

### 1. Equity outcomes and strategies

- a) Outcomes for improving performance for equity groups from 2015-2017

#### Context

The University of Western Australia's (UWA) Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> articulates the mission and vision, values, defining characteristics; strategic goals and measures of success for the period 2014 – 2020. The core values underpinning all of our activities include commitments to equity and merit as the fundamental principles for the achievement of the full potential of all staff and students, and the achievement of Aboriginal peoples' rights, aspirations and potential, and the recognition of Indigenous knowledge, culture and values.

UWA was founded with an explicit objective to provide “special encouragement and assistance” to “those who may be hindered in the acquisition of sound knowledge and useful learning by lack of opportunity or means”. This requires the University to look beyond prior achievement to identify unrealised potential. As a consequence, and in support of our core values, UWA engages with communities in regional Western Australia (WA) in the context of a strategy to enhance educational opportunities for WA communities outside of Perth, as evidenced by our campus in Albany and through our outreach, engagement and aspiration raising activities.

The University recognises that to attract the students of the highest potential requires the University to broaden its recruitment of students to tap into markets beyond WA, and, in admitting greater diversity to the University, provide an outstanding student experience that is broad, inclusive, supportive and values diversity. Accordingly, the University identifies, encourages and provide pathways for students of high potential but limited means and opportunity, including dedicated programs for Indigenous and low SES students.

#### 2015 – 2017 Access and Participation Plan

The University remains committed to recruiting and graduating a diverse student cohort of the highest quality. It will continue to offer and refine its range of equity programs that include the Aspire UWA Program, the Mature-Age Access Program, and the Broadway and Fairway Schemes, and a range of special admission provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that include the Provisional Entry Scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school leavers, offering guaranteed places and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into graduate entry Masters and Professional Doctorates including Engineering, Law, Medicine and Dentistry and our Advanced Diploma in Medical and Aboriginal Health Sciences and Advanced Diploma in Legal Studies courses designed to prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for entry to postgraduate professional-entry courses.

Particular priority will be given to initiatives to improve the access and participation of low SES students, students from regional and remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (especially in professional-entry programs).

#### Half Cohort

The University has previously alerted the Commonwealth to the predicted impacts of the West Australian 'Half Cohort' created by a change in the commencement age of children enrolling in West Australian primary schools 12 years ago. The half year cohort graduated from secondary school in

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<sup>1</sup> UWA 2020 Vision @ <http://www.uwa.edu.au/university/executive/strategic-directions-2014/key-capabilities>

2014 and will impact student enrolments in 2015 through to 2017 as the reduced student intake progresses through the university system.

It is estimated that the 2015 domestic school-leaver intake will be 62% of the intake in the previous year, which equates to a drop in the University's domestic load of around 1,500 EFTSL in 2015 and a reduction in the head count of enrolled students from low SES and other equity target groups.

### *2014 – 2015 Australian Government Higher Education Reforms*

The University recognises that the Australian Government's Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill (2014)<sup>2</sup> proposes wide-ranging reform of the Australian higher education system including, from 1 January 2016, the deregulation of fees charged to Australian and New Zealand citizens and Australian permanent residents enrolled in Commonwealth-supported university places and the introduction of the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme in 2016 as an outcome of the deregulation. Subject to passage of the Bill, the University will review and expand its already extensive scholarship program for students with financial disadvantage and its equity strategies. In the absence of certainty at this point, it is observed that any changes to legislation will necessitate revision of this Plan.

### **Performance Indicators**

The proposed performance indicators take into account the impact of the 'half cohort'. The impact will be evident in a decline in Access Rates as reported in the Student Data Collection for 2015 and will continue to be reflected in Participation data for the period of this plan.

For these reasons, in seeking to demonstrate a focus on continuing improvement in performance across all of the targeted equity groups during the period of this Access and Participation Plan, performance indicators for specific initiatives are identified in Table 1 below. Once the actual impact of the 'half cohort' is evident post the Semester 1 Census date, adjusted targets that take into account the impact can be established for equity groups reported under the annual Higher Education Student Data Collection.

*Table 1: UWA Access and Participation Performance Indicators 2014 – 2017*

<b>Performance indicators</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Access programs				
Aspire UWA: partnerships with schools	52	52	53	54
Aspire UWA: student participation in outreach	9,000	9,500	10,000	10,500
Fairway UWA: number of students completing program	70	75	80	85
Fairway UWA: number of regional/remote participants	5	12	15	18
Broadway UWA: number of students receiving offers	100	70*	105	125
Broadway UWA: number of students enrolling by the alternative entry pathway	90	55*	95	100
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments (undergraduate, postgraduate coursework & HDR by headcount)	226	240	250	260
Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 11 and 12 students in Leadership program	86*	103	124	140
Mature-age Access Program enrolments	140	155	160	170
Girls in Engineering project: number of schools engaged	5	10	12	15

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 @ [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Bills\\_LEGislation/Bills\\_Search\\_Results/Result?bld=r5325](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=r5325)

Participation Programs				
UniAccess – UWA’s Disability Service. Sustaining participation rate > 7%	7.92%			
Satisfaction with UniAccess service – 80% or higher	TBC			
UniSkills Flying Start transition program - attendance	110	90*	110	120
Satisfaction with Flying Start service – 80% or higher	90%			
Numeracy Skills Support – students participating	900	950	1000	1050
Satisfaction with Numeracy Skills service – 80% or higher	83%			
Academic skills support - WriteSmarter	1, 300	1,500	1,600	1,700
Satisfaction with WriteSmarter service – 80% or higher	88%			

\* reflects impact of ‘half cohort’

b) Strategies for achieving the outcomes

*[For example: Build interest and capability in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for year 10 -12 low SES students in abc region schools through the xyz programme.]*

## Access and participation strategies

### Overview

The University was founded as a free university and has a long history of encouraging fair access and supporting participation in its courses for students from under-represented groups in Higher Education; a commitment that is reflected in The University’s Strategic Plan (p3) and the commitment of substantial funds to augment HEPPP (2009 – 2014) and HEPP (2015 – 2017) funds to implement a comprehensive equity strategy. Our strategic approach includes embedding activities previously funded through competitive funding streams and proactively encouraging corporate partnerships to collaborate in supporting equity programs, particularly in regional Western Australia.

The University acknowledges and endorses the Commonwealth’s commitment to a fair and equitable higher education system that provides equal opportunity for people of all backgrounds to participate to their full potential. This commitment is demonstrated, amongst other things, by the broad ranging widening participation initiatives that The University delivers in collaboration with schools, colleges, national charities, NGOs, state and local government authorities and corporate partners. Working collaboratively and growing partnerships are principles that underpin program development and success is evident in new initiatives such as the Rio Tinto Girls in Engineering program, described below.

Targeting initiatives to align with The University’s context is a further strategy to maximise impact. As a university that serves a vast, sparsely populated state where 40 per cent of its low SES population and the majority of its Indigenous population live in regional or remote areas, The University has designed programs with a significant focus on outreach in regional Western Australia. Our strategy includes implementing new programs that complement each other and share resources and which target areas where performance needs to improve, as in the recruitment of females to study engineering and computer science.

Ensuring that assured entry pathways to the highly competitive postgraduate professional degrees offered by The University are accessible to students from under-represented groups is another example of how, as an institution, our equity initiatives are adapted to our context. An example is the recent expansion to the Broadway UWA scheme described in this section to include bonus points to students from eligible schools to make them more competitive for assured entry pathways to professional degrees.

Key components of the University's access and participation equity strategy include:

- extensive and highly influential outreach activities including the flagship Aspire UWA<sup>3</sup>, The School of Indigenous Studies' High School Outreach Program<sup>4</sup>; The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences' choose medicine...choose dentistry pathway<sup>5</sup> and The Rio Tinto Girls in Engineering Program;
- a suite of Alternative Entry Pathways, including Broadway UWA<sup>6</sup>; Fairway UWA<sup>7</sup> and UWay<sup>8</sup>;
- the University's New Courses curriculum with significant implications for enhanced equity;
- a suite of programs and services to support students' participation and retention;
- substantial investment in new affordable student accommodation dwellings; and
- ambitious fundraising targets in order to continue expansion of the University's equity scholarships program and other financial supports.

## Equity and Access Outreach Initiatives

The University will continue to deliver and further develop the following programs with the strategic objective of improving access to higher education for students from targeted equity groups:

### *Aspire UWA*

Aspire UWA has developed an extensive outreach program since 2009, through growing partnerships with the aim of informing aspirations, improving academic attainment and demystifying the university experience. Aspire UWA is partnered with 52 secondary schools in Perth and regional and remote WA. Aspire UWA will continue to deliver its high quality engagement program to students from Year 8-12, extend its core program to students in Year 7 from 2015, and provide support at university to students from Aspire schools. Aspire UWA delivers residential camps, on-campus events, school visits, mentoring through student ambassadors, teacher PD and community events in regional areas. The program currently engages more than 11,000 students, teachers and parents annually.

### *Fairway UWA*

Fairway UWA addresses individual disadvantage and identifies students in their penultimate year of secondary school whose academic ability has not been fully demonstrated due to significant personal disadvantage. Fairway supports these students in a structured program including a residential Summer School, online tutoring, Master classes and exam revision sessions, confidence building and motivational activities and mentoring that complements their Year 12 studies. Fairway UWA will continue to recruit and support a cohort of Year 12 students who face significant disadvantage during 2015-2017. Fairway students who choose to enrol at UWA are provided extensive support in transition.

### *Broadway UWA*

Broadway UWA addresses locational disadvantage by identifying disadvantaged schools through a range of equity indicators and offering admission to the University's three-year undergraduate degrees to students from target schools with an ATAR up to 5 points below the standard admission for a UWA degree. The Broadway students are also provided with individual support tailored to their specific needs, including an interview with the Broadway coordinator in their first few weeks on

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<sup>3</sup> Aspire UWA @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/aspire-uwa>

<sup>4</sup> School of Indigenous Studies High School Outreach Program @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/aspire-uwa/aspire-uwa/sis>

<sup>5</sup> Choose medicine...choose dentistry @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/aspire-uwa/aspire-uwa/aspire-uwa>

<sup>6</sup> Broadway UWA @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/undergraduate/entry-pathways/broadway>

<sup>7</sup> Fairway UWA @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/undergraduate/entry-pathways/fairway>

<sup>8</sup> UWay @ <http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/undergraduate/entry-pathways/uway>

campus. These interviews are intended to ensure that the students are aware of all the resources that are available to them and where to find them.

From 2015, UWA will expand the schools included in the scheme to include all regional and remote schools in WA and will also introduce a bonus points scheme to improve access to assured entry pathways to professional postgraduate degrees for students from these schools.

### *UWay*

UWay allows students to apply for alternative entry to an undergraduate degree course through UWay if their academic achievements have been adversely affected by certain disadvantages, particularly in their final years of secondary school. UWay applies a notional adjustment to the student's ATAR which may result in an offer to one of The University's four three-year Bachelor degree courses. Students who enter UWA via the UWay pathway are provided with an extended orientation program and support through their transition.

### *The School of Indigenous Studies High School Outreach*

School of Indigenous Studies High School Outreach delivers comprehensive outreach and transition programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that are designed to address the low transition rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from secondary to tertiary education. Outreach programs have a strong regional focus, provide options from years 8 to 12, and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander UWA students as role models, mentors and supervisors. Programs include Year 8 Discovery Days, The Indigenous Science, Engineering and Health Sciences Camps for Years 9 to 11, UWA Aspire Indigenous, the Year 12 Seminar for final year students, WACE (WA Certificate of Education) Revision Seminar which provides subject specific academic support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in years 11 to 12 and a Leadership program designed to support Indigenous year 11 and 12 students with the potential to succeed at University to transition from High School to University. In 2015, activities will expand to include Year 7 students.

UWA's programs are a long-term commitment to sustained change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth engagement, and success is evident in UWA's high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 21 years or under. UWA will continue to develop its outreach programs over 2015-2017, with a planned expansion of the WACE Revision Seminars and new initiatives to increase enrolments in Business and Design courses. A range of special admission provisions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that include the Provisional Entry Scheme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school leavers offering guaranteed places and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into the new graduate entry Masters and Professional Doctorates including Engineering, Law, Medicine and Dentistry and our new Advanced Diploma in Medical and Aboriginal Health Sciences and Advanced Diploma in Legal Studies courses are designed to prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for entry to postgraduate professional-entry courses.

UWA has developed a range of strategies to support its entry and pathways programs and increase the retention and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The School of Indigenous Studies provides a comprehensive range of academic, personal and cultural support services working in partnership with UWA Faculties, mainstream student services, residential colleges and external organisations to ensure that support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is both campus wide and course specific.

### *The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences' choose medicine...choose dentistry pathway*

The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences' choose medicine...choose dentistry pathway promotes equitable access to the highly competitive professions of medicine and dentistry for

students from under-represented schools. The program works with all schools identified in the Broadway UWA scheme, which includes all rural schools. Students from Year 10-12 are provided with information, support and role models in medicine and dentistry through in-school workshops. Rural students who need to sit the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) have their travel and accommodation costs paid and all students are mentored through the UMAT and interview process. Students who receive an assured entry place are provided ongoing support throughout their undergraduate degree and their postgraduate medicine or dentistry course.

### ***The Mature-age Access Pathway (MAP)***

The Mature-age Access Pathway (MAP) provides an open-access pathway for students 20 years of age and older who have not previously studied at tertiary level. Students are offered a provisional enrolment until they complete 24 credits points, the equivalent of one semester of full-time study. MAP students receive a high level of individual support through study skills and pastoral care, especially in transition through the UniSkills transition support program. Students who enter by the MAP pathway are more likely to have a home address in a low SES Census District and to identify having a disability than UWA's overall undergraduate cohort.

### ***The Rio Tinto Girls in Engineering Program***

The Rio Tinto Girls in Engineering Program is a new initiative in 2014 funded by Rio Tinto and UWA to promote an increase in the number of female students studying engineering and computer software science. The program engages female students in Years 8-10 in activities designed to encourage them to choose science and mathematics in upper secondary schools and consider engineering or computer science as study options at university. The program addresses the under-representation of women in these non-traditional disciplines at UWA. Female students at UWA have achieved majority status in the non-traditional areas of study for women of Architecture and postgraduate coursework and research.

## **Participation and Retention**

In addition to access initiatives, The University continues to develop and deliver the following suite of high quality support programs to improve participation, retention and success for all students from equity groups, in an inclusive, personalised and appropriate manner:

### ***UniAccess – UWA's Disability Service***

UWA has on average more than 7% of its student population identifying with disability, which is high amongst Australian universities. UniAccess provides comprehensive support to students with disability or medical conditions and works closely with services on campus that support mental health services for students. UniAccess will continue to be proactive in seeking ways to support students with disability during the years of this Plan.

### ***UniSkills Flying Start transition program***

UniSkills is UWA's national award winning program offering transition support to students from targeted equity groups and mature-age students. Flying Start is a two-day residential program prior to orientation that helps students who may be first in their family to study at tertiary level or are new to Perth to experience a supportive and personalised orientation to campus. UniSkills provides a high degree of support for students throughout the year, referring them to services that can assist them and acting as a 'safety net' and point of contact should they need advice or information.

### ***Numeracy Skills Support***

Students from equity backgrounds may not have had access to the high level mathematics study that is a pre-requisite for some UWA courses. The Numeracy Skills support program specialises in

bridging the gaps between past experience and present requirements and builds confidence and expertise in a way that is accessible to all.

### *Academic Skills Support*

The StudySmarter team deliver a range of services to build skills in writing, research, presentations and understanding academic integrity that are available to all students at UWA but they also have a focus on supporting the transition of alternative entry pathway students. Students from the Broadway, Fairway and Mature-age Access Programs receive personalised support and referrals to the range of services that can help them, from finance and accommodation to counselling and medical care, in addition to academic skills development.

### *Career Mentoring*

Students who are first in their family to study at university or who are enrolled in courses where they are the minority may lack confidence and networks when it comes to focusing on future careers. UWA's award winning Career Mentor Link program provides these students with an opportunity to be linked with a professional in their intended work field who will mentor them for six months. Career Mentor Link is developing a specialised mentoring program for GLBTI students and mentors and is also working with Rio Tinto to expand mentoring opportunities for women in engineering.

### *New Courses*

In 2012, UWA launched the first of its New Courses with significant implications for enhanced equity including guaranteed places and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into new graduate-entry Masters and Professional Doctorates including Engineering, Law, Medicine and Dentistry and reported increased enrolments from low-SES students. The University has also developed advanced diplomas in Medical and Aboriginal Health Sciences and in Legal Studies to prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for postgraduate professional education.

### *Student Accommodation*

The construction of 1,000 new affordable student accommodation dwellings under the National Rental Affordability Scheme is making a significant contribution to the participation of students from regional and remote areas. The first tranche of 500 studio and one-bedroom apartments at University Hall opened in 2013 and the second tranche at St Catherine's College in 2014. Further dwellings under construction at St Thomas More College are scheduled to be ready for occupancy in 2015

### *Centenary Campaign*

In line with the celebration of its Centenary in 2013 and in recognition of the University's founding mission to "...advance the prosperity and welfare of the people..."[4] the University is continuing to develop its equity initiatives. The size of the Fairway UWA cohort, for example, was doubled in 2013 to 100 students and ambitious fundraising targets have been set for the Centenary Campaign in order to continue the expansion of the University equity scholarships program and other financial supports.

## **2. Evaluation Plan**

### **Evaluation**

The University adopts an evidence-based approach in relation to assessing performance against indicators measuring equity performance. Our approach will use mixed methods and summative and formative evaluation techniques to measure effectiveness of its programs. The University evaluates its performance in access and participation against a range of measures that include:

- Performance against equity indicators in the Student Data Collection for access rates, participation ratios, retention ratios and success ratios for

- Low SES under 25
- Low SES 25 and above
- Low SES all ages
- Students from NESB backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students
- Students with disability
- Regional student
- Remote students
- Women in Engineering
- Women in Architecture
- Women in IT
- Women in Higher Degree coursework
- Women in HDR
- Internal statistics on applications, offers and enrolments
- Internal evaluation of equity programs for quality and impact
- Benchmarking against similar programs in universities across Australia

Indicators that measure engagement with and impact of programs and services to support participation, retention and success will be developed to support the transition of students from equity groups at university.

Qualitative data is an important component of assessing the richness and the perceived effectiveness of equity programs, particularly those with long-term access strategies. Data will be collected and analysed through individual program evaluations, including student satisfaction and impact surveys; focus groups and surveys of external and University partnerships and stakeholders where appropriate.

The University will keep informed of Australian and international research in widening participation and endeavour to benchmark nationally and internationally, in order to assure our programs are innovative, evidence-based and responsive to the needs of the participants and their communities.

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

#### **Strategic Partnerships**

The University views working in partnership with schools, colleges, national charities, NGOs, state and local government authorities and corporate partners as key to any success in widening participation and improving retention and success. Working collaboratively and growing partnerships are principles that underpin program development and our partnerships with individual and corporate donors greatly assist the provision of financial support through scholarships to students in financial need.

The University is working closely with targeted schools through its Aspire, Fairway and Broadway schemes. Through Aspire UWA, 52 partner schools in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne and Mid-West regions of Western Australia and in Perth have Memoranda of Understanding with the University. The program has seen intakes at UWA from these schools grow steadily from 123 in 2009 to 220 in 2013. The Broadway UWA scheme has expanded in 2014 to more than 120 schools, including all regional and remote schools in the state and the Fairway UWA program has seen the number of schools supporting applications to the program double in the past year.

UWA has a long-standing collaboration with national charity The Smith Family. The delivery of Learning Clubs at several Perth secondary schools has been a feature of this partnership over the



past three years. Partnerships with Scitech, The International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research and the Perth Zoo are examples of ways in which The University seeks opportunities to provide extra activities to its partner schools for students and also for teachers, through professional development when appropriate.

The University works with the WA Department of Education, with members of the equity programs meeting on a regular basis with its regional directorate, to keep informed of any opportunities for collaboration. Similar meetings with the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools occur when there are opportunities to keep them informed of UWA's equity programs and how we can support their schools' priorities for equity.

The relocation of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education to Western Australia has facilitated more collaboration between WA universities through joint professional development sessions and exchange of information. The state branch of EPHEA has also become more active, with the first joint meeting hosted by UWA in 2014.

The University has an ambitious fund raising goal for equity as part of its New Century Campaign and this involves seeking partnerships with individual donors and with corporate donors to provide funds not just for scholarships but for program delivery. Several corporate partners and many individual donors have contributed funding to support equity programs Aspire UWA and Fairway UWA. An exciting development is that some are interested in extending monetary support to more active partnership through site visits and mentoring. These types of partnerships are very attractive and will be pursued even more actively in future.