

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020

University of the Sunshine Coast

1 Equity outcomes and strategies for improving outcomes for people from low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds

USC prioritises increasing access to higher education for all equity groups, and in particular for students from low Socio-economic status (LSES) 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. 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 – recognising that first year is the foundation for success in later years
- Design and enact high quality curricula - high quality programs and courses to 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 15,469 students enrolled at USC. Of these students, 87% are domestic and 50.4% of the undergraduate students are the first in their family to attend university. Of the total number of students enrolled, 23.2% are from LSES backgrounds, 27.6% are from regional backgrounds and 0.2% are from remote backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students currently represent 3.0% of all domestic students. The percentage of students with disabilities is 7.1%.

USC currently sits above the national average for access and participation rates for students from LSES backgrounds, students who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and students with a disability.

2 Key activities leading to an increase in the access, participation and success of people from LSES backgrounds

ACTION		OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES
PRE-ACCESS	Strengthen engagement with communities through widening participation activities targeting schools, adult learners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5% increase in the number of schools and participants engaged in widening participation programs across USC footprint - Pre- post-measures indicate improvement in higher education aspirations to higher education pathways
ACCESS	Systematically rationalise and/or expand the current entry points through which prospective students might enter, in addition to the QTAC application.	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum of 3% increase in the number of people from LSES backgrounds entering pathways programs such as Headstart, Tertiary Preparation Pathway and those enabling direct entry such as Early Offer Guarantee and Indigenous Direct Entry Access (IDEAS).

PARTICIPATION	Strengthen student engagement approaches and develop a consistent Orientation and transition plan for face-to-face and online resources across all campuses	<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated schedule of activities, events and communications aligned to student lifecycle, transition milestones and local needs - Comprehensive, accessible online resources for post Orientation and transition (Your First Year) - Deliver suite of transition and orientation resources for all commencing students, including Starting @USC toolkit; Student News; early preparation for commencing students - Orientation Committee representative of all sites and local needs <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive student feedback via post-semester Starting@USC and service encounters feedback tool - Positive staff feedback reported through Orientation Committee - Student Experience Survey (SES) feedback indicates improvement in satisfaction across all service elements and sites
PROGRESS / 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	<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated advising strategy developed and implemented - Embedding of online employability tools, placement preparation and resumes - Dedicated student employment services available at all campuses <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% of Tier 1 queries resolved at first point of enquiry - Increase in face-to-face/online attendance - 3% improvement on retention and progression - 80% of supported students from LSES backgrounds achieve a GPA reflecting satisfactory progress
PROGRESS / ATTAINMENT	Review and expand student tracking, intervention and support activities to improve student transition and progression rates and to address specific and cohort needs.	<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand and enhance the customer contact model to provide a whole of institution approach to enquiry management - Align services across sites to deliver consistent level of engagement - A revised and expanded student tracking and intervention strategy developed with a focus on impact evaluation - Monitoring Academic Progress and Exclusion (MAPE) policy and procedures reviewed and implemented <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive student feedback re transition and intervention activities - Positive staff feedback from review and feedback processes - Improved retention, progression and GPA scores - Positive feedback via service encounters feedback tool - Improved student satisfaction (SES outcomes)

3 Evaluation

The key activities listed above will be evaluated to establish the extent to which they increase the access, participation and success of people from LSES 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

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