

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2018

SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY

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

Outcomes

- Continue to exceed national access and participation rates for students from low SES backgrounds.
- Improved retention, completion and employability for students from low SES backgrounds.

Strategies

Pre-access (outreach to schools and communities)

- Continue to improve school and community outreach programs throughout northern New South Wales and the Gold Coast.

Access (pre-entry and admissions)

- Provide alternative entry pathways and financial support for students.

Participation, progress and attainment

- Deliver targeted strategies aimed at improving the retention, completion and employability of students from low SES backgrounds.
- Enhance academic and non-academic support strategies for on-campus and online students, recognising the diversity of students' backgrounds and experiences (including first in family at university).
- Affirm diversity and inclusion through workshops, materials and events.

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

Pre-access (outreach to schools and communities)

- Deliver the UniBound / Stellar Outreach programs in partnership with fifty schools (covering Years 6 – 10) selected on the basis of high concentrations of low SES (ICSEA Indicators), Indigenous enrolments and regional students.
- Maintain support for the delivery of programs by the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) across the three campus locations (Coffs Harbour, Lismore and the Gold Coast).

Access (pre-entry and admissions)

- Provide pathways for students needing to enhance their study skills for university-level studies through the Preparing for Success Program (PSP) available on-campus and online.
- Offer Equity Scholarships to financially disadvantaged students. Many students experience multiple disadvantage: for example, low SES and with a disability.

Participation, progress and attainment

- Implement a suite of online and on-campus initiatives aimed at building more positive student experiences across the university life-cycle, recognising the high proportions of low SES students and other equity groups at the University.
- Deliver innovative and accessible mechanisms of academic support geared to the needs of the student cohort.
- Enhance the quality of the relationship between UniMentor participants while maintaining participation rates across student cohorts.
- Develop improved School and program level initiatives for heightened student employability.

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

Equity strategies are evaluated and revised using a variety of methods:

- collection of participation and baseline data (numbers, equity groups, events);
- conducting pre and post event surveys (school and university students, teachers and stakeholders);
- gathering qualitative feedback through interviews and focus groups;
- equity research such as that conducted by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education; and
- analysing and benchmarking trend data on key indicators.

An independent evaluation of the UniBound / Stellar project is planned (2018).

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

Southern Cross University will maintain and, where appropriate, strengthen its extensive partnerships to widen university participation across disadvantaged communities. Partners include local schools (and their parent/carers community) in regional NSW and the Gold Coast, government agencies including the Department of Education and TAFE, and community based organisations (such as the Clarence Valley Industry Education Forum).