

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2019

University of the Sunshine Coast

1 **Equity outcomes and strategies:** for improving outcomes for people from a low SES background.

USC prioritises increasing access to higher education for all equity groups, and in particular for students from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disabilities. Strategies include school-based and community-based aspiration building and academic preparation programs, and activities including on-campus experiences and USC's undergraduate enabling program the Tertiary Preparation Pathway. Specific strategies are in place to address the needs of current USC students from equity groups, these strategies include equity bursaries and additional support services for students with disabilities, however all support services are designed with the aim of increasing participation of the cohorts of students who enrol at USC.

In alignment with USC's Strategic and Academic Plans, the USC Student Engagement and Retention Blueprint 2017-2020 encompasses four key objectives:

- Strengthen first year experiences - first year is the foundation for success in later years
- Design and enact high quality curricula - high quality programs and courses engage students in learning
- Promote access, equity and diversity - a USC-wide coordinated approach to increasing and widening student participation
- Enable support for learning - intentional, proactive, timely access to life and learning support

There are currently 14,540 students enrolled at USC. Of these students, 88% are domestic and 51.4% of the undergraduate students are the first in their family to attend university. Of the total number of students enrolled, 20.2% are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 30.1% are from regional backgrounds and 0.2% are from remote backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently represent 2.67% of all domestic students. The percentage of students with disabilities is 6.21%. USC currently sits above the national average for access and participation rates for students from low SES backgrounds, students who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and students with a disability.

2 **Key activities:** which will deliver an increase in the access, participation and success of people from a low SES background.

ACTION		OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES
PRE-ACCESS	Strengthen engagement with communities through delivery of widening participation activities to schools, adult learners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of schools / participants engaged in widening participation programs across USC footprint. - Undertake an annual evaluation of programs. Measuring effectiveness and impact on aspirational shift of participants to go onto higher education.
PARTICIPATION	Strengthen student engagement approaches and develop a consistent Orientation and transition plan for face-to-face and online resources across all campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single programmed schedule with milestone consistent elements - Comprehensive online resources for post Orientation and transition (Your First Year) - Suite of transition and orientation resources for all commencing students, including Starting @USC toolkit; Student News; commencing student advisement model. - Orientation Committee representative of all sites and local needs. <p>Measures: Increased positive feedback from students to orientation and transition activities; Feedback from staff via Orientation committee review and feedback processes; Impact measured by post-semester Starting@ USC toolkit; 5% or lower negative feedback via service encounters feedback tool. SES feedback indicates improvement in satisfaction across all service elements and sites.</p>

PARTICIPATION / ATTAINMENT	A comprehensive approach to the design and development of programs and resources that support student progression and success including course and program advising; student career development, academic capacity building, service learning and leadership skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holistic USC Advising strategy developed and implemented; - Embedding of online career modules, including employability products, fieldwork preparation and resumes; - Dedicated student employment services available at all campuses. <p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation data- bounce rates from communication to online resources; volume of face to face attendance; 85% conversion of appointment to attendance; - Impact data via progression semester to semester; retention data year on year for participants compared to non-participants.
PARTICIPATION / ATTAINMENT	Review and expand student tracking, intervention and support activities to improve student transition and progression rates and to address specific and cohort needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand and enhance the customer contact model to provide a whole of institution approach to enquiry management; - Align service model across all sites to deliver a consistent level of engagement; - A revised and expanded student tracking and intervention strategy developed with a focus on impact evaluation - MAPE policy and procedures reviewed and implemented. <p>Measures:</p> <p>Increased positive feedback from students to all transition and intervention activities;</p> <p>Feedback from staff intervention review and feedback processes;</p> <p>Impact measured by post-semester progression data</p> <p>5% or lower negative feedback via service encounters feedback tool.</p> <p>% positive/negative customer satisfaction show increase in satisfaction;</p> <p>SES feedback indicates improvement in satisfaction across all service elements and sites.</p>

3 Evaluation: how the university plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the equity strategies.

The key activities listed above will be evaluated to establish the extent to which they increase the access, participation and success of people from low SES backgrounds. The evaluations will be conducted according to the methodologies most applicable to each individual project’s objectives and will take account of project inputs, outputs and outcomes. Institutional data will be used to track enrolment and participation trends amongst equity groups, and evaluations will also take account of data provided by the Queensland Widening Participation Consortium in accordance with its Memorandum of Understanding.

4 Partnerships and collaboration: who the university will partner and collaborate with and how this will improve equity performance

Continue to collaborate with the Queensland Widening Participation Consortium and Regional University Network targeting Low SES and Indigenous students and build upon successful existing partnerships including: The Smith Family, AIME and TAFE. Work with identified high schools to deepen engagement with feeder primary schools.