

# ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020

## Australian Catholic University

**Equity strategies:** ACU's whole of university widening participation strategy provides a cohesive framework across the student lifecycle for improving access, participation and success in higher education for people from low SES backgrounds. ACU's Widening Participation Strategy also seeks to broaden its focus on supporting mature age students and disadvantaged adults who may not otherwise have considered or have access to tertiary education.

### Equity outcomes:

- Increase participation rates for people from low socio-economic backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from regional and remote areas
- Increase retention and success rates of students from low socio-economic backgrounds to be at or above the sector rate.
- Increase completion rate and graduate outcomes of students from low socio-economic backgrounds to be at or above the sector rate

### Equity strategies:

Building awareness of the benefits of higher education, informing aspirations, providing access and enabling successful participation and attainment in higher education is the focus of ACU's Widening Participation strategy activities. ACU will focus on strengthening its digital engagement capability across all platforms. The strategies and activities are embedded throughout the student lifecycle. :

- Pre-Access: Partnership with schools and communities to facilitate widening participation strategies and programs
- Access: Pathways and admissions (including enabling pathways)
- Participation: Transition, engagement and progression programs to improve retention
- Attainment: Inclusive learning and teaching pedagogical development, targeted support to assist students with transition to work and further education.

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

### Pre-Access & Access:

First People's and Equity Pathways Directorate widening participation programs delivered in collaboration with partner school and community organisations:

- Explore your Future programs: High Schools & Primary Schools: capacity for online, virtual delivery, in-school and on-campus programs designed to raise awareness of the benefits of higher education and possible career paths; build and inform aspirations for higher education. This is achieved through peer assisted educational activities which promote engagement in learning and demonstrate the links between learning, higher education and career pathways
- Academic Workshops: High Schools: Year 12 workshops to provide academic enrichment opportunities; capacity for online, virtual and face to face delivery
- Uni Step Up Programs: Senior secondary school students from low-SES backgrounds undertake selected ACU undergraduate units prior to entering university. Credit points are

given towards a related undergraduate degree for the successful completion of the unit. On successful completion of two units' students can articulate into an ACU undergraduate degree. Capacity for online, virtual and face to face delivery on campus.

- Teacher Professional Development: Partner schools can access teacher professional development opportunities at ACU to contribute to building school capacity; capacity for online, virtual and face to face delivery.
- Access programs: Access routes and enabling pathways are available via foundation courses and contextualised admissions processes
- Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in collaboration with ACU's Indigenous Higher Education Units to increase understanding and access of higher education participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Continued development of practice and research informed widening participation programs
- Bushfire assistance programs for regional NSW schools – Widening participation student ambassador program and Year 6 leadership program; capacity for online, virtual and face to face delivery

#### **Participation and Attainment:**

Transition, retention and success strategies for students from low socio-economic backgrounds are developed, embedded and delivered as a central focus throughout the whole of ACU:

- Office of Student Success services including:
  - Connect2Uni: a transition program for students from low socio-economic backgrounds
  - Peer Assisted Student Sessions (PASS) for first year undergraduate units
  - Academic skills support
- Faculty development and provision of engagement, retention and success strategies including:
  - National Educating Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools Program
  - Catholic Teachers Education Consortium
- First People's and Equity Pathways Directorate:
  - Widening Participation Student Ambassador Program
- Equity Scholarships for students from low socio-economic backgrounds

#### **2 Evaluation:** how the university plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the equity strategies.

- Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of all widening participation programs
- Regular consultation with key stakeholders

#### **3 Partnerships and collaboration:** who the university will partner and collaborate with and how this will improve equity performance.

- ACU will continue to build sustainable, strong partnerships with First People's and Equity Pathways partner schools and communities in VIC, NSW, QLD and ACT which enable widening participation work with schools, students, their families and the wider community.
- ACU will continue to collaborate with other higher education institutions such as the Widening Participation Forum Queensland; Widening Participation Managers University Consortium NSW and the Widening Participation Network VIC and Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Association