

### **1. Equity outcomes and strategies**

#### ***Outcomes for improving performance for equity groups from 2015-2017***

The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) prioritises increasing access to higher education for Indigenous Australians and students from Low SES backgrounds, with strategies aimed at improving retention and success for all equity groups, in particular Low SES, Indigenous Australians and students with disabilities.

USC is on track to meet its target of 20% Low SES students by 2015 and intends to continue to grow this figure with an aspirational target of 23% by 2017. 2014 Compact targets for Indigenous enrolment have been exceeded, with a 16.8% increase in the Indigenous student enrolments from 2013 – 2014 to a total representing 2.2% of all domestic students. Building on this success, the University will be aiming to increase its total enrolment of Indigenous students from 2014 - 2017 by 33 %.

Retention rates have steadily increased for equity groups, however, further improvement is desired, and USC will aim for a reduction in the overall attrition rate for students in equity groups to less than 20% by 2017, with a particular focus on reducing first year attrition.

#### ***Strategies for achieving the outcomes***

Maintain schools-based and community-based aspiration building and academic preparation programs targeting Low SES and Indigenous students particularly those in the STEM areas providing a range of activities including on-campus experiences and the Tertiary Preparation Pathway program.

Boost career advice available for potential students through development of statements of inherent academic requirements for degree programs. Maintain successful programs including Academic Skills Support and Unify (mentoring for students with chronic mental health conditions). Expand peer-assisted mentoring programs for students in equity groups. Provide financial assistance through equity scholarships, emergency relief bursaries and financial management workshops.

Promote student engagement through integrating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, supporting adoption of inclusive pedagogies. Enrich the quality of campus life through developing a campus where staff and students are more knowledgeable and supportive of diversity through programs such as: Diversity Week, USC Ally (promoting understanding of LGBTI issues) and cultural awareness initiatives.

### **2. Evaluation Plan**

Continued and sustained improvements in relevant student equity data and in QTAC data, including changes in trends on retention to Year 12 and conversion to university application, will establish the degree of success of the suite of strategies. Individual programs will incorporate a range of appropriate evaluative measures such as participant surveys.

### **3. Partnerships and collaboration**

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