.

From my perspective, and I know I also reflect the views of my colleague, Tom Urry, Regional Director of South Western Sydney, when I say I cannot conceive of a stronger nor a more broadly based commitment by a university to the schools sector.

This commitment, and the initiatives that flow from it, all of which are so elegantly articulated within the UWS Schools Strategic Plan 2008-10 and the Schools Action Plan 2008, are transforming the education landscape in Western Sydney;

It’s a beautiful relationship and we partner on many levels.

At the peak of our work together, however are a couple of initiatives that really define the extraordinary potential and the depth and quality of our links with the university.

The first is our very exciting China strategy where, under the MOU I signed with the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, and the MOU with the University of Western Sydney, we are bringing out volunteers from China to support Mandarin in our schools. At the same time, they will undertake a Masters Degree at Honours level at the University.

The second one I want to mention is the research program. This has been an inspiration. I want particularly to applaud the outstanding research … on our Positive Behaviour for Learning strategy in Western Sydney Region.

I believe this work has established a benchmark for a cooperative approach to research between schools and the tertiary sector which has already spurred us on to greater and more ambitious research projects that will inform and guide us to higher quality outcomes for teachers and students.35

STUDENT INCOME

Question 11: What evidence is available from institutions about the impact on individuals or groups of either failure to gain income support or the inadequacy of income support?

Main points

The issue of student income support is an essential part of a commitment that higher education should be accessible and affordable to all who can benefit from the experience. Access to higher education should be on the basis of academic ability rather than ability to pay.

UWS proposes that:

- a new comprehensive student income support framework should be created which recognises cost of living, rent and study costs and be available for undergraduate or postgraduate students; it should reduce the age of independence to 18 and increase any parental income threshold.
- a specific Indigenous income support payment (ABSTUDY) should continue but the level of payment should be significantly increased.
- the level of the student and Indigenous student allowance should be well above the Henderson poverty line and significantly higher than the current Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY.
- students should be encouraged and allowed to work and save during university breaks without being financially disadvantaged in their allowance and should also be allowed to earn greater income from part time work without it so adversely affecting their allowance
- the number and benefits of scholarships should be greatly increased
- income support for students with a disability should be improved
- students should be entitled to the Low Income Health Care Card
- HECS should not be expanded to cover living costs

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35 Mr. Lindsay Wasson, Regional Director, NSW Department of Education and Training, speaking at the launch of UWS Schools Plan, April 2008.
We strongly endorse the commitment of the Deputy Prime Minister to a new long term goal for our post secondary education system: guaranteed access to higher education or skills training for every young Australian with the talent and willingness to give it a go.\(^{36}\)

As the 2006 ALP White Paper on Higher Education Australia’s Universities: Building our Future in the World \(^{37}\)stated:

Financial disadvantage presents a barrier to student access to, and participation in, a university education. All members of our society should have the opportunity to access a university education if academically qualified. The financial barriers facing students who are unable to support themselves, or whose family is unable to support them, whilst engaged in higher education is something any Government concerned about equity of access needs to overcome...

Addressing income support is a critical part of addressing equitable access and participation in higher education. Ensuring the student income support system is adequate to meet the needs of eligible students will be a priority of a Federal Labor Government.

UWS student responses to the national Universities Australia study reflect the national trend except that UWS students:

- had higher average expenses particularly for credit or loan commitments and transport costs (being $2,018 to $9,725 more per annum)
- had higher deficits
- are more likely to be doing work in addition to their studies and for longer hours (1 to 15.5 hours more per week)
- are more likely to report that work adversely affects their study and that they miss classes for paid work
- are more likely to worry about finance, be unable to afford food or necessities and study related costs such as text books, stationery, computer, and be unable to support dependants
- are more likely to have their choice of university influenced by financial circumstances as well as the mode of study

Evidence of the Impact of Student Income Levels

Income support for students is not adequate currently and is having a significant impact on the progression, retention and quality of experience of students in higher education.

National studies and UWS studies (Attachment 4) have all identified the negative impact of inadequate student income levels on:

- student retention levels
- the time available for students to attend lectures and focus on their studies as a result of the time spent in employment. (The 14.8 hours employment per week on average in 2006 is up from 14.4 hours in 2000 and around three times the hours in 1984).
- enrolment patterns, with more students enrolling part time although full time students have better progression rates
- student stress levels
- the quality of the educational experience, as a result of the time spent in employment to meet basic living costs. Students have little time to benefit from the full range of university support, activities and culture, at a cost to the quality of the student experience and to student retention.\(^{38}\)

Indigenous students have borne the impact of cuts and changes to ABSTUDY in 2000 and are more likely than other students to:

- go without food,
- work longer hours in part time work,
- miss classes or study because of these work commitments,
- have applications for income support rejected,
- rely on university subsidised services,
- have higher general and study related costs,
- use up any prior savings,
- take out a loan and at a higher amount,
- miss out on financial or other support from family,
- want to study full time if financial circumstances permitted.

\(^{36}\) Julia Gillard speech, A Higher Education Revolution: Creating a Productive Prosperous Modern Australia, 13/3/08


\(^{38}\) Australian University Student Finances 2006: Final report of a national survey of students in public universities", Richard James, Emmaline Bexley, Marcia Devlin and Simon Marginson Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne, Universities Australia, August 2007
A consistent set of themes from the AVCC study into student finances emerged, as encapsulated in the following:

I struggle every week with my finances. I get paid the bare minimum wage and I can only work once a week due to my timetable. I am constantly worrying about the huge debt I am getting into: how am I going to be able to pay this money back? Constantly having to think ahead to make sure I have just enough money to afford the next field trip, textbook or put petrol in my car so I can actually make it to my classes. I even tried to condense my timetable so that I can save on petrol.

(female, full-time undergraduate)

Recommendations

UWS believes that the current student income support from the Government is inadequate and that issues of access and progression are closely linked to rising financial pressures.

There needs to be a fundamental change in student income support in Australia to ensure students have sufficient income during their studies to enable them to:

- focus on their studies
- meet basic costs of living and studying
- engage in the full experience of being a student
- avoid further debt levels other than the current HECS debt

without having to engage in high levels of paid employment and in a structure which fairly recognises the real costs and what parental support can be expected.

UWS makes the following recommendations:

1. A new comprehensive student income support framework should be created, with a new student income support payment which:
   - replaces the current Youth Allowance and Austudy
   - supports students over the period of their study rather than for any period of temporary unemployment,
   - recognises the real cost of living for students and includes rent assistance
   - enables students to meet the additional costs associated with study (text books, computers, equipment)
   - is available to undergraduate and post graduate (coursework and research) students. Currently most post graduate students are not eligible for Austudy or the Youth Allowance and are also not receiving an Australian Post Graduate Award scholarship
   - reduces the age of independence (which is currently used to determine eligibility for the Youth Allowance) from 25 to 18 years of age noting that this was a recommendation in the Australian University Student Finances Survey 2006
   - better matches the parental income threshold to the circumstances of the family where it is to be applied. The amount should increase based on the number of children in the family and include a factor related to whether the parents are estranged from the child and/or each other. The current level is completely inadequate as it starts to reduce the Youth Allowance payment at an income level which is close to a benefit income level (around $28,150)
   - applies a means test to students who are living at home and receive parental support where parents have high income regardless of age, to ensure that only needy students and families are eligible.

2. A specific Indigenous income support payment (ABSTUDY) should continue but the level of payment should be significantly increased.

The availability of Abstudy is a factor of great significance to the participation of Indigenous students in higher education. Approximately 62% of Indigenous full-time undergraduate students are in receipt of Government income support, compared with 41% for non-Indigenous students.

Indigenous communities have identified the limitations to Abstudy as one significant barrier to Indigenous participation in university education.

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40 Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future, May 2003, p1 and p6
3. The level of the student and Indigenous student allowance should be well above the Henderson poverty line and significantly higher than the current Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY.

The Henderson poverty line for the June quarter of 2007 was $357.81 per week ($715.62 per fortnight) for a single person paying for housing. The current maximum student payment including rent assistance is less than 60% of this amount and the Disability Support pension is only 85% of the poverty line.41

The level of the allowance(s) needs to take account of the additional costs faced by students in terms of travel, accommodation, equipment and text books. Many students are unable to live at home to study and are required to travel and seek accommodation near the relevant university or campus.

4. Students should be encouraged and allowed to work and save during university breaks without being financially disadvantaged in their allowance and should also be allowed to earn greater income from part time work without it so adversely affecting their allowance. The current student income bank cap is too low and acts as an incentive to students to take low and sometimes exploitative cash-in-hand payments for work.

The current system means students earning over $236 per fortnight (around $6000 per annum) have their payments reduced by 50-60 cents in the dollar. The 1991 Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education, and Training on Student Finance Assistance, recommended the rate should be increased from $6000 to $8000, which if indexed would have increased by 2008 to $12,181 per annum ($468.51 per fortnight).

5. Scholarships need to be enhanced

Currently a Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship is valued at $2,162 and a Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship is worth $4,324 with the one-off Indigenous Access payment valued at $4,080.

UWS is concerned that:
- these amounts just cover the immediate cost of text books and materials but do very little to help students in the longer term with costs such as rent, food and petrol
- the criteria for receiving a Scholarship are too tight with many deserving students not qualifying despite disadvantaged circumstances
- non-Commonwealth scholarships attract income tax and affect Centrelink entitlements.

UWS therefore recommends that:
- there should be a substantial expansion of the number and length of the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships and Australian Postgraduate Award scholarships to provide an effective supplement to the standard income support arrangements
- access to the accommodation scholarship should be extended beyond rural students and cover any student required to move a significant distance to attend university or facing significant hardship related to accommodation
- all scholarships for university students (whether Commonwealth or otherwise) should be exempt for the purpose of determining entitlement to Government student income support benefits and be exempt from income tax
- APA scholarships should be increased in value to recognise the real costs and should be improved to be available for four years for full time research doctorate studies and eight years for part time research doctorate studies (instead of the current three years and six years respectively).

6. Income support for students with a disability needs to be improved

Students with a disability should have greater access to the Disability Support Pension, a disability education supplement to cover increased costs associated with study, increased personal care support where needed and access to funding for assistive technology assessment, acquisition and training.

7. Students should be entitled to the Low Income Health Care Card

Currently most students miss out on the card (which gives them access to free ambulance, free dental, cheaper pharmaceuticals and NSW Department of Housing cash grants). The entitlement to the card is based on the income in the previous 8 weeks prior to a claim. The problem is that students engage in periods of intense employment in university teaching breaks which

41 Melbourne Institute, Faculty of Economics and Commerce <http://melbourneinstitute.com/labour/inequality/poverty/default.html> 15/1/08
can take them over the threshold even if their annual income is low.

8. HECS should not be expanded to cover living costs

UWS does not support the idea of extending a HECS-style loan to cover accommodation and other living costs. This would impose too great a debt burden on students and could become a disincentive for some students to attend university at all.

3.3 The Student Experience of Higher Education

Main points

- To assure the standards for learning outcomes in universities and other post-secondary institutions:
  - A more comprehensive and clearer framework for tracking, proving and improving the quality of the higher education student experience and its outcomes be used. A four level Quality Evaluation framework discussed below provides one model of how this might be achieved.
  - All universities be required to engage in external moderation with like institutions on the assessment criteria/grading standards being used in each of their programs and the reliability of their application to a small sample of assessment items (as provided in the AUQA Cycle 2 round);
  - AUQA confirm in its Cycle 2 round of audits that these processes are taking place and that any discrepancies are being addressed promptly and effectively;
  - Studies be undertaken by ALTC of graduates during the first five years of their professional or disciplinary practice and employer feedback on graduates be sought in order to validate that which is being assessed during a university education (in conjunction with validation against key university attributes).

- The issue of services for and representation of students arising from the funding hole left by voluntary student unionism must be addressed if a student experience of university which is comparable to international experience is to be achieved.

- The dramatic increase in student to staff ratios as an indicator and major inhibitor of the quality of the student experience must be reversed.

- A common capability and competency framework for use in VET and higher education be developed and tested – in order to make articulation between these two sectors more effective and student transition between them smoother. The successful graduate studies in nine professions completed in 2002-4 at one Australian university provide a proven model for how this can be done.

- The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund be given to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council or the Commission we propose in section 3.9 of this submission to fund projects which address areas for
national improvement which would benefit the sector. However, if funding to the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund continues it should fund national development projects to address key areas for improvement affecting the sector as a whole - including how best to use IT-enabled learning as part of a broader system of learning for specific groups of students, fields of education, university types and locations; effective approaches to engaged learning; and how to ensure quality in multi-campus universities.

» The complementary roles and links between the proposed University Agreements, Australian Universities Quality Assurance, Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Australian Qualifications Framework and the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund be clarified.

eLearning
The Discussion Paper notes:

- the increased use of information and communication technology (ICT),
- increased demand for eLearning options from increasingly ICT savvy young students,
- that IT learning may disadvantage students from ICT-poor backgrounds and
- that the impact of eLearning on the quality of outcomes is largely unknown.

Students learn in different ways and settings and eLearning needs to be part of the mix alongside traditional learning methods and mediums. eLearning is not a cheap alternative as it generally requires additional resources compared with traditional face-to-face teaching methods. UWS has embraced eLearning as one aspect of educational delivery, while noting the limitations and financial impact of this mode of teaching.

Question 12: How can the quality of the student experience be monitored nationally?

It is proposed that the following institutional quality evaluation framework, which has been tested and applied in a wide range of contexts within and beyond Australia, be considered as the model to inform a national monitoring scheme.

The model proposes that evaluating (i.e. making judgments about) the quality of learning and teaching in higher education can occur at four levels. The first two levels involve making judgments about different levels of inputs – specifically the quality of the design and resourcing of learning programs. The third and fourth levels involve making judgments about outcomes – specifically the quality of implementation and impact of these programs.

Level One: Quality of design
Evaluating quality at this level involves judging the relevance, desirability, feasibility and likelihood that a proposed learning program will engage students in productive learning and retain them. The empirical evidence from the CERQ research and associated studies has identified tests for this design process (these are provided in Attachment 5).

Level Two: Quality of resourcing and support
Evaluating quality at this level involves making judgments about what sorts of infrastructure, IT, learning support & resources, library resources, administrative systems, staff and support programs are necessary to support the consistent and effective delivery of the program as approved at Level One.

Key indicators at this level centre on the cost-efficiency, alignment, relevance and quality of the resources and support systems to be used. In a period of rapid climate change this now also entails giving consideration to a relatively new set of issues concerning the carbon cost of having purpose-built facilities unoccupied for significant periods, the potential for joint use of community resources as an alternative, how to minimise intercampus travel and the need to consider running universities over a trimester year to optimise both efficiency and just-in-time access.

The recent ALTC Learning Leaders research identifies what is needed to address the emerging leadership succession crisis in university teaching. Other studies have identified the importance of building the image of the profession to attract and retain high quality staff in a highly competitive employment environment. Increasing numbers of sessional

staff add a further dimension to the resource quality challenge. There are indications that the optimum way to build teacher capability is to provide them with exactly the same just-in-time, just-for-me, relevant and situated learning approaches that they are required to provide their students.

**Level Three: Quality of implementation**
Evaluating quality at this level involves making judgments about the extent to which the program’s design and the resources allocated to support it are being put successfully into practice.

The key measures here focus on feedback from students: especially on questions related to the key quality tests applied during program design (see Level One). There is increased potential to use qualitative, not just quantitative, data at this level and to self-validate quantitative survey items by asking students to rate their importance as well as performance.

Data gathered at this level is especially useful for improving the quality of implementation but, in our view, it is a less valid source for proving quality – the key tests for which lie at Level Four.

**Level Four: Quality of impact**
Evaluating quality at this level involves making judgments about the extent to which the university experience for students has consistently developed the capabilities that count for early career professional or disciplinary performance, along with the key graduate attributes identified in the university’s mission. This assessment has to be both valid and reliable.

Other key impact indicators that can be used include benchmarked retention; assessment of graduates’ subsequent professional performance, including employer satisfaction; the number of students going on to successful further study; and comparative graduate salaries.

**Question 12 continued: Is there evidence that declining student:staff ratios have impacted on the quality of the student experience?**

The chronic and lengthy period of under funding of universities has led to a dramatic increase in student to staff ratios, as noted in the Discussion Paper.

Increases in student:staff ratios among the most visible effects of the damage done to the student experience by underfunding. They have:

1. Lessened the time that staff have for teaching innovation, developing new programs, research, community engagement and other key roles.
2. Increased the numbers of students in tutorials and lectures which has an impact on the ability of students and staff to interact and participate.
3. Decreased the number and type of evaluations being undertaken, which means less effective monitoring of student progress or feedback for students.
4. Driven the increase in casualisation of staff which, despite the best efforts of the staff involved, is not good for quality. Casual staff are not available for extended student consultations. They are not paid to participate in professional development or to engage in research to drive their teaching.
5. Affected the ability of the University to provide support for retention and academic achievement and remedial support for disadvantaged or struggling students.

The important issues listed by students in the student experience research (CEQuery referred to below) included a range of factors that would be affected negatively by increasing student to staff ratios - course design, staff accessibility, teaching skills, assessment feedback and marking, support from student administration, student services and library.

Staff accessibility, quality, commitment, knowledge and the ability and time to prepare for and be innovative are clearly important in the quality of the student experience. Efforts to improve the quality of the student experience must include improving the student:staff ratios.

As noted earlier the many factors affecting the student experience are complex and interlinked. The CEQuery data show, for example, that a positive combination of capable and responsive staff, an engaging learning design, carefully aligned support, appropriate assessment and productive
learning outcomes work in combination to engage students in productive and satisfying learning and retain them.

The UWS Exit Survey confirms that it is a combination of external and internal factors - of which staff quality and responsiveness is one element - that influences student decisions to persevere with their studies or discontinue. This aligns with other studies of the first year experience including those cited in the Discussion paper and a recent UWS publication.43

Question 13: How can the quality of learning outcomes in Australian higher education be measured more effectively?

Question 14: How do institutions measure the quality of their learning outcomes and how do they know they are nationally and internationally competitive?

Standards ultimately reside in the validity and reliability of what is assessed (Level Four in the above framework). At UWS standards are developed by applying professional judgments based on evidence about expected levels of student performance on explicit and demonstrably relevant assessment criteria. Standards are expected to be benchmarked against acceptable levels of performance within the University, discipline and/or profession. These criteria and standards must be described so that students are informed in advance about the level of performance required for each assessment task.

It is our view that, for assessment to be at university standard, it needs to focus on the key capabilities that count for early career professional or disciplinary performance and to be assessed using explicit criteria that focus on evidence of higher order knowledge and understanding, not just the ability to replicate information or skills. For example, as the studies of successful graduates repeatedly demonstrate, a university standard of assessment should focus on the ability to operate in uncertain situations and manage under adversity; to work productively with a diverse set of colleagues and clients; and to be able to diagnose what is causing a problem in a human or technical situation, assess its significance and deliver an effective response, typically as part of a team.

Addressing the issue of standards involves adopting a more transparent, criterion-referenced assessment system for the sector. It requires making explicit at the outset to students what performance at a fail, pass, credit, distinction and high distinction level looks like in each specific subject studied.

The UK Quality Assurance Agency (UKQAA) and its standards framework are worth considering for use in Australia.

UWS supports the concept of benchmarking and establishing standards for specific fields and units of study and for looking more closely at entry standards, including the reliability and predictive validity of entrance tests.

While workforce skills are not the sole aim of university education, it would be worth replicating earlier pilot studies of successful graduates to identify the key capabilities they regard as most important for effective early career performance. These could be used as an additional way to assure the relevance, focus and standards of assessment and curriculum in each field of higher education. This can complement the focus on ensuring that assessment concentrates on the more generic graduate attributes. This is another way to address the issue of how best to link higher education to labour market needs and the development of a productive economy.

Institutions also need to ensure that there are clear protocols and standards for service, for example in assessment turn-around times, feedback quality and time taken to respond to student enquiries (see the key areas for quality improvement in Section 3.4).

The respective roles of AUQA, ALTC, AQF, the LTPF and the proposed funding University Agreements in building and assuring standards and the overall quality of the student experience should be clarified.

What affects the quality of the student experience?

External Factors
Our research (e.g. the UWS first year student exit survey) suggests that all of the following external factors help shape the quality of the student experience at university:

» university culture
» socioeconomic status
» having to work and study at the same time
» travel, transport and ease of access to the university
» previous educational experiences
» the ease of transition from VET to University

coming from out of town/overseas
the varied needs and expectations students bring with them

Institutional Factors
The CEQuery research (2006)\textsuperscript{44}, funded by DEST/DEEWR, involved the qualitative analysis of some 280,000 CEQ comments made by 90,000 students in 14 universities on the ‘best aspect’ and what most ‘needs improvement’ in their university experience. It provides evidence of the relative impact of various institutional factors on student engagement in productive learning and retention.

Both the national CEQuery study and subsequent replications of it in a range of universities show that it is not just what happens in the classroom but the total university experience which shapes students’ judgments of quality. It shows that the key criteria students apply are multi-faceted and align with the Level One quality indicators identified earlier.

The national CEQuery study showed that, of the 25 sub-domains studied:
- Those of most importance to students were (in rank order, highest first):
  - Course design – active and practice-oriented learning methods
  - Staff – quality
  - Staff – accessibility
  - Course design – flexibility
  - Course design – structure
  - Course design – relevance
  - Staff – teaching skills
  - Support – social affinity
  - Outcomes – key knowledge and skills
- Those in most need of improvement (in rank order, lowest first) were:
  - Assessment – feedback
  - Assessment – expectations management
  - Assessment – marking
  - Course design – structure
  - Support – student administration
  - Assessment – standards
  - Support – student services
  - Support – library
  - Support – infrastructure & environment
  - Staff – teaching skills

This pattern of results generally aligns with the findings from other universities which have replicated the CEQuery research.

We have found having a comprehensive tracking and improvement system is critical if student satisfaction, retention and the engagement in productive learning is to be enhanced. The UWS TILT system is outlined below and is on the AUQA good practice database. Its implementation has contributed to increases in overall satisfaction on the CEQ of 10% and in retention of 4% over the past three years. It addresses key performance indicators at Levels Three and Four in the QA frameworks discussed earlier. It is recommended that a national initiative be undertaken, possibly under the auspices of ALTC and/or AUQA, to bring together the many parallel systems currently being used with a view to providing all universities with a set of good practice models to support the development of quality across the sector.

UWS Tracking & Improvement System for Learning & Teaching (TILT)

The University received an AUQA commendation for its TILT system in its 2006 AUQA audit. TILT provides one model of how Level Three and Four indicators can be tracked and the results acted upon with to improve retention and overall student satisfaction.

1. Practice
This system consists of a ‘nested’ series of interrelated data gathering and reporting systems. It allows UWS to drill down and link data from many sources such as:
- the UWS Student Satisfaction Survey and UWS Research Student Satisfaction Survey which measures the student’s total experience of the University;
- the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), Post Graduate Research Evaluation Questionnaire (PREQ) and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) surveys
- the Student Feedback on Unit survey (SFU) which covers the student experience of each unit;
- the Student Feedback on Teaching survey (SFT) which provides student feedback on teaching;

These core tracking instruments and processes are complemented with data from the University’s:
- Offshore Student Satisfaction Survey;
- Employer Survey (which measures employer perception of UWS graduates’ capabilities);

\textsuperscript{44} See: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/access_student_voice.htm
Image Survey, Exit Survey, Retention Survey and Commencing International Student Survey; the DEEWR staff and student collections; and the University Admissions Centre data.

From these the following reports are prepared:

- the Annual Course Reports which include benchmarked performance data on student demand, enrolments (EFTSL), retention, progression, completions, graduate outcomes and feedback on the course experience, including the (CEQ) and (GDS) qualitative and quantitative data at overall University, College and Course level.
- Vital Signs Reports for the Board of Trustees which show the University’s benchmarked performance against a number of key indicators.
- aggregated performance reports prepared for review and analysis by the UWS Strategy and Quality Committee and the UWS Executive each year;
- SFU reports showing school and unit performance with cleaned open ended comments electronically;
- a range of reports covering the other surveys mentioned above; and
- an extensive range of custom-tailored management information for all users across the University.

2. Evidence of Success

The TILT system has contributed to a 4% improvement in undergraduate commencing student retention over the last four years and a 10% improvement in explicit overall satisfaction in the CEQ. The ability to provide appropriate and timely management information has enabled the University to identify areas for improvement and then to put into place strategies to improve these areas and to set objectives in its Learning and Teaching Plan, which can then be followed by a review process using the data from TILT. Areas of good practice are linked to those requiring improvement via cross-campus networks like the UWS Heads of Program Network.

3. Further details

See the AUQA good practice database at: http://www.auqa.edu.au/gp/about/index.php or see Tracking & Improving Performance on the UWS website at: http://www.uws.edu.au/option/Planning_and_Quality/Tracking_and_Improving_Performance

3.4 Connecting With Other Education and Training Sectors

UWS is and always has been a strong supporter of and advocate for the TAFE sector. TAFE colleges provide a bridge between school and work that creates life-long vocations and security for tens of thousands of students in the Greater West, some of whom use their qualifications as a stepping stone to university. It is an integral part of the makings of a strong economy and social capital.

UWS strongly supports collaboration between the sectors, but not their convergence into a single sector. We favour institutional diversity with genuine differentiation. We strongly support the distinctive mission of a university and propose that the definition of university be tightened somewhat. We argue that the concept of a teaching-only university is a contradiction in terms. We consider that the contested areas between the Higher Education and VET sectors need careful but arms length management.

Question 15: To what extent should vocational education and training and higher education continue to have distinct missions and how should these missions be defined?

Almost any generalisation that one makes about the distinct missions of VET and higher education is contestable, and it may be argued that the sectors form a continuum. Nevertheless, at the opposite ends of the continuum, exemplified by higher degree research training on the one hand and technical certificates on the other, the missions are clearly distinct.

We argue that the difference between the ends of the continuum is so sharp that the VET and HE sectors should continue to have distinct missions.

Clear distinctions between the sectors are evident in the National Protocols and the policies covering higher education approvals processes. Fundamentally, these distinctions arise from the contrasting mission of higher education in discovery and scholarship in teaching for professional employment and vocational education meeting industry training needs.

None of these distinctions is watertight, and each could be refined indefinitely. Universities do research, but not
all university teaching will be obviously characterised by a research underpinning. What is important is that research and innovation is embedded in the curriculum and this ideally is facilitated by teaching staff who are research active.

Nevertheless, for a very large part of the offerings of both sectors, the distinctive missions hold true. Again, for a large part of their offerings, these distinctions align in the case of universities with the Purposes and goals of higher education in Australia (OECD 2007: 7) and for VET institutions with the first priority of the current National Training Scheme, i.e. Improving the system’s responsiveness to rapid changes in demand for skills development and addressing skills shortages, especially in traditional trades and in emerging industries (DEST 2004).

It is recommended that vocational education and training and higher education continue to have distinct missions, despite the fact that there will be some overlap and contestation of missions.

The strength of the Australian tertiary education system will also rely on increased collaboration between higher education and VET that explicitly enables a seamless engagement by students along the continuum of possible qualifications and study sequences.

If it is accepted that broadly speaking, the missions of Higher Education and VET are distinct, the crucial issue is the management of the overlapping parts of the continuum, and development of principles for their management. These sometimes contested areas cover movement of students between the sectors, the relative provision of funding and the awards offered.

**Question 16: Does the movement between the sectors of students with credit need to be improved? If so, in what ways?**

The Review states that the number of students that move between the two sectors is relatively small (pg42), however, the sector average conceals the peaks and troughs. With about 20% of our undergraduate students entering with a VET qualification, we see cross-sector movement as a significant driver of opportunity for students who do not have the chance, results or wish to go directly from school to university, and a key factor in increasing low SES participation.

The acceptance of a robust capability and competency framework to support more seamless articulation and transition between VET and higher education is very important. At present, quite different conceptions and standards are generating quite different approaches to learning, teaching, program design and assessment. This is a natural reflection of the distinctive missions of the sectors. Nevertheless, both recognise that the general learning and maturity which students acquire in one sector must be relevant to, and recognised by, the other.

Movement between the sectors needs to be better facilitated in several ways. One difficulty is in the different curriculum principles underpinning VET and university programs. At UWS, exhaustive mapping is undertaken by academic staff and TAFE teachers facilitated by a dedicated UWS/VET Relationships Manager, to develop articulation agreements with VET providers (largely TAFE, but increasingly private providers). However problems still arise in equating competency-based VET program elements with university majors based on graduate outcomes that emphasize generic scholarly capacity. The problem is typically characterised as VET students having practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge. Our feeling is that good practice can be developed to negotiate many of the problems if there is an institutional commitment to implementing the MCEETYA Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation from VET to Higher Education (MCEETYA 2005). This commitment comes at a price however and we recommend that funding be made available for developing and implementing good practice in VET-higher education articulation where universities have a commitment to these partnerships.

For a university like UWS, there is a further cost to providing VET pathways. First year student receive academic study skills in the large first year ore units making this a very efficient acquisition of these skills with significant economics of scale. Student receiving credit through pathways miss these units. For this reason, we recommend that a special loading be added to Commonwealth funding of undergraduate places to compensate for the extra cost of VET students entering with credit but still requiring transition support to adjust to their new learning environment.

We have concerns about academic drift and agree with the OECD regarding the need to ensure the coherence of the tertiary education system where there is extensive
diversification (OECD 2008:6). While we support diversity within the broader tertiary education sector, we believe that the status of the university has been eroded by the expansion of the MCEETYA National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes in 2007 (MCEETYA 2007). UWS recommends that the awarding of doctoral and research masters degrees should be the sole prerogative of universities. Further, the AQF should be strengthened to include Foundation studies programs, and clearer differentiation between those awards that can occur without an institutional research base and those that cannot.

Movement between the sectors could be improved by expanding the MCEETYA Credit Transfer Principles to include VET, and aligning or even merging the Principles with the AQF. This would provide the chance to clearly define the sectors and sub-sectors and assign qualifications to each, solving, for example the confusion caused by Advanced Diplomas being available in the higher education and VET sectors. It would also allow the restriction of the postgraduate research awards to universities.

All of the foregoing discussion points to the need for an umbrella body to support the integration of the higher education sectors so that Australia has diversity with real differentiation. Our recommendation for such an umbrella body is outlined in section 3.9 in response to questions 31 and 32.

Question 17: To what extent should relative provision between the sectors be planned or demand driven? What are the effects of current differences in funding, governance and regulation in limiting planning or influencing choice between sectors?

Our view is that workforce planning will continue to be an appropriate basis for much VET sector provision, with Commonwealth and State Governments using funding levers to support national targets that will reflect Australian and state government policy objectives (DEEWR). At the same time, the decentralisation of TAFE in Victoria and probably elsewhere will see an increasingly responsive and entrepreneurial VET sector entering into business partnerships with large and small companies.

For universities, the mix of planning and demand is inevitable, but will depend very much on mission, and the recognition of that mission in funding. At UWS, for example, it is consistent with our mission and with workforce demand nationally to educate nurses and we have one of the largest student cohorts in the sector currently across four campuses. We accept the responsibility but we do not expect to be financially penalised (See 3.8). As the university most deeply engaged with Australia’s prime industrial heartland we expect to be able to formulate our patterns of provision based on knowledge of our constituency and our competitors, and in addition to core funding, to negotiate appropriate funding through an agreement with the Government.

From the point of view of planning between sectors, a number of funding, governance and regulation factors have been mentioned previously. However, a key issue is student support and fees. We support the compelling argument of Bruce Chapman and his colleagues that HECS style loans should be extended to the VET sector (Chapman et al 2007). As Chapman notes, … the high cost of participating in VET (both through direct living costs and foregone income), combined with a lack of family and capital market sources of finance, potentially creates a significant barrier for many students which is necessarily exacerbated through the imposition of up-front fees (Chapman et al 2007:6). Again, we stress the capacity of UWS to increase low SES enrolment through VET articulation, but we can only help to the extent that such students have the financial backing to take advantage of VET. We recommend that HECS style loans be extended to the VET sector.

Question 18: Can institutions give examples of good practices which have led to movement between the sectors with high levels of credit and good learning outcomes?

VET relationships with UWS
UWS has further developed and diversified its relationships with the VET sector over the past 18 months by:

- appointing the UWS/VET Relationships Manager
- designing and implementing administrative frameworks and systems to support UWS/VET relationships including standardising procedures for negotiating, documenting, approving and publishing VET pathways
- negotiating, implementing or publishing over 200 separate UWS/VET pathways over the past year with more being negotiated for 2009
- establishing relationships with several high quality private VET providers and continuing to expand private provider relationships
- ensuring credit pathways are responsibly designed to take into account the overall student experience and successful progression and completion of UWS degree studies
- re-designing credit application and processing systems for VET pathways students to enable electronic form submission and automatic credit matching and processing using UAC extracts and Callista in conjunction with an ADOBE Lifecycle e-forms product (starting 2009)
- a UWS/VET website publishing all current UWS/VET pathways including specific credit details http://currentstudents.uws.edu.au/students/stuadmin/admissions/otheradmission/vet
- supporting a VET Transition Project established to research and address transition needs of VET students entering UWS and design strategies to promote a high quality end to end experience

Recommendations

1. that vocational education and training and higher education continue to have distinct missions, accepting some overlap and contestation of missions,
2. that the award of doctorate and research masters be available only to universities
3. that funding be made available for developing and implementing good practice in VET-higher education articulation, and
4. that a special loading be added to Commonwealth funding of undergraduate places to compensate for the extra cost of supporting VET students entering with credit.
3.5 Higher education’s role in the national innovation system

Research at UWS brings knowledge to life through its interdisciplinary focus, collaborative orientation and responsiveness to the contemporary social, economic and environmental challenges in Greater Western Sydney and beyond.

(UWS Research Plan 2004-2008)

Main points

The University of Western Sydney holds strongly to the view that all universities by definition, must be research-led. Whatever the level of intensity or focus on research the institution chooses or is able to achieve, the best way to a sustainable innovative culture in Australia is to embed a culture of research-based innovation at all levels of higher education.

UWS believes there is no place for teaching-only universities, and that this term undermines the internationally accepted concept of a university. The fundamental advantage of a University is the presence of teaching staff who are research active and can embed, research methodology, scholarship and the culture of research based innovation in the undergraduate program and supervise postgraduate research students.

UWS currently has a number of internationally competitive research centres that have been recognised for achieving significant research maturity through external review and annual benchmarks for performance quality and excellence. They receive central funding support. Staff are encouraged to work in multidisciplinary research programs that support the University mission, align with national research priorities and are relevant in Greater Western Sydney.

Urban Research Centre

As a result, for instance, of an all of institution external research review the Board of Trustees approved substantial investment to set up an entirely new centre in 2006 focused specifically on the mapping, management and planning of burgeoning metropolitan regions such as western Sydney. The UWS Urban Research Centre’s mandate is to forge partnerships across all levels of government and industry focusing on:

- housing, especially affordability, sustainability and brownfield developments;
- infrastructure, including public-private partnerships, governance and regulation, ports and materials flow;
- design and architecture of the city, such as urban office spaces, celebrity architects, business parks and new business spaces, hotels, airports and Nanjing and Shanghai urban development;
- urban indicators, at city-wide and neighbourhood scales, and including labour markets, economic self containment, community, cultural activity and health and well-being; and
- urban dynamics, notably demographic change and shrinking cities.

Question 19: By what mechanisms should research activities in Australian universities be supported?

Main points

If Australia is to be a ‘knowledge nation’ which is driven by innovation that can match or exceed that of other countries, there must continue to be a significant growing contribution to funding for research:

- Australia should commit to a target of gross expenditure on research and development (GERD) to GDP of 2% by 2010 and 3% by 2020
- Research scholarship stipends should be increased to reflect the cost of living
- APA stipends should not be treated as income for tax or Centrelink purposes
- The APA stipend needs to be increased in both value and duration
- Bridging funding should be available to assist researchers who have completed a Postdoctoral Fellows/Fellowship (APD) to help establish their career
- Funding of research must represent full cost recovery, including dedicated project salaries
Universities should have access to funding aimed at building research capacity, not just rewarding established research excellence; the retention of block funding for this purpose is important.

All funding should be indexed.

Core university funding must enable community engagement, in its broadest sense, to be an essential characteristic of the research work of universities.

Universities should have access to funding aimed at building research capacity, not just rewarding research excellence.

Student to staff ratios should be reduced as one of the benefits would be to allow academics to devote the time necessary for research.

Universities should have funding to enable them to address the critical issue of the current and pending research staff shortage through early intervention from school onwards by building the aspirations and achievements which are precursors to university study, especially among academically disadvantaged students who would otherwise not attend university.

UWS broadly supports the current system of research support as a mix of peer-reviewed project funding and performance based block funding. Institutional block funding for research based on performance should be retained. Institutions depend on these block research funds as non-targeted, discretionary funds to build new research areas and to develop the next generation of researchers. Prior to researchers obtaining their first ARC or NHMRC competitive research grants, institutions will have nurtured and funded their research for several years, providing essential infrastructure through block funding to build their capability and track record.

Full funding of university research

The Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG) should be increased to more clearly reflect the real infrastructure costs to universities and other research institutes in conducting research. Over the years 2003-2008 the dollar value of the RIBG has increased from $137m to $208m. However, at the same time the relative value of this funding — that is the return in the dollar on Australian Competitive Grant income — has declined from 28 cents in the dollar to 23 cents in the dollar. We argue that the RIBG support for Australian competitive grants needs to be set at an internationally benchmarked level of at least 60 cents in the dollar in order to reflect the real cost of research.

One concern which needs to be addressed for the RIBG funding system is that some universities appear to be artificially distorting their research profiles by processing Medical Research Institutes research grants though the universities’ systems and then remitting a proportion (from 50% to 90% in those cases with which we are familiar) of the funding received for this research effort and PhD completions to the university and the Medical Research Institutes.

In our submission to the Innovation Review we put our view that research and innovation in universities and other publicly funded research institutions will best be served by continuing to allocate RIBG using the driver of relative success in ARC, NHMRC and other national competitive grants. We have no objection in principle to Medical Research Institutes whose staff obtains ARC, NHMRC or other national research grants through competitive means also being eligible for direct RIBG funding provided it is underpinned by policy and transparency. This is consistent with our view that innovation thrives on competition between individuals and between institutions.

It is, however, of concern when metrics-based allocations are ‘gamed’ in a way that distorts the intention of a funding mechanism. For instance, in the 1990s a number of arrangements were brokered between universities and independent medical research institutes to secure RIBG and related funding by proxy and artificially boost the research profile of the universities involved. In short, universities negotiated with some medical research institutes to process their medical research grants through the universities’ books, and then remit a proportion of the RIBG to each. The universities were and are counting the research funds and accomplishments of staff not employed or paid by those universities. This practice distorts institutional research profiles and disadvantages those universities which do not manipulate the system in this way. In our view such funds should go directly to the institute or other organisations which employ the staff and not be processed through universities’ books, and honorary university titles should not be allowed as a proxy for employment.
Question 20: On what principles and for what purposes should research activity be concentrated in particular universities or types of universities?

We hold strongly that across the sector research activity should be concentrated based on merit and the performance of the researchers or research group; the type of University should not be an issue. Concentration should be leveraged by a transparent national prioritisation process, reviewed annually. The proposed Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative should be able to identify all pockets of high quality research, although the current discussion paper describes a metrics based process which appears complex and, by assessing individual disciplines, could easily miss identifying areas of high quality multidisciplinary research.

For example the UWS MARCS Auditory Laboratories which specialises in auditory perception, action and communication covers across at least three of the ARC discipline clusters - Cluster 2 (Humanities and Creative Arts), Cluster 4 (Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences) and Cluster 5 (Mathematics, Information and Communication Sciences). Under the ERA these would be assessed separately and at different points and across several years.

UWS has, through two all-of-University external research reviews (2001 and 2004), as is mentioned above, articulated University-wide priority research themes and designated research centres. The model was given strong direction in the Research Plan 2004-2008, articulating UWS research “through its interdisciplinary focus, collaborative orientation and responsiveness to the contemporary social, economic and environmental challenges in Greater Western Sydney and beyond” (p.3). Through its process of selectivity and concentration UWS has built its research income significantly over the past 5 years to ranking 16th out of 40 institutions in total ARC funding allocated for 2008.

UWS strongly supports the continuation of the current system of funding individual researchers through the ARC and the NHMRC as an efficient method of distributing scarce funds to the best projects. While there will always be room for improving processes, the assessment processes used by the ARC and the NHMRC, with the emphasis on peer review and on international benchmarking of research proposals, are widely recognised as fair and reasonable.

Question 21: Do you believe there is a place in Australia’s higher education system for universities that are predominantly ‘teaching only’ universities? If so, why?

UWS believes there is no place for teaching-only universities, as this would undermine the internationally accepted concept of a university and diminish the standing of Australian universities at home and overseas.

The fundamental advantage of a university is the presence of teaching staff who engage in research, so that research techniques, scholarship and the culture of research based innovation can be embedded in the undergraduate program and provide high quality research supervision. Teaching-only institutions are unlikely to attract the most accomplished staff and consequently are unlikely to contribute to the national aspiration of increasing innovation and research and development competitiveness of Australia.

In order to maximise creativity and innovation in research, individuals and institutions must compete on equal terms for research and innovation funding. Certainly Australia cannot afford to fund every research proposal nor should it fund all research projects at the same level. Choices and priorities have to be made. However innovation will not prosper and
grow behind protective barriers, where some institutions receive preferential funding. The argument put by some that only a small number of universities should be funded for research or research training will only result in a stifling of innovation and creativity.

Research training is an important element of a national innovation system. In the near future Australia will need many more researchers, and research training can only sensibly occur in a vibrant research environment. Furthermore, to build the pipeline of postgraduate research students, there must be continuity of exposure to innovation, research and research practice throughout an undergraduate degree. This would not be available in a teaching-only institution.

Recommendations
UWS believes that the role of higher education in the national innovation system is key and that we must ensure that:

1. at all levels of higher education, research and innovation are embedded into the curriculum. The four Boyer knowledge domains would be a good place to start - discovery, integration, interpretation and application. These avoid the artificial separation of activity into disconnected spheres of research, teaching and engagement;
2. research and innovation funding to universities, medical research institutes and other state and national research institutions is allocated in an open, transparent and competitive way, as far as possible using existing metrics to measure quality outcomes. Innovation and research thrive on a balance of competition and collaboration. Funding should be provided using a balance of peer reviewed competitive project grants and performance based block funding; and
3. the research infrastructure costs of doing research in universities should be more adequately funded than is presently the case. At a minimum the RIBG infrastructure support should be increased to at least 60c in the dollar.

3.6 Australia’s higher education sector in the international arena

Over the last ten years most major universities have recognised the impact of borderless scholarship and enquiry, of international mobility and e-learning and communication on their institutions. Curricula have become more international in focus and student mobility is increasing as students come to recognise the value of an overseas experience as part of their university education. Universities are creating networks to explore deeper levels of cross-national collaboration, such as the development of joint courses. Increasingly, international consortia of universities are working to find better ways of cooperating, including collaborating on high-cost research projects with funding from multinational sources or from more than one national government.

Internationalisation for a university is fundamentally about broadening the educational experience of students. University graduates will become key decision makers in their societies and key influences on the intellectual life of their countries. Increasing numbers of graduates will work either with multinational companies in their own country or work overseas. In this international labour market they will need the ability to cross cultural boundaries, to understand values and beliefs different from their own, and to be able to work within different social, political and religious frameworks.

A good internationalisation strategy for a university must include, at a minimum: internationalising the content of the curriculum; adjusting modes of teaching to allow for different cultural modes of learning and language ability; creating both an internationally diverse student and academic staff profile; incorporating an overseas learning experience as a normal expectation of undergraduate study; creating opportunities for the regular exchange of staff with partner institutions overseas; developing research projects and teaching programs that cross national boundaries; and developing collaborative alliances and joint ventures with overseas institutions.

While we have made some progress in recent years we have a long way to go before the majority of our graduates possess the key attributes needed to work across national boundaries in languages and cultures different from their own. In particular, we have gone backwards in the numbers of university students studying a foreign language, a serious impediment to their career mobility if their profession or
company requires overseas postings or they wish to broaden their experience.

**Question 22: Are there any unintended consequences of the current approach to internationalisation of higher education in Australia?**

The substantial gap between government funding for domestic students and fees paid by international students encourages universities to focus on volume rather than quality of international students. Inadequate indexation of Commonwealth Grant Scheme payments has added to the pressure to increase the number of fee paying students. This in turn has led to instances of over-aggressive marketing and has produced a carpetbagger image of Australian universities in some countries. Australian universities should be seen overseas as providing the highest quality undergraduate and postgraduate education, not as commercial operations seeking to maximise revenue.

The need to maximise revenue through incoming student load has meant universities have neglected other key elements of true internationalisation such as:

- increasing the number of Australian students undertaking exchange programs with overseas universities
- developing deep institutional linkages of mutual benefit based on research and education agendas
- creating joint programs where students move in both directions
- cooperating with universities in other countries to develop joint courses

**Question 23: What is an appropriate role for government in assisting the Australian higher education system to internationalise? On what principles should this role rest and what purposes should it serve?**

In UWS’s view, government should:

- clearly articulate the value of internationalisation of universities for the economic, social and political future of Australia.
- facilitate increased internationalisation by developing government-to-government frameworks.
- develop accountability and reporting mechanisms without seeking to control or over-regulate. The current ESOS legislation provides a sound framework to ensure high ethical standards in the recruitment and education of international students.
- work with universities to overcome the barriers which prevent greater numbers of Australian undergraduates and postgraduates attending overseas universities as part of their programs.
- make a long-term commitment to the Endeavour Scheme. The Endeavour Scheme is one of the most significant international education programs since the Colombo Plan. It not only provides benefits to Asia-Pacific countries but enables increased numbers of Australians to work or study in an Asia-Pacific country, creating long-lasting networks linking Australians to their counterparts in the region.
- expand the University Mobility in the Asia-Pacific (UMAP) program. The Erasmus and the Socrates programs in Europe have contributed greatly to the mobility of students between European countries. The UMAP scheme should focus on sustainable mobility by funding institution to institution links over a period of at least five years.
- recognise the long-term economic value to Australia of increasing the number of scholarships available for international postgraduate research students. These postgraduate research students will develop long-term and formative relationships with Australian researchers as well as contributing enormously to the Australian research effort.
- support collaborative schemes which enable increased number of Australian students to study in Asian countries. The overwhelming majority of Australian university students who study overseas as part of their degree programs go to Europe and the United States. It is in Australia’s national interest that an increasing number go to universities in Asian countries. For this to happen Australian universities will need to establish collaborative structures, along the lines of the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies, managed by Murdoch University. Collaborative arrangements will need government, financial and other support.
Question 24: Can you provide any examples of good practice in encouraging local students to undertake study in other countries?

UWS Cooperation Agreement with Indonesian Islamic Universities

UWS has entered into academic cooperation agreements with the premier Islamic universities in Indonesia: the State Islamic University Jakarta, Muhammadiyah University Jakarta and Muhammadiyah University Yogyakarta. The Agreement covers:

- capacity building
- development of joint undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs
- exchange of staff and students
- research linkages

UWS is also involved in development of a Quality Assurance system for these universities.

A young academic from the State Islamic University, Jakarta received an Endeavour Executive Fellowship to spend three months at UWS in the first half of 2008. A UWS academic will spend three months at the State Islamic University Jakarta in 2009, funded by UWS. A major program of capacity building at Muhammadiyah University Jakarta is in the planning stages, focusing initially on the health sciences. This partnership is a natural extension of UWS's focus on building healthy and harmonious relationships with Muslim neighbours, students and communities through initiatives such as the University's Centre for Islamic Studies and its campus-based Muslim Harmony Project.

Australian Consortium ‘In-Country’ Indonesian Studies [ACICIS]

ACICIS was established in 1994 to develop and coordinate high-quality, semester-long programs at Indonesian partner universities; ACICIS is an exemplar of cooperative endeavour by Australian universities. It has always been difficult to manage ‘in-country’ programs in Indonesia and no university has the capacity to do so alone. ACICIS brings together a large number of universities in a cooperative program which provides a highly efficient and cost effective way of providing a high quality experience for Australian students in Indonesia. Its real strength lies not just in negotiating suitable programs for students with Indonesian institutions, but in providing pastoral care to these students while they are in Indonesia.

3.7 Higher Education’s Contribution to Australia’s Economic, Social and Cultural Capital

Main points

Community engagement is not only a legitimate and appropriate role for contemporary higher education institutions but essential to address national priorities and to contribute Australian knowledge to the solution of global issues that affect this nation and others. It is a proven force in strengthening and diversifying the intellectual capacity and strategic agendas of universities.

Future approaches to funding and leveraging the capacity of our universities should facilitate inter-institutional collaboration with a special emphasis on regional agendas and cooperative enquiry and action.

The extensive global investment in community engagement is evidence that the intellectual exploration of critical societal issues and challenges is increasingly connecting the teaching and research capacity of universities with sources of external community-based knowledge, expertise, assets, and opportunities. This approach is not only diversifying higher education, but changing accepted views of excellence and achievement across higher education.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is generally taken to describe the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. Engaged teaching and research create opportunities for students and academic staff to work together to explore, generate and exchange ideas in partnership with business, industry, government, schools, community organisations and other external entities.

Because engagement requires the development of sustainable knowledge-based partnerships between academia and society it requires new approaches to policy and funding practices for tertiary education, both to create and to reward these activities.

In recognition of the emerging diversity of institutional models and the growth of engagement as an explicit dimension of
university teaching and research, the Australian Universities Quality Agency has added engagement as a factor in its performance review model for the next cycle of institutional reviews. Some universities reported extensively on their engagement activities in the last cycle, including the University of Western Sydney. The Australian Catholic University has indicated to AUQA that engagement will be a key feature of its next cycle review and others are expected to follow ACU’s lead. UWS has provided AUQA with a quality management framework for community engagement developed in partnership with a number of other institutions, including Griffith University.

The Australia Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA), now with 34 active members, was the outcome of a UWS initiative in 2005 to provide a platform to share information on practice, research and successes in engaged research and teaching. In the USA, the Carnegie Foundation has implemented a national scheme for classifying universities on measures of their involvement in community engaged teaching and research activities. Approximately half of all schools and universities in the USA have implemented community-based learning practices for their students and communities; in part this has been supported by federal and state government funding.

Engaged learning and research strategies have been adopted by educational institutions and systems in the UK, Canada, Spain, Germany, Italy, South Africa, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Japan, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, South Africa and others. Some of these nations have created national policies or funding programs to encourage community engagement as an aspect of academic responsibilities for nation-building.

Research on the impact of engagement on higher education shows it has direct benefits for universities and society including: increases in research activity, donor funding and student enrolment and retention, especially among the new generations of students who are first in their family to attend university. Engagement activities cross all academic disciplines. Articles on community engagement have appeared in more than 100 academic journals. International engagement associations have formed and launched new conferences and journal venues for scholarly exploration of engaged research and teaching models and their impacts.

Community Engagement in Australia
The Australian policy and rhetoric of the last 10-15 years has created a view of tertiary education as an enterprise designed to produce economic benefit. This benefit is meant to be gained by funding universities to produce work-ready graduates and to generate innovations that can be commercialised and generate new jobs and economic growth. This perspective begs the question:

How might the higher education sector contribute to the critical challenges facing Australia? For instance:

» Closing the gap for our Indigenous peoples
» Enhancing social inclusion across an increasingly diverse nation
» Increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to reduce their environmental impact
» Creating new strategies for ensuring affordable housing
» Improving the efficiency of food production and distribution
» Reversing the current decline in levels of school completion
» Reversing the trend to obesity and risky health behaviours
» And so on….

These challenges cannot be addressed independently of their locus and those affected. The testing and selection of effective solutions requires collaborative work that involves all sectors, including citizens and communities.

This is the essence of community engagement as a key role for higher education: the realisation that key expertise and wisdom for solving Australia’s ills resides in the very communities that are living with the growing strain of poor health, inadequate education, poor nutrition and/or poor housing, any of which would alone prevent effective participation in the economy or society. For Australia to meet and overcome these challenges, higher education policy and funding must increase the capacity of the universities to be directly engaged in collaborative work with communities. This will accelerate the development of innovative and effective solutions that can inform future government actions and policies.

Past policies and incentives such as those currently in place in Australia actually constrain the ability of universities to engage in critical public issues. Commonwealth approaches to distributing research and teaching funding and to measuring performance inhibit interdisciplinary work, emphasises theoretical work over “real-world” studies, create barriers to engagement with communities and other universities, and encourage a conservative culture that minimises risk and thus innovation. Current policies also place teaching and research into an unproductive and competitive tension. In the global knowledge economy where ideas and innovation
are the coin of the realm, those nations who see the power of an integrated and dynamic view of teaching and research endeavour will have a significant advantage in mobilising their staff, students, institutional partners and communities to address emerging, damaging or refractory problems or building coalitions for research and its application.

**Question 25: How would you define knowledge transfer and community engagement in an Australian context?**

Australian policy and some universities have tended to define knowledge transfer and community engagement in the narrow context of the commercialisation of research. This approach limits the role of tertiary education and defines it as an economic engine with products valued in market terms. This concept leads to a very limited view of the contributions that tertiary institutions can make and places an undue emphasis on private or commercial rather than public good.

We believe it is important to broaden the framework for knowledge transfer and engagement to match Australia’s ambition for tertiary education to contribute to the broader challenges facing the nation. The new framework would expand the role of knowledge transfer beyond commercial applications and economic development and recognise the importance of the university to community development and the generation of essential social, human, and cultural capital.

In developing schemes for supporting and promoting university engagement it needs to be recognised that the traditional model of knowledge transfer as a one-way flow from the university to the end-user is inadequate and ignores a major untapped source of expertise and wisdom. The raw material for essential new knowledge generation resides both in the university and in external communities (business, industry, schools, government, organisations and citizens). Knowledge from both sources needs to be harnessed to create the most effective response to Australia’s needs.

**Question 26: Do you believe that knowledge transfer and community engagement are legitimate and appropriate roles for contemporary higher education institutions? If so, how do you see this additional role for the higher education sector blending with its traditional roles and are there limits to these traditional roles?**

Engagement is not only a legitimate and appropriate role for contemporary higher education institutions but essential to Australia’s being able to address social, environmental and economic priorities and contribute Australian knowledge to the solution of global issues. Engagement helps to strengthen and diversity the intellectual capacity and strategic agendas of universities.

Around the world, engagement has been shown to expand the teaching and research capacity of universities by encouraging a sharper focus on knowledge partnerships that align university expertise with challenges and concerns of local, state and national sectors. All universities can encapsulate the role of community engagement in their mission and context. In this way each university’s engagement agenda will be a distinctive reflection of its location, capabilities and relationships.

Engagement has been most robust at universities that serve large numbers of students who come from their immediate vicinity and tend to remain in the region after graduation. The characteristics of students enrolling in a particular university have a strong cultural impact on the kinds of relationships that the university will build with external communities, in part because students bring their community identity with them to the university, create opportunities for knowledge exchange and value reciprocal placement and project opportunities.

Engagement is a strategy best mobilised when the presenting problem is complex and understanding it requires multiple perspectives or disciplines; when the nature of professional practice is changing rapidly and newcomers to the field require new kinds of expertise and skills; or when there is no consensus on the nature and direction of the problem. In these cases, the sharing of ideas and experiences is necessary to define an appropriate solution or to develop a model that will yield the human and social capital required to manage the issue in the longer term.
The extent to which a particular university will embrace community engagement will vary according to its mission, its institutional history, the nature of the community context in which it operates and its portfolio of academic programs. In short, engagement is not a universal answer to all questions nor will it play the same role in every Australian institution. It is a powerful strategy but it makes significant demands on its users.

**Question 27: If you think that knowledge transfer and community engagement are appropriate roles for higher education institutions, how do you believe these functions should be funded?**

All the issues that challenge Australia are also global issues. Other nations have recognised the essential role of higher education as a resource with a wider role to play beyond educating the workforce and patenting new ideas. In the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Funding Council for England became quite interested in the concept of community engagement especially as a distinctive expression of research and teaching that is aimed at achieving direct impact on external entities referred to in the plan as Business and Community. In 1999, the decision was made to treat engagement as a specific “third stream” of activity along side funding for research and for teaching. In 2007-08, the engagement stream held about 110 million pounds organised in several programs. The most recent report from HECFE noted that engagement is rather awkwardly sitting separately from research and teaching. The new report raises questions that suggest a more integrated view of engagement as an essential aspect of a university’s research and teaching is emerging and that the emphasis is expanding beyond a mostly economic and business development focus to a wider focus on community and social development as well.

The third stream approach was the subject of a lively debate in Australia in 2005 but did not gain sufficient support. The third stream approach has the advantage of making engagement explicit and visible as a specific activity with its own sources of support. However, in practice, engagement is a form of teaching and of research. It is not a reinvention of past concepts such as outreach or public service; it is a way of linking the intellectual assets of the university to external sources of expertise in order to exchange knowledge, to strengthen research and teaching while also strengthening community capacity. Therefore, while the UK approach has generated considerable activity, the emerging picture is that there is a gravitational pull to connect it more directly with core activities of teaching and research to ensure quality, effectiveness, and sustainability.

**Funding University Engagement in Australia**

In Australia a hybrid model may be most effective. While third stream funding creates a separation of engagement from teaching and research, the visibility and accountability it confers has some usefulness. At the same time, quality and impact require an integrated view of engagement as core business that depends on leveraging teaching and research in ways that strengthen university performance while enhancing community capacity and improving the quality of life more broadly.

In addition, because engagement involves external partnership relationships, it is time intensive, and requires facilitation across the diverse cultures and structures of academia and the community. The teaching and research methods of engagement are well-established in the literature, and effective engagement requires investment in staff development, curricular reform, and evaluation and monitoring strategies. These features represent the essential infrastructure that must be in place to support university engagement with communities, and these costs must be reflected in any funding scheme.

The Kentucky\(^{46}\) model provides one approach to a hybrid model in that the initial funding is distinct from other funding sources, the purposes and procedures are clear, and the progress reporting scheme ensures accountability in the short run. Once progress benchmarks are met, however, the funds for engagement move into the university’s ongoing base budget to provide sustained infrastructure and capacity to continue existing and launch new community projects and partnerships.

Engagement has demonstrably positive impacts on student learning, retention and further study while also enhancing research productivity. Thus, one could make a strong case that elements of engaged teaching and research should also be integrated into current or future schemes for encouraging and rewarding performance in research and teaching.

Therefore, an Australian approach to funding engagement might have at least four aspects:

- Attention to the role of engagement in research funding and teaching quality schemes and recognition of

engagement as an ongoing and essential strategy to increase performance across all universities in both arenas.

A specific fund for engagement, driven by national and regional priorities, that is distributed to universities to develop the core infrastructure and capacity for engagement, and to launch specific initiatives. This fund would be shaped by individual agreements with each university in recognition of the impact of community characteristics and contexts on the University’s mission and the design and implementation of engagement activities.

Institutions would monitor and report progress according to their individual agreements and agreed upon performance indicators and benchmarks. The reporting would include reporting from communities as well. To the extent that universities meet their impact measures, engagement funds would move into base funding.

The Commonwealth could establish programs to recognise the achievements and impact of university-community collaboration. Such schemes serve to raise the value placed by society on education as a core ingredient in local, state, national and international prosperity and wellbeing.

Attachment 6 expands on the way in which governments might approach and fund this dimension of university activity and provides examples of the growth in many U.S. schools, universities and colleges of engagement-led research and teaching. UWS’s own program was summarised in its AUQA Performance Portfolio and several accompanying documents and the AUQA Report (2007:32-25). From 2003 -2005 UWS was involved in over 1100 projects and continues to regard these activities as integral to its identity and mandate notwithstanding the lack of recognition in funding.

3.8 Resourcing the System – An Alternative Funding Model

Main Points

Universities play a fundamental role in nation building and in addressing an array of complex social, economic and cultural issues. National governments around the world have recognised the need to assure future prosperity through increased and strategic investment in the provision of accessible, high quality and innovative higher education. In this context Australia has languished behind most comparator OECD countries. Adequate resourcing to support a world-class system of higher education and the development needs of all universities in Australia is very long overdue.

Question 28: What incentives or unintended consequences are there in the current arrangements for higher education funding?

Question 29: To what extent are the current funding models adequate to secure the future of Australia’s higher education sector? If there are better models, what are they?

Question 30: Are the current institutional arrangements for determining relative funding between higher education institutions appropriate? If not, what changes should be considered?

The greatest weaknesses of the current funding regime are that it is insensitive to the cost-drivers for universities, it is weighed down by accretions of small schemes which are expensive, unpredictable and opaque and it is not underpinned by an explicit and simple statement of national purpose. However, if a new model is designed it should be simple, as well as sufficient for the declared purposes of each institution and for the sector’s health and development.

Commonwealth funding for the sector must increase significantly.

Universities should be compensated for the historic lag in indexation; and indexation in future must fairly reflect the real costs. It should include

- Wage Cost Index (Education) for salaries
Concerns about the current higher education funding system
The current Government funding of higher education suffers from a number of key problems:
1. The overall level of government funding is inadequate and must be increased significantly in line with the level of national investment of comparable OECD countries. It has been allowed to decline compared with rising costs to the detriment of quality, contribution and participation.
2. University funding has been treated as a cost rather than valued as an investment in future prosperity.
3. Increased funding for higher education has been derived from larger financial imposts on students. The financial contributions made by students are already too high.
4. Funding does not recognise the varied but critical roles of all universities in the social, intellectual, cultural and economic development of the nation as well as the key role universities play in terms of engagement with communities, business and government agencies.
5. The funding regime does not include specific and substantial funding to support widening participation.
6. The key funding mechanism (the CGS) is based on a one size fits all approach to funding which assumes that the cost of one university delivering a degree for any student is the same as for any other university. The model has entrenched the historic financial binary divide where older and more established universities can call upon substantial assets while newer universities do not have the cumulative benefit of the largesse of past governments. The advantages of history have skewed the current sector resourcing landscape.
7. The current funding clusters approach is bedevilled by quotas, targets and penalties so precise that institutions are expected to ensure their student enrolments are within one hundredth of their target load.
8. Research funding levels do not cover the full costs and require the universities to cross-subsidise research infrastructure and activity.
9. The long period of under-funding of universities has led to a dramatic increase in student to staff ratios as noted in the Discussion Paper. UWS believes that current student:staff ratios are a major inhibitor of the quality of the student experience and must be addressed.

Universities have diverse populations, defined not only by their tertiary entrance score profiles but also by the demographics of the student population and by students’ prior and concurrent life circumstances. This means that universities vary considerably in the infrastructure and support they must provide. The traditional university funding model allocates funds to universities for teaching solely on the basis of student numbers and discipline mix. It is inadequate in terms of:

- meeting the establishment needs of newer universities in the long term task of building infrastructure and supporting research development;
- outreach of all kinds into the community to build aspirations, partnerships and capacity.

Sector funding reform should provide real incentives for universities to excel in teaching and learning and in meeting their community service obligations. Any new funding model that does not address the financial imbalance in the sector will simply perpetuate disadvantage and the inherent inequity of the current system. All institutions would argue that there are factors which militate against their capacity to achieve their strategic goals. The critical factors for UWS are the additional costs of establishing a balanced profile and infrastructure in learning and teaching and research, of achieving equitable learning outcomes for an educationally disadvantaged student cohort, the cost of community and regional engagement inherent in the University’s legislative charter, the cost of running six large campuses, and the inadequate infrastructure and asset base compared with the long established universities.

The evolution of the current model
The accretions, adjustments and assumptions which have shaped the policy and funding environment for universities over the last two decades have had a variety of perverse impacts on all institutions. Universities have common cause in the damage wrought by the loss of annual indexation of the government grant but, depending on their size, location, student demography, course mix and history each has been affected in its own way. For UWS certain systemic anomalies were thrown into relief during the Nelson reforms. They illustrate the lack of internal logic of the funding system as it is today.

In the recalculation of the base funding for UWS the University was, in the frank words of one of the architects of the new order, the loser. It lost more funding than just about any other university and while the Commonwealth agreed to baseline maintenance of the 2004 grant, it did not therefore benefit from the 2.5% annual supplementation that followed. The given reason was that in the years since 1990 the number

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47 Jenny Macklin, speech to FASTS 20/11/06
48 Comment made to the UWS Vice-Chancellor by a senior Commonwealth bureaucrat
of high cost agriculture students at UWS had substantially declined. This was true, but it reduced the teaching costs only marginally, as those remaining needed access to the farm, laboratories and staff of UWS Hawkesbury. The campus simply could not be closed, although this would have been the economically rational response. The Roseworthy campus of the University of Adelaide which was identical in almost every respect to Hawkesbury, received a regional loading of 2.5% per student place. Hawkesbury was ineligible because of the census district rule for ‘regional’ status set by DEST.

Even then the CGS load which was subsequently set for UWS bore no relation to actual enrolments. This is still the case. No campuses were eligible for a regional loading, despite their distance from the CBD and the costs of maintaining six campuses each with enrolments ranging from 3,000 to 9,000 students. Nor was a multi-campus allowance considered. As the fiscal vice tightened, small number, high cost courses, however relevant to the region’s future (eg the performing and fine arts), had to be wound down and taught out.

A further serious anomaly was the prohibition on ‘premium’ (25%) HECS for the national priority areas of Nursing and Teaching without meaningful compensation through CGS rates. Although the Commonwealth would argue that additional clinical and practicum funding has been added to the CGS rates this did not and still does not cover the decrement caused. While the difference in CGS plus HECS relativities between funding clusters and national priorities areas were relatively modest initially, the gap has widened with further changes to funding clusters since 2005. For UWS, Nursing and Teaching represents 17% of total load. These are areas of strength and focus for UWS, the development of which is significantly constrained because of these policies. Given these are national priority areas this is particularly illogical (and possibly explains why the University of Sydney decided to retreat from undergraduate nursing education and its places were transferred to UTS and ACU).

The following figure illustrates the estimated funding impact of the cuts to the funding base delivered in the implementation of the CGS reforms in comparison to applying the package to UWS base funding at the time.
AN ALTERNATE FUNDING MODEL
RECOMMENDATIONS

The factors which drive costs vary among universities; some (salaries, research support, teaching) are similar while others (number of campuses, models of teaching, student profile) may differ. UWS proposes an alternate funding model which we believe would recognise the vital role of higher education for Australia to compete internationally and to promote the diversity in the sector and the critical need for excellence and participation in higher education. It is premised on the principles that:

» Funding for the sector from the Commonwealth government must increase significantly.
  • government investment in higher education should rise to 2% of GDP
  • gross expenditure on research and development (GERD) should be 2% of GDP by 2010 and 3% by 2020

» Indexation must fairly reflect the real costs
  • wage Cost Index (Education) for salaries
  • CPI for non salary costs provided the overall corpus still meets the percentage of GDP target

» The historic lag in indexation needs to be compensated.
  Universities Australia has calculated that universities have been under-funded by an average of more than $65 million per annum since 1996 (comparing actual funding with what would have occurred if indexation had kept up with the real costs) 49

> Ideally a new funding model should include:

1. core funding on a per student basis with indexation; and with a reduced number of funding categories
  This would fairly recognise actual costs of courses using only 4 CGS clusters (high, medium and moderate cost) and 2 HECS bands instead of the current 7 CGS clusters and 4 HECS bands

2. loadings on top of the cluster/HECS discipline funding per student to take into account a range of factors. For UWS these factors would include:
  a. the nature of the student profile with loading for:
    • Indigenous or low SES students or from other national priority disadvantaged groups to provide adequate support services and transition programs
    • students enrolled in national priority areas (teaching, nursing, and STEM – science, technology, engineering and maths) to make up for reduced student HECS contributions
    • students articulating from TAFE/VET courses with credit from those courses in recognition of their additional transition support needs
  b. the nature of the Institution, with loadings to:
    • recognise the social inclusion benefits but high cost of multi campus universities (defined as those universities which have more than 3 campuses and no more than 50% of their load on any one campus)
    • address the sharp financial ‘binary divide’ in the sector by taking into account the financial and other assets and dependence on the Government grant history of each university
    • ensure that all students have a comprehensive and comparable experience of higher education
    • recognise rural, regional and outer metropolitan universities (see details below)

3. individual institution agreements
  Additional funding should be available through funding agreement negotiations rather than a competitive bidding process, this should take account of:
  • national priorities
  • institutional mission and location
  • institutional and national research goals
  • modes of learning and teaching
  • the needs and nature of the students being serviced by each institution
  • community and industry engagement
  • incentives to become more environmentally sustainable
  • outreach activities to improve participation of key disadvantaged groups
  • major targeted development projects
  • the location, number and size of campuses
  • encouraging cooperation between universities – for example, funding for groups of universities offering common programs to work together to enhance the design, learning resources and delivery of these programs in order to improve the efficiency of the system and the quality of student experience. It is suggested that this commence in the national priority areas of Teaching and Nursing.

The proposed scheme must have the potential to recognise and reward diverse missions and be implemented in a transparent and defensible way. Stability of funding should be assured through the core funding with this as a mechanism to provide supplementary funding for negotiated additional

objectives relating to economic, community, regional or other outcomes.

4. separate funding to continue for the following formula-based allocations:
   - Higher Education Equity Program
   - Specific Indigenous funding
   - Disability support
   - Medical loading
   - Enabling loading
   - Capital Development Pool
   - Higher Education Initiatives Program

5. other funds such as the Workplace Productivity Program and Diversity and Structural Reform Fund to be rolled into the improved core university funding

6. allocate the LTPF funding to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council or use it to fund national development projects to address key areas for improvement affecting the sector as a whole.

This proposal by UWS is in keeping with:
- the Government proposal for agreements with individual universities and concern about the inequities inherent in a single formulaic model
- the ALP White Paper on Higher Education 2006 which referred to a similar model
- the UK Model which has loadings for low SES, low entry score and mature age students
- current national priorities for higher education.

The ‘core plus’ funding approach used in the UK is worthy of consideration as it enables universities to pursue diverse missions based on the knowledge that there will be real investment and comparable reward for universities in a range of areas. This multivariate funding model for higher education is based on a core of high quality teaching and learning; research; participation and access; and engagement with communities and industries for all higher education institutions. The ‘plus’ element represents extensions to the core according to the mission of the institution.

Simplifying CGS Clusters And HECS Bands

As the ALP White Paper on higher education noted, the current CGS cluster funding for higher education is excessively complex, controlling and limits flexibility and adaptability in university course provision. Other cluster problems include:
- anomalous outcomes where courses with similar cost levels have different funding per student
- individual university courses, through their units of study, typically span and are funded through several different CGS clusters, adding to the complexity of planning and managing institutional and faculty finances
- the four HECS bands interact with and must be considered alongside the CGS funding clusters to obtain a view of total funding per student. The combined effect of the clusters and the HECS bands is a total of 11 different funding categories.

UWS recommends that the CGS clusters and HECS bands are greatly simplified to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of universities.
- the CGS clusters should be reduced to four broad funding clusters
- the associated HECS bands should be reduced from four to two.

This would reduce the funding categories from 11 to 5.

One example of this is shown below. This example creates four broad CGS clusters and eliminates both the current higher and the lower (frozen) HECS bands. It would be important to build in the principle that no cluster should receive less combined CGS and HECS funding than it currently receives. While the figures used are illustrative only, the aim is to create broad funding groups while allowing for the higher funding of high cost areas such as medicine, agriculture and science. It is less useful to differentially fund each of the lower cost areas such as law, business, humanities and social science.

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### Example of Simplified CGS Clusters and HECS Bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CGS Clusters</th>
<th>CGS</th>
<th>HECS</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>$5,095</td>
<td>$8,217</td>
<td>$13,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting, Commerce, etc</td>
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<td>Behavioural Science and Social Studies</td>
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<td>Medicine, Pathology, Vet, Sci, Dentistry</td>
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<td>$7,260</td>
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</table>

### Current CGS Clusters and HECS Bands

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<td>Foreign Languages, Visual and Performing Arts</td>
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<td>Allied Health</td>
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<td>$8,499</td>
<td>$16,998</td>
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The Case for Particular Loadings

Increasing participation from disadvantaged groups
It is generally acknowledged that students who are Indigenous, low SES and from other disadvantaged or at risk groups need more educational support than those who have more privileged backgrounds and sources of support outside the institution. Given that increasing participation in higher education for these groups is a priority, it is appropriate to recognise the higher servicing costs and to encourage focus on the participation of these groups through a loading on the per student CGS funding.

Even the 2002 year Review of higher education Setting Firm Foundations acknowledged that universities have widely differing cost structures and infrastructure. Several institutions are exposed to higher student support costs as a result of their student profile which includes high proportions of low socio-economic background students or students with lower entry scores (paragraph 70).

Defining Low SES
In terms of the definition of low SES, UWS believes there should be a national review and discussion on this definition. The current use of post code to define low SES is too blunt and should be replaced by a new system which takes into account factors such as family income, whether the student is entitled to a benefit card, whether the parents are on a benefit, whether the student’s parents have themselves attended university and family income.

Historical resource position
As noted in the ALP White Paper on higher education, universities have very unequal resource positions as a result of their history, age and location. The older, inner city, urban universities typically have significant advantages in their resource position due to their historical endowments.

The older universities have:
» a substantial asset base,
» strong reserves of cash and investments, and therefore,
» a capacity to innovate and take risks on initiatives without putting at risk the financial stability or viability of the institution,
» a net liquidity that is on average 80% of their annual revenue.

Most of the universities established since 1989, however, have:
» a lower asset base,
» limited reserves of cash and investments, especially when taking debt levels into account, and therefore,
» limited opportunity to innovate and take risks on initiatives without putting at risk the financial stability or viability of the institution,
» a net liquidity that is on average 11% of their annual revenue.

These very unequal resource positions are not performance-related but due to institutional age and history and earlier government funding. It is difficult for the resource-poorer universities to compete, grow and provide a comparable education experience on such an unequal footing.

UWS recommends Commonwealth funding be adjusted to compensate and provide additional funding to these more recently established universities. One possible way to do this is to take investment income as a percentage of total revenues, and provide a loading on the total CGS funding to those universities with historically very low investment income as a percentage of total revenues. This could be by way of a one-off initial grant.

Regional loading
Currently a regional loading (of 1.5%, 2.5%, 5%, 7.5% or 30% of CGS) is applied to student load on campuses defined as ‘regional’ by the Commonwealth. UWS recommends that that definition of regional be reworked and that the issue of outer urban location also needs to be fairly addressed in funding.

The regional loading criteria need to be reviewed as they are clearly inequitable. For example regional loadings were gained by:
» Wollongong but not Newcastle,
» Adelaide (Roseworthy) but not UWS (Hawkesbury), and
» La Trobe (based only on a small country campus).

The ‘regional’ nomenclature has been a synonym for ‘rural’ or ‘semirural’. The definition has excluded universities that serve metropolitan regions (i.e. those on the urban frontiers) even when they have similar catchment characteristics and developmental histories to eligible universities.

The need for further funding support for outer metropolitan universities is recognised in comments from the Labor’s then Shadow Minister for Education, Stephen Smith, Federal Labor understands the need to invest more in our Universities in a range of areas including additional recurrent expenditure,
research infrastructure and rural and regional universities and campuses.

The principles underlying this regional support were stated by the Government to be: Universities that provide places at regional campuses face higher costs as a result of location, size and history. Regional campuses generally have less potential to diversify revenue sources, a smaller capacity to compete for fee-paying students and a narrower industrial base providing fewer opportunities for commercial partnerships. (Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future, 2003, p.16).

The defining parameters for eligibility for four bands of regional loading on the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) are outlined. These loadings range from 30% for Northern Territory (Band 1); 7.5% for distant and small (Band 2); 5% for proximate and small or distant and large (Band 3); to 2.5% for proximate and large (Band 4). The current allocation of regional loadings are inequitable and illogical.

It is recommended that the definitions and allocations of regional loadings be reviewed and refined and that they be expanded to include outer urban regional universities, which can experience the same disadvantages as mentioned above for rural regional universities.

Multi-campus Loading

Genuinely multi-campus universities are ‘network universities’ with no large central campus they meet the definition of having:

» at least three campuses (UWS has six)
» and not more than 50% or 60% of onshore student load on any one campus.

These multi-campus universities are typically spread across large geographic regions. Individual campuses often serve discrete sub-regions with a strong connection with their regional communities and play a vital role in improving participation.

Multi-campus university cost structures do not typically benefit from economies of scale and require additional investments in the provision of distributed student services and infrastructure, including libraries, IT, laboratories, and student centres, across multiple campuses. Multi-campus universities therefore have higher costs than those with large central campuses where the provision of services, administration and infrastructure can be centralised and economies of scale realised. Further, numbers of the older universities were established in downtown locations where local suburbs are essentially an extension of campus life and provide food and facilities at no costs to the institution (e.g. RMIT, Melbourne University). Other urban campuses have none of these advantages.

UWS has six campuses with between 2500 and 9500 students ringing Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and spanning an area of approximately 2000 square kilometres. The ramifications of serving such a large region and the additional resources needed are considerable. GWS has a parlous public transport system so many staff and students drive. The distances and expense increase the burdens on students. The cost to the University of maintaining car-parking alone is $8M per year after fees. Seven self-contained networked libraries, six student centres, six Indigenous support centres, six security and grounds services, replication of teaching the same courses across campuses and staff travel all contribute to the unfunded expenses of running the University. The advent of VSU meant the loss of $9.8M in fees and any services that could not be subsidised from the teaching grant or retail services. Our estimate has been that the additional cost is in the order of 10% of revenue. This is undoubtedly contributing to UWS’s higher student: staff ratio than the sector average.

UWS proposes that a funding loading be provided on the CGS for the student load on these multi-campus universities to compensate for these higher costs of provision with a 2.5% and a 5% loading depending on the percentage of onshore student load on the largest campus:

» 5% loading for 50% or less students on one campus
» 2.5% loading for over 50% and under 60% on one campus.

Multi-campus universities cannot provide the same quality of infrastructure, campus experience and opportunities for social engagement and basic facilities and services as those which have the majority of students on one large campus. Yet the CEQuery results show that these are key factors in shaping students judgments of quality. In order to achieve the Government’s excellence and diversity objectives, it is recommended, therefore, that funding for these multi-campus universities is specifically increased to address these issues. The alternative of closing and consolidating campuses both limits local opportunities for students and is often politically untenable. This will enable institutions to improve the quality of the total student experience relative to those universities which have the majority of their load on one campus and are able to provide a much richer experience as a result.

52 Stephen Smith, press statement 24/7/07
Engagement Funding

Engagement with communities cannot be meaningfully achieved within the current constrained resource environment. There must be a commitment of resources from government (as a part of core funding and through the individual institution agreements with Government), private and community sectors. A hybrid model for funding engagement is discussed in section 3.7.

Other Funding Model Changes

UWS also proposes the following changes:

**Flexibility in load funding**
Currently annual fluctuations in student demand and enrolments can cause significant variations on annual CGS funding. If CGS load falls more than 1% below target in funding terms in any one year, the university loses that funding. To smooth this annual variability in funding, it is proposed that the limit for losing CGS funding be raised to 5% of load funding. This provides universities with greater flexibility to manage year-to-year variations in demand and enrolments.

**Triennial funding**
It is recommended that CGS funding be moved to a triennial rather than an annual basis and that the funding be assured provided there are not variations of more than 5% under or over enrolment. This will assist longer-term financial planning and greater stability.

**Sustainability funding**
It is recommended that universities be provided with funding to improve their environmental sustainability. This could be based on the geographic size of each university or their student numbers. The funding could be tied to the implementation of 10 key priorities over a five year period.

**State payroll tax to be removed**
It is recommended that there be no state payroll tax imposed on universities, as is the case with schools.

Public universities are liable for state payroll tax, whereas private and public schools are exempt from payroll tax. Placing public universities on the same basis as schools would free up substantial funding for research and teaching purposes.

The NSW payroll tax of 6% is a significant cost burden on universities given that salaries represent over 60% of overall cost. For UWS the total payroll tax in 2007 was $10 million, for the state universities as a whole over $100M.

These funds could be used to improve quality of service to students, to provide better classroom facilities, enhance library resources; reduce class sizes and improve safety on campus.

**Tax treatment of research and development**
Taxation is highly relevant to private investment in R&D. There is a direct nexus between the tax regime and industry investment. When Australia’s rate dropped from 150% to 125% private funding of R&D dropped substantially. Australia is now one of the lowest in the OECD in terms of business expenditure on R&D.

We recommend that there be a return to the standard 150% deduction rate with continuing access to a further 50% where companies increase their level of this type of R&D expenditure relative to their average over the previous three years.

We also recommend that the eligibility criteria be reviewed to assess whether it excludes too many companies on the basis of the annual turnover limit of $5 million. We accept that any criteria would need to be clear and tight to ensure the tax relief is used for genuine purposes which boost investment in R&D.

**VSU and replacement funding**
It is recommended that the Government address the huge funding and support services gap left by the introduction of VSU. This is particularly acute where there are no nearby community commercial or recreational facilities that students can use. This could be achieved through a combination of recognition of core services to be provided and universities funded through a compact by Government and/or the reintroduction of a service levy on students which can be paid through the HECS system. There should be a direct Commonwealth intervention as these services are essential to student participation and retention.

The loss of student payments has directly diminished the student experience of university, reducing:
- the provision of food and beverage service outlets;
- health and dental services
- welfare services such as counselling and child care facilities
- campus life social connectedness with the reduction of funding and support for clubs, sporting groups and other campus activities
- student advocacy and the maintenance of a student voice.

According to AVCC data, the first three categories of service alone account for $80m in expenditure, indexed accordingly. The immediate gap left for UWS in fees uncollected was $9.8M in 2006.
3.9 Governance and Regulation

In recent years the direction and focus of the Australian higher education sector has, in many ways, been driven by a combination of regulatory control and policy imperatives only made possible through at-risk funding regimes. The shape of the sector reflects a purposeful program of reform matched to government priorities. Commonwealth funding was used as a lever to bring about governance and industrial reform without the need for legislative change.

Much of this reform was consistent with broad change agendas within the public and private sectors. But some did not resonate well with universities and created a lack of alignment between stated aims and actual outcomes at an institution or sector-wide level. There is now too much regulation for little gain. There is a plethora of reporting requirements, compliance obligations, financial penalties and intrusions into institutional planning and management that renders the aim of reducing red tape meaningless.

The most appropriate and effective means of sector-wide regulation and compliance with legislative and policy imperatives and directions is for institutions to be autonomous while at the same time being responsible and accountable for achieving their missions, for the appropriate use of public funds and for achieving their mandated purposes.

Question 31: Is it time to reshape tertiary education in Australia and streamline financing and regulatory arrangements? If so, what structural changes would you make and why?

Question 32: Is the level of regulation in the sector appropriate? If not, why not, and what should be done to reduce the level of regulation?

At present, there is far too much micro-regulation without a productive outcome or meaningful purpose. Universities which currently have to report to State Governments under the provisions of their Act are subject to state audits, have to report a range of statistics to DEEWR including data for the Institutional Assessment Framework, have to comply with the provisions of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, the MCEETYA Protocols, the AQF, the requirements of professional accreditation bodies, the voluntary codes of

Universities Australia and engage in the AUQA audit process and its various reporting and follow through requirements. A single data source must be used for all of the above purposes. This would enable multiple uses and automatic reports from the same database.

The fact that there is patchy equivalence in what is being approved for private providers across different states is an additional cause for concern and has some impact on universities in terms of articulation and the reputation of equivalent degrees.

It is recommended that the following integrated structural change be considered. It builds on the model put forward by the Group of Eight but has some additional features:

- Establish an independent and determinative and integrative Commission or Council that would administer and ensure the effective use of the funds allocated to post-secondary education – both VET and HE. This will not simply be an advisory group to the Minister (like the earlier NBEET, CTEC or HEC)
- It could be comprised of approximately 12 commissioners – including those elected from a set of nominees put forward by each state or territory government (along the same lines as currently used with the AUQA Board); Commonwealth nominees; peak body chairs (e.g. the Chair of Universities Australia; the Chair of the Australian Council of TAFE Directors)
- This is a radical move as it would separate the politicians from the money. However there would be clear policy guidelines provided by the Government and it would be transparent and principled
- This single body would link and give oversight to the AQF and current non-self accrediting institutions accreditation processes, the work of ALTC, the allocation of HEEF, compliance with the ESOS Act, implementation of the MCEETYA Protocols, the University Agreements, IAF process and a revision of the AQF including a clarification of its links to professional accreditation
- In some instances this body could commission state groups to undertake its functions against a national set of guidelines
- This entity would not be a national curriculum development body – rather it would set the standards and process guidelines to be followed for locally relevant application by the self-accrediting institutions; and it would assure comparable standards for the non self-accrediting institutions. AUQA would assist in ensuring that these are being complied with in locally relevant and feasible ways. In this way excellence and diversity – the
Minister’s stated key objective for the system – might be achieved

» It is recommended that the LTPF be discontinued but that the remaining funds should be allocated to the ALTC or the proposed Commission to address sector-wide areas for quality improvement in Learning and Teaching – starting with the issue of assuring high quality assessment and standards. This recommendation involves ALTC taking a more pro-active role on behalf of the sector than is currently the case. It is recommended that the ALTC awards and it core programs like the leadership program continue

» The creation of a sector-wide Commission would involve the states signing over their VET-HE mandates. This would entail, for example, an amendment of each University Act to give accountability and reporting to the Commonwealth via this new Commission. It would entail inserting exemption clauses into State Acts like the State Bodies Financial Administration Act and the Financial Audit and Administration Act which make the institutions accountable to the Government Commission

» The exact way in which the University Agreements component of this process would operate would require further clarification.

State/Federal Government role with universities

In this context UWS supports the Commonwealth taking over responsibility for higher education through negotiation of an appropriate framework with the States and universities.

The arguments in favour of the Commonwealth taking over control are:

1. greater national coordination and consistency for universities and private higher education providers
2. avoiding duplication in reporting and accountability
3. providing a more effective way to address inter-state issues rather than the current situation of inconsistent registration, tax, accreditation, standards, legislative requirements and frameworks between states
4. avoiding the need to impose national requirements on states through funding mechanisms (such as the Governance Protocols)

Question 33: Does Australia’s Quality Assurance Framework need revision? If so, why? What changes would you make?

UWS endorses the current role of AUQA. If an independent Commission is established, AUQA’s core functions would remain but be given further focus in ensuring that national standards as set via the AQF and other protocols are being consistently and effectively applied in locally suitable ways.

Question 34: Are changes required to the Australian Qualifications Framework?

At present, some institutions may not fully comply with this framework – this is seen, as the Discussion Paper notes, in the quite different way in which some professional doctorates are being structured and approved in the self-accrediting institutions. There are also some levels of qualification not being addressed, such as the introduction in some institutions of a one year masters degree.

Tied to this is the need, as the Paper says, for institutions to sharpen what their standards are for different levels of degrees. This requires, as endorsed at the Australian Universities Quality Forum 2008, a focus on the quality of assessment to be consistent with the focus by the government on assuring the quality of outcomes not just inputs.

Question 35: Is there more that could be done to improve university governance? How should this be done?

The University of Western Sydney does not favour a uniform model of university governance across the sector. Universities through their histories, profiles, and communities will have different needs and expectations with respect to the model of governance that suits them best. So long as university governing bodies maintain a clear majority of external members, the University sees no problem with some level of representational membership. The roles and duties of members in these circumstances are well documented in law and practice and are as relevant to appointed members as they are to elected members.

As part of the National Governance Protocols exercise the previous Government provided some support for professional development via the University Governance Professional Development Program. While considerable effort has gone into the UGPDP it may be that a simpler approach involving the production of resources (e.g. guides and open training programs) specifically for university governing bodies would represent better value for money and have greater impact - e.g. the Committee of University Chairman Guide in UK. For example many universities encourage Council members to attend ‘company director’ programs but it would be beneficial if these could be tailored to the university sector.
Reducing ‘Red Tape’

UWS believes that there has been a period of over-regulation and reporting obligations imposed on universities by the Federal Government which have been to the detriment of the proud history of university independence and been an unnecessary drain on university resources which could be more fruitfully allocated to educational delivery, research and community engagement.

In May 2006 Phillips KPA produced a report for the Australian Vice Chancellor’s Committee University Reporting Requirements. This report analysed the increased reporting requirements on universities as a result of the Backing Australia’s Future reforms. The report concluded that even after $10.2 million was allocated to universities to assist with implementation of the new reporting obligations, the costs for universities nationally was:

» $50-60 million net for implementation costs and
» $20-30 million recurrent costs to maintain the changes (ranging from $0.55 million to $1.06 million per annum per university).

UWS agrees with the Phillips KPA report’s recommendations to cease the following reporting requirements and to make changes to reduce the administrative burden. In this context UWS agrees that consideration should be given to:

1. Ceasing the Student Learning Entitlement as it does not provide additional funding for institutions or support for students. It is unlikely to yield significant savings to the Commonwealth given that few students will exceed their SLE
2. Removing the cap on FEE-HELP loans as it does not appear to have any positive outcome - students must either not enrol in programs that will take their loan total above the cap, or must pay the difference up front
3. The implementation of the Commonwealth Grants Scheme and funding agreements to provide a more flexible approach to the CGS and funding agreements and opportunities to reduce administrative complexity, reporting requirements and operational costs. Options include fewer funding clusters, longer time frames for funding agreements, and greater margins of flexibility in relation to over- and under-enrolments
4. Ceasing the publishing requirements and the Going to Uni website as the current publishing requirements and approach are not necessary, reasonable or in the best interests of students
5. A one-off investment by the Commonwealth to support universities in improving their administrative systems
6. A senior operational-level group of university and DEST representatives to have an ongoing, open brief to monitor reporting requirements and suggest improvements
7. Schemes to promote and support further the already strong professional relationships between DEEWR staff and institutional staff involved in planning and reporting
8. The development of a single source of documentation of reporting requirements and their purposes, together with a calendar and ‘map’ of the various elements
9. Consolidation of separate funding programs into a smaller number of larger programs
10. A review of the need for Research and Research Training Management Reports in the context of the changes to research funding being developed
11. Consolidation of accountability reporting requirements for a number of programs into a single acquittal/certification process.

In the longer term, the most substantial opportunities for reform to reporting requirements could flow from fundamental change in the relationship between the Commonwealth and the universities. Options include:

• A more arms-length relationship between the Commonwealth and universities which positions universities more as independent enterprises than as entities subject to very specific operational interventions by Government
• A different form of and less intrusive funding and accountability relationship in which those providers that have demonstrated long term financial stability and consistent performance are subject to other substantial forms of public accountability
• Establishment of a national agency separate from DEEWR to manage the collection and publication of information from the higher education sector. This option would not necessarily lead to a net reduction in reporting requirements. The strongest case for such an option might arise if it were part of a wider move to harmonise policy, data funding and reporting approaches across the higher education and vocational education and training sectors. An idea model would be the Commonwealth’s Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

UWS notes that while the above proposals would free up time and resources for core university activities rather than reporting obligations, there will be initial implementation costs for which universities would need Government funding.
Further Approaches to Reducing ‘Red Tape’

Changes to PRISMS
Provider Registration and International Students Management System is a useful and accepted reporting tool. However, some aspects of its student enrolment management requirements are outside the normal activities of universities. These aspects in relation to study load monitoring are burdensome for universities.

Higher education providers are exempt from attendance monitoring requirements under ESOS. This is in recognition of their particularity among education providers. However, ESOS requires them to monitor international students’ study load in a way that universities have never done for their other students.

Commonwealth legislation sets maximum completion times against every type of qualification. This is absent from ESOS. The ESOS requirement is that international students complete their studies within the time it takes to do so when carrying 100% study load in every study session.

In the university setting there is no precedence for or established mechanism of instructing students to increase their study load and to threaten or penalise them if they set their own pace of study. This requirement in ESOS inadvertently or implicitly applies compulsory education sector principles to the post-compulsory sector.

One solution would be to legislate minimum and maximum completion periods for international students and let them manage their progress within whatever maximum period is set, just as local students do. The maximum course lengths do not have to be necessarily the same for local and international students but in the post compulsory education setting it should be left to the students to manage their pace of study, whether they are local or international.

Monitoring the pace of study is burdensome, time consuming yet highly inaccurate and for this reason leaves universities exposed to inadvertent non-compliance.

Review Contact Persons
It would be useful if Government Departments could seek advice on who will be the key liaison person for each review (rather than email announcements, reminders, bulletins etc being sent to the VC, DVCs, PVCs etc and then being redirected internally to key people by a number senior executive staff causing duplication, triplication etc). For example, ERA sought formal advice of a University liaison officer and directs all communications requiring action to that person.

Scholarships Reporting
Changes to the reporting of Commonwealth Scholarships to include commencing scholarship recipients within 15 days of census was a huge burden on institutions. The file had to be created outside the system (for Callista sites) because there was no functionality available at the time. The rationale for the change was so that DEEWR could notify recipients, rather than the institution awarding the scholarship, but the motivation appeared to be political.

The Time Burden from Excessive Reporting
To give an idea of the time involved in just some of the reporting obligations, UWS estimates that the:

- Institution Assessment Framework – involves at least 3 weeks staff time
- Learning and Teaching Performance Fund Stage 1 Requirements - involves at least 2 weeks staff time
- Annual DEEWR Away from Base Report for Indigenous students - involves at least 2 days staff time
- annual NSW Department of Education and Training - University Survey: Education Enrolments - involves at least 3 days staff time and is obvious duplication as the data is also collected by the Commonwealth but not shared with the State
- Student administration reports: UWS submits a minimum of 28 data files to DEEWR every year with approximately 8 weeks to prepare each file. This does not include testing systems changes due to changes made by DEEWR, lodging student management system queries with the product provider, analysing HEIMS errors and advising Business Units on the DEEWR requirements etc. In addition to the time spent on the actual submissions extensive time is spent on analysing business requirements, implementing system changes, extracting data, identifying errors, cleansing data, submitting files to DEEWR, and advising functional units of reporting requirements
- The Provider Registration and International Students Management System (PRISMS) is an online DEEWR database, uses CRICOS course details and manages individual student enrolment details for Education and Immigration Department purposes. Any change to an international student’s enrolment has to be updated in PRISMS. Education providers face significant penalties for not maintaining accurate PRISMS records.
Some 2007 statistics of UWS PRISMS use:

- CoEs issued for 26 weeks or more: 3120
- CoEs issued: for under 26 weeks: 1848
- CoE variations entered: 3223

The total annual time spent on handling 8191 PRISMS entries, according to this reckoning, is estimated as the equivalent of around 70 weeks of a full time staff member’s work (using a range of 5-30 minutes per change).

Another issue of concern is the burden of requests for reviews and reports. While not wanting in any way to lessen the principle of consultation, there is a need to review the frequency and prioritisation of such requests. For example, in the research area alone, since January 2008 we have provided feedback reports or submissions on the following reviews, requiring many hours of staff time:

- Review of the NCRIS Roadmap (ongoing) – we nominated three staff members to be involved in the working groups and one was selected.
- ARC Future Fellowships consultation paper (6hrs)
- DIISR Review of the National Innovation System (20hrs)
- NSW Government Inquiry to Nanotechnology (written submission say, 4hrs) followed up by a request for the PVC Research to attend State Development hearings into Nanotechnology in NSW (4hrs)
- ARC Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) response to consultation paper (10hrs)
- ARC Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) response to Journal Ranking list of over 19000 journals – currently underway.
- Senate Inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian universities (6hrs)
- NCRIS consultations on the exposure draft 2008 (7 hours).
In recognition of the unique Indigenous demography of Greater Western Sydney as well as the fact that its campuses span the traditional territories of three peoples (the Darug, Gandangarra and Tharawal), the University of Western Sydney (UWS) is committed to exemplary practice in Indigenous education and is building capability to become an employer of choice, in particular in Greater Western Sydney.

Key aspects of the best practice include:

1. An Embedded and Whole-Of-University Approach

Indigenous Leadership

As an initial step towards embedding Indigenous education, in 2006 the University created the position of Dean of Indigenous Education. The purpose of this position was to take an across-University responsibility for Indigenous education. The Dean, Indigenous Education is also the Director of Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education.

UWS has also appointed a cadre of senior Indigenous staff strategically located across the University and with across-University responsibilities. These positions include:
- Associate Director (Academic), Badanami;
- Associate Director (Research), Badanami;
- Associate Director (Administration and Student Services), Badanami;
- Director, Indigenous Employment and Engagement, Office of Human Resources;
- Manager, Indigenous Outreach, Office of Marketing.

Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC)

The Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) continues as a standing Council of the University, providing advice on Indigenous education matters to the Vice-Chancellor and the Board of Trustees. Membership has been expanded to include one Indigenous alumnus of UWS, one Board of Trustees member and up to ten Indigenous community members with half of the community member positions allocated to regional and local AECG’s in Greater Western Sydney.

Indigenous Policy Foundation

UWS embraces the vision statement of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. A reconciliation statement was approved by the UWS Board of Trustees in May 1998 and in part says:

This University is committed to providing higher education pathways for Indigenous students and contributing to the process of reconciliation as an education institution which shares with the Australian community the cultures, languages, history and contemporary experiences of Australia’s Indigenous people.


UWS supports the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council’s Strategic Plan 2006-2008.

Indigenous Education Policy

The University’s work is guided by the UWS Indigenous Education Policy (IEP), its purposes, vision, values, principles and objectives, available at: http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00229

The UWS Indigenous Education Policy provides guidance for the development and management of Indigenous education at UWS, including:
- Indigenous involvement in leadership planning and governance.
- Indigenous student access, marketing and communication.
- Indigenous student support.
- Learning and teaching.
- Indigenous research.
- Indigenous community outreach/engagement.
- Indigenous cultural recognition.
- International/Indigenous.

In support of the above objectives, the IEP lists the following principles:

- Section 11: UWS acknowledges that Indigenous Education is a priority area of operation and as such occupies a status similar to Learning and Teaching, Research, Engagement and Internationalisation.
- Section 16: Implementation of this UWS policy is a responsibility shared across all sections of the University and will be included in the University’s staff performance management system.

ATTACHMENT 1
– UWS INITIATIVES IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

In recognition of the unique Indigenous demography of Greater Western Sydney as well as the fact that its campuses span the traditional territories of three peoples (the Darug, Gandangarra and Tharawal), the University of Western Sydney (UWS) is committed to exemplary practice in Indigenous education and is building capability to become an employer of choice, in particular in Greater Western Sydney.
Integrated Indigenous Education Strategy

In 2008 UWS introduced an Integrated Indigenous Education Strategy (IES). The purpose of this document is to support the UWS Indigenous Education Policy by establishing a framework of senior staff accountability, leadership, management, planning, implementation and reporting across UWS. To this end the Strategy is divided into 7 areas of focus:

1. Marketing and Communication;
2. Student Services;
3. Learning and Teaching;
4. Research and Research Training;
5. Engagement and Outreach;
6. International;
7. Cultural Recognition.

UWS has established an Indigenous Education Strategy Committee to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

Indigenous Employment Policy

The UWS Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy aims to improve the participation and employment of Indigenous Australians through effective recruitment strategies and retention support. Currently, UWS has 1.4% representation to total staff (being 34 staff out of 2465 staff).

The core elements of the program will be focusing on the following:

- A research program that identifies best practice in Indigenous Employment and Engagement
- Developing a vision informed by identifying best practice in Indigenous Employment and Engagement
- Development of a comprehensive Indigenous Employment and Engagement strategic agenda and action plan University-wide.
- Inculcate engagement with the Indigenous community University-wide
- Identification of champion leaders that will drive the agenda
- A process of monitoring and evaluation of initiatives developed and implemented

A governance framework has been established and is being implemented comprising a new UWS Indigenous Employment and Engagement Advisory Board chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Strategy and Services). The main purpose of this board is to provide advice and input into the development of Indigenous employment initiatives at the University. External members have been invited who are Indigenous leaders in Law, Education, Industry, Government, Senior Elders and Community Engagement.

A number of pilot initiatives have been approved and developed for 2008 to build strong foundations and capabilities contributing to overall economic, social and cultural well being for Indigenous Australians at UWS:

- A traineeship pilot program has commenced in the School of Medicine, School of Law, Library, Special Projects, School of Management, Human Resources, MARCS Auditory Laboratory, the Research office and Careers and Cooperative Education. This includes mentoring, employee assistance & benchmarking, Indigenous workplace relations and skills transfer, tailored learning and tutorial assistance.
- Vocational Indigenous employment for students and key partners is in place
- Community engagement programs including collaboration with partners to:
  - enhance participation and engagement in Indigenous communities
  - ensure ongoing retention
  - contribute to a strong sense of place for Indigenous Australians

Over 2008-2009 the pilot plan for traineeships will be expanded to include school based traineeships, cadetships, and apprenticeships. Technology will be a key focus to facilitate community engagement and cultural awareness.

2. Marketing And Communication

UWS now has a Senior Indigenous Marketing Officer, an Indigenous Marketing Officer and is developing an Indigenous Marketing and Communication Plan to improve marketing and promotion activities aimed at increasing Indigenous participation.

Initial activities have already had an impact on interest and positive feedback about Indigenous participation.
3. Scholarship Opportunities

The increase in UWS scholarships available has contributed to the ongoing improvement in participation and retention rates, including:

- an one-off start-up grant of $2,000 for each commencing student.
- Indigenous Achievement Scholarship to recognise the most talented Indigenous students. It is valued at $5,000 per year, for up to five years. There are currently 19 Commonwealth, UWS and donor related scholarship recipients.
- the Yarramundi Scholarship aims to support candidates wanting to complete research at the Masters, Honours or Doctoral level. The scholarship is valued at approximately $30,000 and is for a period of up to 3 years. Two scholarships are offered annually.

4. Alternative Entry Program

The Badanami Alternative Entry Program, introduced in 2007, has been the most effective tool for increasing Indigenous student participation at UWS. The program has allowed Indigenous students who would not historically have had the opportunity to participate in higher education to enter a program of their choice based on a set of minimal and essential criteria identified by each College. In 2008 the alternative entry program saw 76 applications a total intake of 109 Indigenous students. Each student is entitled to the $2000 start up scholarship.

Block Mode Residential Programs

The Aboriginal Rural Education Program (AREP) continues to be a significant access strategy for Indigenous students with two successful courses on offer in Mixed Mode (Away-From-Base). The AREP Bachelor Education Primary course and the Bachelor of Community Welfare (Family and Community) AREP/Metro course have continued to attract applicants from a variety of Indigenous community organisations.

Indigenous Student Support

Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education, in collaboration with UWS Colleges, has established a sophisticated across-University support network for all Indigenous students on all six campuses. In support of the national agenda of increasing the numbers of medical graduates, the School of Medicine has an Indigenous Program Officer to support the increasing numbers of Indigenous students enrolled in the UWS Medical Program.

5. International and Australian Benchmarking

UWS undertook national and international benchmarking with the view to gathering feedback on proposed UWS Indigenous Education Policy and Strategy and to gain insight into key issues of Indigenous student recruitment, retention and completion, Indigenous specific courses, units and embedded Indigenous content and a graduate attribute. The Dean of Indigenous Studies visited two national (Curtin and Edith Cowan) and two international universities (Universities of Manitoba and British Columbia in Canada). The four universities strongly endorsed the proposed UWS policy and strategy and commended UWS on its innovative approach to Indigenous education.

UWS intends to benchmark against two New Zealand Universities: University of Waikato and University of New Zealand.
Building Better Relationships with Schools: 2008-10

Rationale
The University of Western Sydney (UWS) was established with explicit aims to increase higher education opportunities and access in the region of Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and to help build social and intellectual capital. It aspires to bring positive change to the life opportunities of its students and to be a source of creativity and new knowledge that contributes to individual and community development. The University’s connection and commitment to GWS is integral to its identity and reflected in its learning and teaching strategies which involve University/community partnerships, and its community-based research. To ensure UWS fulfils its role as a catalyst for positive change in the region, one of the key focus areas in its blueprint Making the Difference is “Nurture a mutually beneficial relationship with GWS communities”. This is linked to four strategic imperatives:

» involve community and industry in academic programs
» link research to community benefits where possible
» develop close ties to community leaders and institutions
» enhance the ethic and evidence of service to the region and people

By working collaboratively with the school sector, UWS can pursue these imperatives in ways that support its goals and address the sector’s needs, priorities and interests, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Strategic Plan will facilitate University/school partnerships that contribute to school student engagement in learning, educational aspirations and confidence, opportunities, skills and educational attainment. This will enrich students’ lives and increase their options, including a greater preparedness for participation and success in higher education, and an interest in lifelong learning. UWS can help to support the needs of school students, teachers and staff while enhancing the learning of its own students and staff and adding to the body of knowledge. Familiarity with the University and what it has to offer may lead academically talented students and students with the capacity to succeed but disadvantaged by circumstances to make UWS their first choice. Indigenous school students will be encouraged and supported to engage in education and aspire to University.

The Strategic Plan will help to address the national priorities of building teaching skills in science and maths, increasing the number of science and maths teachers, and ensuring all teachers have an adequate background in these subject areas.

The Strategic Plan will be of benefit to the region, enhancing capacity in the school sector and helping students at all academic levels and from all backgrounds to realise their potential, so they can contribute more effectively and thoughtfully to the community. The plan will also provide a mechanism for recognition and promotion of the achievements of GWS school and University students and educators, and engendering regional pride.

Vision
UWS is engaged in mutually beneficial activities and relationships with the schools across GWS and is regarded as their University. UWS and the school sector work in partnership to enhance educational opportunities and pathways, build knowledge and skills, encourage and support educational aspiration and lifelong learning, and foster University/schools awareness, interchange and involvement. Innovative models of teaching and learning and collaborative programs help to increase student engagement and educational attainment. UWS is a University of first choice for GWS students. The University/school sector partnership contributes to the growth, prosperity and profile of the Region.

Aims
1. To build sustainable University/school relationships that facilitate identification and achievement of common or complementary goals
2. To increase knowledge and capacity in Greater Western Sydney through University/school partnerships and collaborative activities
3. To provide opportunities for school and University students which increase their options and help them to achieve, educationally and in other spheres
4. To encourage school students, teachers, staff and parents in Greater Western Sydney to feel a sense of ownership about UWS and to become advocates of it so it is increasingly a destination of first choice for university aspirants
Strategies

**Strategy 1 – Engaging with the school sector**
Develop and maintain school sector relationships to enable open communication, matching of goals, alignment of priorities and formulation of programs, and to foster understanding, cooperation and interchange

(supports all aims; other strategies contribute)

» Engage with the school sector at all levels with a focus on GWS, including government, governance and representative bodies, professional associations, groups of schools and individual schools of all types, to build mutual awareness, cooperation and partnerships

» Develop joint goals and agreed program areas linked to the State Plan and school sector priorities, and reflecting UWS teaching and research strengths

» Ensure ongoing involvement of the sector in decision-making on implementation and review of the Schools Strategic Plan and Action Plans

**Strategy 2 – Collaborating to achieve results**
Extend and establish collaborative programs and activities with schools and provide schools with access to expertise and resources to help them meet their needs and goals

(supports aims 2 and 3 particularly, also 4)

» Maintain and develop University/school partnerships and implement programs and activities that are linked to UWS teaching and research strengths and address identified sector needs, issues and interests

» Implement and enhance the Indigenous school student outreach program

» Work with the GWS school sector on initiatives to increase interest and skills in science and maths among teachers, trainee teachers, undergraduates and school students

» Provide GWS schools with access to academic and technical expertise, relevant research results and other data, online resources, facilities and equipment

**Strategy 3 – Enriching and empowering students**
Enhance students’ confidence, knowledge, skills and educational attainment through enrichment and equity programs

(supports aims 2, 3 and 4)

» Enhance educational opportunities and pathways, and students’ confidence and ability to reach their potential and realise their aspirations

» Provide specific opportunities for high-achieving school students, students with a demonstrated capacity to succeed but disadvantaged by circumstances, under-achieving students with identified potential, and Indigenous students

» Develop and implement innovative learning programs and run events to address students’ needs and interests in specific subject areas, particularly science, technology, engineering and maths

**Strategy 4 – Enhancing professional skills**
Enhance the skills of GWS school staff through professional development activities and provide opportunities for school and UWS staff to learn from each others’ experience

(supports aims 2, 4 and to a lesser extent 1)

» Help to address school staff development needs which have been identified by the school sector

» Provide and facilitate opportunities for University and GWS school staff to share knowledge and learn from each other’s experience
Strategy 5 – Building awareness
Foster UWS/school interaction and information exchange, and raise awareness of the achievements of GWS school and University students and educators to engender regional loyalty and pride

(supports aims 1 and 4; other strategies contribute)
» Run events, activities and platforms, and provide information, to increase familiarity with the University and how it can assist schools and students to achieve their goals
» Run programs that recognise and reward the achievements of school students and schools in GWS to build relationships and promote the Region
» Publicise UWS/school achievements and engagement activities in the wider community to raise the profile of the University and the schools and engender support

Strategy 6 – Conducting research and sharing the results
Undertake school-related research, particularly research linked to sector and regional priorities, and disseminate the results to inform policy and practice

(supports aim 2 and to a lesser extent 1 and 4)
» Undertake school-related research and evaluation partnerships that meet sector-identified needs in practical ways
» Identify and implement mechanisms for involving the school sector more closely in decision-making on research proposals and sharing results
» Research/evaluate the effectiveness and impact of program strategies for different types of students and use findings to inform future strategies and investments
» Identify sources of research funding where UWS/sector/school partnerships could leverage funding for projects of mutual benefit and develop joint submissions

Strategy 7 – Ensuring support from the UWS community
Promote, nurture and systematically support school engagement activities within the University to help ensure the Strategic Plan and Action Plans are effective and sustainable

(indirect but essential support for all aims)
» Ensure the Strategic Plan and Action Plans are owned and contributed to by all relevant areas of the University and establish the necessary internal infrastructure to support implementation of the Plans and the monitoring of progress

Strategy 8 – Seeking support from the wider community
Seek external support to enhance and extend UWS/school sector activities

(potential support for any/all aims)
» Identify and pursue external funding and sponsorship opportunities for University/school engagement activities
» Link with business, community and other organisations, particularly in GWS, to contribute to or develop programs and activities for schools
### AIM 1
Build sustainable University/school relationships that facilitate identification and achievement of common or complementary goals

### AIM 2
Increase knowledge and capacity in GWS through University/school partnerships and collaborative activities

### AIM 3
Provide opportunities for school and University students which increase their options and help them to achieve, educationally and in other spheres

### AIM 4
Encourage school students, teachers, staff and parents in GWS to feel a sense of ownership about UWS and to become advocates of it so it is increasingly a destination of first choice for university aspirants

#### Strategy 1
Engaging with the school sector
- Develop and maintain school sector relationships to enable open communication, matching of goals, alignment of priorities and formulation of programs, and to foster understanding, cooperation and interchange

#### Strategy 2
Collaborating to achieve results
- Extend and establish collaborative programs and activities with schools and provide schools with access to expertise and resources to help them meet their needs and goals

#### Strategy 3
Enriching and empowering students
- Enhance students’ confidence, knowledge, skills and educational attainment through enrichment and equity programs

#### Strategy 4
Enhancing professional skills
- Enhance the skills of GWS school staff through professional development activities and provide opportunities for school and UWS staff to learn from each others’ experience

#### Strategy 5
Building awareness
- Foster UWS/school interaction and information exchange, and raise awareness of the achievements of GWS school and University students and educators to engender regional loyalty and pride

#### Strategy 6
Conducting research and sharing results
- Undertake school-related research, particularly research linked to sector and regional priorities, and disseminate the results to inform policy and practice

#### Strategy 7
Ensuring support from the UWS community
- Promote, nurture and systematically support school engagement activities within the University to help ensure the Strategic Plan and Action Plans are effective and sustainable

#### Strategy 8
Seeking support from the wider community
- Seek external support to enhance and extend UWS/school sector activities
A program to increase participation in higher education of students from Western Sydney

This is a suite of transition programs offered to students in priority schools within the Greater Western Sydney region. The program targets low SES students from Years 9 to 12 who have been identified by the schools as having academic and/or leadership potential and who have very little exposure or aspirations to university.

Fast Forward has been running for 4 years and has grown to include a planned 25 schools in September 2008. It has now been incorporated into the UWS Building Better Relationships with Schools program.

Feedback from schools that have participated in the program has credited the program with improving the retention and progression rates of their students and the number of students applying to attend UWS from these schools has grown.

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), conducted by ACER continues to identify socioeconomic status as the key indicator of young people’s educational aspirations and outcomes. This trend is seen in the national participation rates for low socioeconomic status (LSES) students. These remain low at around 15% of overall student participation (DEST 2007).

Despite rising rates of university participation in every other socioeconomic group, these rates have remained unchanged for the last decade (DEST 2005). These LSES participation figures are well below the 25% equity benchmark set by DEST which would better reflect the structure of the population as a whole.

Fast Forward has been one modest UWS DEST equity funded outreach pilot program that has aimed to improve aspirations and outcomes for Western Sydney youth.

Project Aims

» to facilitate the connection to UWS of Western Sydney high school students from low socio-economic and NESB backgrounds; and
» to contribute to development of tertiary education as a realistic and viable post school option for these students.

Rationale

The project has been designed to capitalise on:

» The DEST requirement that tertiary institutions run outreach programs aimed at attracting equity group students into higher education;
» UWS’ commitment to working with the community of Western Sydney;
» The previous collaborative work of UWS Counselling Service and Careers and Employment in improving participation rates in post secondary education of equity groups within Western Sydney (Club Ace program); and
» The research undertaken by A/Professor Valentina McInerney that addresses the aspirations of young Muslim high school students, and their considerations of post school options.

Both LSES and NESB students are DEST identified equity target groups. There is ample evidence to support the claim that both these groups can be assisted to consider university as an option if entrenched attitudes are moderated by a range of strategies, and early during high school years (McLean, P. & Holden, W. Investing in ‘cultural capital’).

Once enrolled these students go on to perform at the same rates as other groups of students (Centre for the Study of Higher Education HEEP Discussion Paper Section 3.2)
Aims

This project seeks to engage school students with UWS students, staff and resources at an early stage in order to build interest and credibility for this higher education pathway.

During Year 9 children within our FF schools are identified for induction into the program. Once accepted into the program, the FF team and members of the UWS community work with the students throughout the remaining school years. A range of educational and personal development activities and opportunities are offered.

This project, through interactive, fun and practical activities, provide the targeted students a positive ‘taster’ of University life.

Program Up to 2008

» 10 Western Sydney School are currently enrolled in the program;
» Many additional schools have requested admittance to the program;
» Numbers of schools enrolled in the program has to date been constrained by resources available to the FF team.
» The program provides a successful model that could be used with other targeted groups (eg Selective Schools, Indigenous students etc).

Comments taken from the 2007 Participant Schools Evaluation include:

» 100 per cent retention of targeted students into Year 11 … increased confidence, improved focus and group support of targeted students toward each other. (Senior Principal, Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
» Improved tertiary aspirations of targeted cohort … exposure of group to other like minded people from other schools. (Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
» … there has been a clear concentration of focus by the cohort toward tertiary education with increased rates of school attendance, assessment task completion, homework centre attendance … this cohort positively impacted upon their peers. (Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
» Improved drive and commitment … in all areas for students themselves and their peers. (Belmore and Punchbowl Boys High Schools)
» Students have chosen a pathway for years 11-12 based on what they got out of the FF days. (Dunheved High)

» Majority of students involved in the program have now indicated a belief that they can pursue tertiary education … All students involved will continue with schooling into Yrs 11 and 12. (Shalvey High)
» Three students … had doubts about continuing to Yr 11. These 3 have now enrolled for HSC courses and now believe they have an interest in tertiary study. (Shalvey)
» Thank you for the opportunity to participate … it provides positive outcomes and opportunities for our students. (Shalvey)
» Helped identify strengths, weaknesses … very valuable insights and tips. (Bankstown Girls High)
» Students have been encouraged to become familiar and comfortable with university. In particular UWS and have become aware of the personal pathway in attaining their goal of future attendance. (Belmore Boys)
» The program has encouraged a continuing focus on the goal of attaining University entrance. (Belmore Boys High)
» They are more focussed on their personal goals and are mentoring each other to try to achieve their best results … (Belmore Boys High)
» Exposing young students with potential … improving their self confidence with respect to their academic ability. (Mt Druitt)
» The program demystifies the tertiary sector … they will be first in their families to graduate (high school). (Mt Druitt)
» Many of our students may not have … role models. This program allows contact with successful young students who are currently attending university … this is essential for our students … to see that attending university … is achievable. (Mt Druitt)
» Impact of this program … increased number of successful applications to selective senior school … (Mt Druitt)
» All FF students requested information … on UWS. (Mt Druitt)
» Great program, school is very privileged to participate. (Mt Druitt)
» I believe they have more confidence in their ability to succeed at university and to understand it is a real option … with this … increased focus on studies, follows on. (Bidwill High)
» More confidence in their own abilities … more able to focus on their goals. (Bidwill)
» Students gained a better understanding of the requirements … they showed a greater commitment to their studies and focused on achieving the results that would help them enrol at their chosen courses. (Wiley Park Girls High)
Students have been able to better identify their career paths and have learned to work hard towards achieving their goals. They have learned skills to help them study better and gain confidence. They also developed leadership skills. (Wiley Park Girls High)

This program opens up a whole new window to the world of higher education. (Australian Islamic College)

Students felt a sense of pride in receiving the awards in the awards ceremony. They loved the campus. (Australian Islamic College)

It gave the students direction. Students became interested in their future ... as a group they shared interest in each other and helped each other make decisions. (Australian International Academy)

**UWS Student Support:**

These include:

* **Academic Preparation Programs** are offered to develop student awareness about study, time management, the requirements of academic writing and possible career options. Evaluation shows that one of the major benefits of the program is the connections that students make with each other and staff which ultimately maintains their engagement in the learning experience.

* **Bridging Programs** are offered to assist students who may not have a high enough level of skill in a particular area to cope with the entry level university subjects in the area. Both general programs - focussing on academic literacy and maths - and more specialist subject programs are offered.

* **Peer Assisted Learning Program** offers peer-assisted learning support to first year students. The aim of the program is to assist first year students in targeted core units across all colleges, where student progression and/or retention is an issue. to:
  > understand what is expected of them at university;
  > develop study strategies and learning skills appropriate to their field of study;
  > create peer connections through study groups.

* **Peer Mentoring Programs:** Several programs are available to students, these include a mentoring scheme aimed at mature aged students offered via academic service learning, mentoring for students in areas that have been identified as having high attrition or low progression rates.

* **The University Counselling Service** offers confidential counselling to students experiencing difficulty, conflict or crisis in their lives that may impact their ability to achieve their personal and academic goals.

* **Careers and Cooperative Education** offers career development programs, employment opportunities and programs, student placements and employer liaison.

* **The First Year Diary** is provided to all commencing students and is intended to provide first years with information to assist in the transition to university using a just - in - time approach. The diary supports a web site for commencing students – *First Year Central*.

* **Student Welfare Services** administer the student loan scheme, emergency food packages, book vouchers and accommodation assistance in addition to providing welfare advice, referral and information services.
The data and research from UWS reveals a similar picture to national studies:

**UWS section of the 2006 Universities Australia study**

The UWS student responses to the national Universities Australia study reflect the national trend except that UWS students:

- had higher average expenses particularly for credit/loan commitments and transport costs (being $2,018 to $9725 more per annum)
- had higher deficits
- are more likely to be doing work in addition to their studies and for longer hours (1 to 15.5 hours more per week)
- are more likely to report that work adversely affects their study and that they miss classes for paid work
- are more likely to worry about finance, be unable to afford food or necessities and study related costs such as text books, stationery, computer, and be unable to support dependents
- are more likely to have their choice of university influenced by financial circumstances as well as the mode of study

**Student Exit Survey**

UWS has conducted two surveys (2004 and 2006) of students who have withdrawn from their studies before the end of their first year about their reasons for leaving.

Students were asked to rank the importance of a range of factors in their decision to withdraw from their studies.

- **Financial difficulties**: 25.3% very important and 16.5% moderately important in 2006, a significant increase from the 2004 result of 8.6% very important and 4.4% moderately important
- **difficulties with fee payments**: 13.1% very important and 16.5% moderately important in 2006, a significant increase from the 2004 result of 5% very important and 2.6% moderately important
- **Difficulty attending classes**: 24.8% very important and 10.3% moderately important in 2006, a significant increase from the 2004 result of 16% very important and 4% moderately important
- **Employment commitments**: 32.9% very important and 16% moderately important in 2006, a significant increase from the 2004 result of 24.1% very important and 3.4% moderately important

Students were also asked to identify any other factors contributing to their withdrawal which were not covered in the standard questions. Almost 70% of respondents gave feedback on this question. Student income, child care, difficulties in balancing work and family commitments, and financial difficulties were among the most common problems identified by students as influencing their decision to withdraw.

**Students at Risk study**

The UWS Students at Risk project (2007 and 2008) aimed to improve the engagement of students in their critical first year of enrolment. The project identified a number of issues related to the impact of inadequate income and financial strain on students and their studies:

- A profile of commencing year students reveals that they work long hours in paid employment
- Just over 54% of those surveyed were in paid employment with the work hours evenly spread from 1-5 through to over 30 hours per week.
- Paid work and variability of casual employment arrangements mean that students will prioritise paid work over voluntary study activities seen to ‘possibly’ improve academic performance.

**Law first year interviews**

Concern about the cost of buying text books was one of the top 8 issues raised by over 350 first year law students who attended interviews associated with a UWS support and transition project for students in 2006. The average text book cost was $1,000.00 per unit of study.

**GA Research Review of Student Representation, May 2008**

GA Research was engaged by UWS to undertake an independent review of student representation. Some questions were relevant to the issue of the impact of inadequate student income. Questions about employment, time spent on campus outside of classes and average earnings income revealed:

- Of the 3054 respondents 70% of UWS students are having to juggle their studies with employment. This affects the time available for their studies.
Type of employment:
- Casual 33%
- Part-time 4%
- Full-time 11%
- Working and on government benefits 3%
- Self-Employed 2%
- Unemployed/not working at all 27%

The income levels for UWS students are very low: 40% of UWS students earn less than $149 a week before tax and the average weekly income before tax of a UWS student is $282.

Personal average weekly income from all sources before tax % Overall
- $0 16%
- $1 - $149 24%
- $150 - $349 33%
- $350 - $649 16%
- $650 - $999 6%
- $1,000+ 4%

On average students spend less than 8 hours a week on campus outside class time.

Impact on students with a disability

ABS statistics demonstrate that employment outcomes for people with disabilities increase with higher education qualifications. It is in the national interest, as well as that of people with disabilities, their families and carers, to help each person with a disability achieve their individual educational potential.

Students with a disability have particular needs that require attention. Students with a disability frequently have:
- Higher medical costs, including treatment, hospitalisation and medication;
- Higher transport costs, including more frequent travel due to study, often using specialised transport;
- A restricted capacity to work to support themselves during study;
- Higher accommodation costs;
- Personal care costs;
- Costs associated with acquiring and using assistive technology, and
- Increased need to study part-time due to the restrictions imposed by disabilities

Income support for students with disabilities is extremely important, since they frequently have much more limited opportunities to engage in paid work to support themselves through their university studies, either through restrictions imposed by the nature of their disabilities, or by a limited capacity to work and study. They should also be eligible for an adequate level of income and study support if they are required to study part time because of their disability.
UWS Student Services

UWS Student Services has reported a significant increase in requests for food vouchers, emergency loans and text book vouchers in 2007 and 2008.

A mature age student who recently migrated from Poland was studying full time in an applied mathematics degree so that he can become a high school maths teacher. He was working on average 42 hours a week in two jobs to support his young family. His academic progress was variable as commitment to paid work put pressure on study deadlines.

(UWS Students at risk interview data, 2007)

A student had to move out of his family home after ongoing arguments with a step parent. The student was denied a Youth Allowance by Centrelink who still treated him as a dependent and means tested his family despite one parent living overseas, and neither parenting providing financial support to the student. The student's only income was a casual job with irregular hours which sometimes required him to miss classes. UWS provided food vouchers and an emergency loan to cover the cost of two weeks' rent.
Level One: Quality of design

Evaluating Quality at this level involves making judgements about the relevance, desirability, feasibility and likelihood that a proposed learning program will engage students in productive learning and retain them. The empirical evidence from the CEQuery research (see section 3.3.4 below) and associated studies has identified the following quality tests for this design process:

» Relevance, including consistent theory-practice links and a focus on the capabilities found to count most for successful performance in early professional or disciplinary practice, along with the key graduate attributes the University wishes to see developed;

» A direct focus in assessment on these capabilities with particular use of problem based assessment and learning tasks; along with mechanisms to ensure prompt and constructive feedback, and transparent marking;

» Using the right combination of those just-in-time, just-for-me, self-directed and active learning methods identified as a ‘best aspect’ in the CEQuery studies for the field of education concerned. UWS agrees with the panel that more direct empirical research on what forms of IT-enabled learning work best with what sorts of students across different fields of education is necessary (green paper pg 36). It has a research plan for the area which includes benchmarking with the Canadian Quality Network of Universities;

» Clear up-front management of student expectations on what the university will (and will not) provide and, in particular, how assessment works - including what different levels of assessment performance (standards) look like in the particular subject being studied;

» A clear course direction and processes for ensuring that various units of study in the program complement each other and fit together into an integrated whole;

» Putting in place mechanisms to ensure that both academic and administrative staff are accessible, committed, responsive, knowledgeable and that teaching staff are competent teachers and student focused;

» Ensuring that learning support, library and administrative systems are directly aligned to the program and easily accessed;

Confirming that the times and locations for learning make access to the program and the university as convenient and productive as possible.
In the United States, federal and state policy toward higher education began to change in the mid-1990s with a focus on increasing university involvement in collaborative activities aimed at addressing key societal issues and goals, particularly in local communities which had become alienated from their universities:

» Every federal agency has specific grant programs that facilitate the involvement of higher education in research and teaching activities related to the agency’s strategic goals and objectives. Examples include:
  • Housing and Urban Development – Community Outreach Partnership Centres program which awarded grants to universities to work in partnership with communities on community development issues such as closing the digital divide, fostering small business, facilitating home ownership, providing job training. The Agency’s explicit goal for this program was “to change higher education culture to promote involvement in community problem-solving and partnerships.” Successful proposals required staff and student involvement as well as a community voice in decision-making. HUD also funds doctoral dissertations, early doctoral and early career research awards, scholarships to students in key fields such as community development or urban studies, and publishes a refereed research journal.
  • Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention – Teens, Crime and Communities is just one of a cluster of programs that involve schools and tertiary institutions in programs that link community service directly to learning objectives. This approach has been shown to increase social responsibility and behaviours as well as improved academic performance and commitment to school. Funds for this and similar youth development programs provide funds for program evaluation, research on interventions, and involvement of university students in program delivery.

» Since 1994, the federal agency, The Corporation for National and Community Service has provided competitive funding to schools and tertiary institutions for the purposes of linking student learning to community-based learning projects that enhance learning while meeting community needs. Evaluative research shows educational and economic benefits for students and for communities including increases in student retention, academic learning, and transition to higher levels of education as well as direct impacts on specific community issues that are the focus of the projects. In particular, the Agency’s goal is to increase social responsibility and a lifetime commitment to volunteerism as measured by total volunteering rates across the nation (measured by census data). Funding programs related to tertiary education include:
  • Learn and Serve America: direct competitive grant awards to tertiary institutions (and schools as well) to fund curriculum reforms that integrate service with instruction and support the essential coordinating infrastructure and evaluation of the program activities. The ongoing evaluation of this program and collection of performance data establishes it as the primary force for increasing the amount of experiential learning across higher education. Almost 100% of community colleges now offer service learning and nearly half of all universities motivated by the demonstrated benefits to student achievement and community capacity.
  • President’s Higher Education Honour Roll: A competition that recognizes leadership, impact, and achievement among universities regarding their involvement of students and academic staff in community-based learning and research activities that benefit communities.
  • Americorps: A program that engages young adults in a year or more of service in teams in communities, addressing local community needs in exchange for earning a cash voucher toward tertiary education costs. Many participants work in support of university-community partnership programs, especially liaising with schools and community-based organisations. The program increases access to university and influences student retention, career choice, and lifelong commitment to service.

» The Commonwealth of Kentucky – Regional Stewardship Program. In 2006, the state created this new initiative to promote regional and state-wide economic development, liveable communities, social inclusion, creative governance and civic participation through public engagement activities initiated by university staff and students. Kentucky is the first state to create a stewardship program and provide recurrent funding to its state universities for that purpose. The program provides direct funding for institutional infrastructure to create and sustain community-based activities, grants to build capacity on priority topics, and stewardship initiatives that support specific community engagement projects relevant to each region of the state. The state negotiates
Activities for affordable housing, health, and neighbourhood outreach, technical assistance, and information exchange: Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA) provides volunteers painting and repairing the buildings (for example, when the UWS Vice-Chancellor visited the well fortified West Philadelphia high school was a hive of activity with U.Penn students and staff also conducting research on issues such as obesity and malnutrition, and then study intervention strategies to work out the most effective approaches to improving community health. On an annual basis more than 5,000 community children, parents and community leaders are involved in the six intensive service sites in West Philadelphia. The services provided through these partnerships reach thousands of other community residents annually. The work has also improved university student learning and civic responsibility and provided staff with the opportunity to develop numerous research studies, grants and publications. (On Martin Luther King public holiday this year, when the UWS Vice-Chancellor visited the well fortified West Philadelphia high school was a hive of activity with U.Penn volunteers painting and repairing the buildings)

Some examples of University Community Engagement Initiatives to meet critical needs:

University of Pennsylvania – Centre for Community Partnerships: Recognising the depth of poverty, hunger and danger in the neighbourhoods surrounding their campus, U. Penn stepped beyond its campus boundaries in the early 1990s and began to collaborate with schools, families, and neighbourhoods to address and improve community conditions. The university’s West Philadelphia initiative involves a diverse array of partnerships. The university helped create a group of community schools and provides ongoing student and staff involvement in providing learning and other services to students, parents and other residents in a specific area. U. Penn students and staff also conduct research on issues such as obesity and malnutrition, and then study intervention strategies to work out the most effective approaches to improving community health. On an annual basis more than 5,000 community children, parents and community leaders are involved in the six intensive service sites in West Philadelphia. The services provided through these partnerships reach thousands of other community residents annually. The work has also improved university student learning and civic responsibility and provided staff with the opportunity to develop numerous research studies, grants and publications. (On Martin Luther King public holiday this year, when the UWS Vice-Chancellor visited the well fortified West Philadelphia high school was a hive of activity with U.Penn volunteers painting and repairing the buildings)

University of Arizona – the University of Arizona College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA) provides outreach, technical assistance, and information exchange activities for affordable housing, health, and neighbourhood revitalization. These activities will be targeted to the neighbourhoods of the Tucson Empowerment Zone, including the City of South Tucson, and adjacent neighbourhoods experiencing high poverty and development pressures. An emphasis is on the discovery and implementation of new materials and technologies to improve the efficiency of homes.

The University of California, San Francisco is working with involvement of a wide variety of community and university partners to focus on three major issues affecting the worst areas of the city. Using an inclusive and empowered board of community leaders to help guide the work, the partnership seeks to engage in community capacity building to eliminate health disparities. Achieving this ambitious goal requires attention to two critical contributing factors: joblessness and violence. High rates of poverty, under-employment and unemployment, and inadequate capacity in existing job training and job placement programs undermine health and well-being in the target communities. The university and its partners are addressing this through innovative and systematic approaches to community outreach worker job training and placements. High rates of violence and ensuing mental and physical health problems prompted the campus-community team to undertake The Resiliency Project. This consists of using an adapted Study Circles model to engage Community Council members, local violence and mental health experts, and community residents in designing and implementing culturally appropriate community-based interventions to promote individual and community resiliency.

The University of Chicago is partnering with the Woodlawn area of Chicago which has experienced drastic economic and population declines in the past 20 years. Residents are now facing myriad problems, including high unemployment, inadequate housing, low academic achievement, and poverty. To increase economic stability for both the residents and businesses in the area, the Woodlawn Community Partnership Program works to develop the area into a more stable mixed-income community. By reaching out to community organizations and residents, the program identifies gaps in service, provides technical assistance that builds upon the community’s infrastructure, integrates essential services, improves educational opportunities, and facilitates positive community interaction. In particular, the program will focus its efforts in three distinct areas: social service and educational support, the identification and treatment of asthma, and public safety.

University of Minnesota – as the population of the state rapidly changes because of large waves of diverse immigrants, the University has developed a university-wide strategy to help
strengthen social fabric, support new residents, and provide opportunities to ensure a successful transition and promote social inclusion. More than 200 staff and 1000 students have worked over the last decade to facilitate opportunities for immigrant community leaders to shape services and programs that meet community and cultural needs and priorities. The effort has catalysed academic innovations, public policy changes regarding immigration and education, and new practice and research findings regarding language learning, immigration, social inclusion, and the meaning of citizenship. The Initiative on Children, Youth and Families provides a framework to engage students and staff of the university in educational and research activities that support the healthy development of children across the state. Children's Summits provide an ongoing venue for cross-community planning and action in support of children's healthy development, with a strong emphasis on children's voices in the process of designing and evaluating activities and outcomes.

The University of Washington in Seattle is addressing the urgent needs of Toppenish, Washington, a rural multicultural community located on the Yakima Indian Reservation. Staff and students focus on three key areas of community need. Yakima Indian Nation Information Technology Job Skills Training is provided to tribal members and tribal government employees at the Yakima Nation's new Community Technology Centre. Small Business Assistance Services is provided to business owners in downtown Toppenish and surrounding neighbourhoods to assist small emerging Hispanic entrepreneurs meet the needs of the growing Hispanic market. Students leading Neighbourhood Revitalization programs educate residents about homeownership strategies, and sponsor workshops and community collaboration in beautification projects. As a result, community conditions and opportunities have demonstrably improved.

University of Michigan partnered with other universities and communities to find effective strategies for enhancing community expertise and motivation to understand, identify and correct environmental factors that contribute to asthma in children. Students and staff worked with Detroit public schools to identify almost 400 families affected by asthma. Participants were given with useful knowledge about air quality and issues related to furniture, bedding, vacuums, smoking, and home climate control among others. The participants learned monitoring and corrective techniques and strategies, and worked with the academics to organise family and community forums to share their findings, identify additional areas for research, and continue to provide education and strategies for household-level interventions.

Evaluative research is measuring both the effects on child health and on the effects of empowerment of adults in the community through access to useful information and the opportunity to take independent and collective action to improve community conditions.

Vanderbilt University is working in the worst neighbourhoods of Nashville to address crime prevention, disease and substance abuse prevention and to promote greater community capacity for collaborative action. One approach includes a partnership with a community in Gallup, New Mexico that has similar problems regarding health and substance abuse. African-American students from Nashville worked through the internet with Navajo students to conduct research on their communities, test public education and information strategies and monitor results. The students visited each other's communities to work together and to learn each other's cultural and faith approaches to community change and health improvement. The work improved student learning and retention, led to research studies and publications, and created new intervention strategies that are reducing alcohol use among young people in both communities.

Portland State University (Oregon) – In June 2008, PSU received the first National Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Partnership Award Community-Campus Collaboration for its partnership with Portland Public Schools, the City Water Bureau, State government, and businesses. The ongoing partnership has engaged more than 700 staff and students in research and learning activities such as gathering essential field data and conducting studies to help local and state government map, monitor and improve the quality of urban watersheds. Students gained science knowledge and a great commitment to social responsibility and several completed theses; staff published research articles, 27,000 community volunteers were trained by students to reduce their impact on watersheds and help restore streams and banks, and the city and state used the data to inform mandatory reporting, improve their program strategies to meet required standards, and support funding requests.