

UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT 2010

The University of the Sunshine Coast acknowledges all traditional custodians of the land and recognises the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal people in this land.

PART 1 OBJECTIVES FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION

Institutional objectives to improve higher education outcomes for Indigenous Australians

The Bradley Review into Australian Higher Education (2008) highlighted the importance of increasing the higher education access and outcomes of Indigenous people in Australia. From 2008 to 2009, the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) undertook an Eidos project in conjunction with James Cook University, to map and assess the multiple pathway opportunities from school to university that are available for Indigenous students in these regional areas of Queensland. The "Indigenous Sunrise Project – A School to University Pathways Project" final report was released to DEEWR in October 2009. With the many emergent pathways identified including USC's Headstart, Tertiary Preparation Pathway, and alternative entry programs, the next step will be to review and augment these strategies. Further research is planned to explore the contemporary motivations, barriers, enablers and aspirations of Indigenous school students, staff and other stakeholders.

The Buranga Centre in the USC Chancellery Building provides a prominent place to promote cross-cultural understandings and advance the knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies, values and traditions. It is a supportive, inspirational environment for Indigenous students to explore learning, leadership and employment opportunities. Through the Eidos Sunrise Project, a proposal for the advancement of the Buranga Centre was designed that will inform future development of student and adult learner pathways to tertiary study, and promote excellence in teaching and research in Indigenous studies, particularly postgraduate Indigenous studies and research on Indigenous themes.

USC has achieved an annual increase in the number of Indigenous students from 2004 through to 2009, with the success ratio of those students consistently exceeding the Queensland ratio since 2005. The success of the University's Indigenous students demonstrates the effectiveness of integrated strategies to improving Indigenous higher education outcomes, involving a continuum approach from recruitment through to faculty support, and graduate career guidance. Objectives for achieving the USC's Buranga Centre Operational Plan in 2009 included:

- ensuring Indigenous people's higher education outcomes are a shared responsibility and a shared success across the University through inclusion in key University-wide plans including the Learning and Teaching Plan 2009-2011;
- providing career pathways and income assistance through the success of initiatives including the Indigenous Cadetship Support program;
- actively pursuing growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment through links with community organisations, schools, TAFE and other registered training organisations;
- implementing the Learning and Teaching Plan 2009-2011 with an emphasis on increasing the knowledge and appreciation of Indigenous issues and culture, and developing staff cross-cultural understandings;
- continuing to provide financial assistance and support to postgraduate students through the USC equity scholarships, and research grants.

How the Indigenous perspective is embedded in the University's Strategic Plan

The University of the Sunshine Coast 2005 – 2011 Strategic Plan identifies and commits to a collection of values that guide and direct pursuit of its Mission and everyday operations. Three of these values are directly relevant to the University's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education:

- Engaging in and responding to the community's intellectual, cultural and economic needs.
- Adopting consultative processes and ethical behaviour in all activities.
- The advancement of human rights within a tolerant and inclusive society, in which respect of Indigenous and international peoples is fundamental.

Through its Equity – Governing Policy, the University seeks to address racial discrimination and overcome past disadvantage of students and staff in equity groups.

The Student Services Operational Plan also articulates a specific objective to:

- Improve Indigenous student recruitment, support and success in undergraduate and postgraduate study.

This objective aims to see an annual increase in the number of commencing Indigenous students enrolling in USC programs, and enhanced rates of success and completion for continuing students. Further strategies have been developed in the Student Services Operational Plan 2009 – 2011.

PART 2 ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION POLICY GOALS IN 2009 & PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS

Goal 1: Establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making.

USC recognises the importance of Indigenous people's involvement in the high-level decision-making of the University. Opportunities for Indigenous Australians to participate in the governance and management of the University in 2009 included representation on the:

University of the Sunshine Coast Council

- Mr Michael Williams (Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, University of Queensland)

Vice-Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Committee

- Mr Michael Williams (Chair)
- Mr Corey Czok (USC, Indigenous Services Officer, postgraduate student)
- Ms Susan Gould (USC, Indigenous Services Officer)
- Dr Maria Raciti (USC, academic staff)
- Ms Robyn Parkes-Sandri (USC, academic staff)
- Ms Maryanne Williams (USC, general staff)
- Ms Justine Grogan (USC, undergraduate student, Indigenous Cadet)
- Mr Lachlan Anderson (USC, undergraduate student, Indigenous Cadet)
- Ms Judi Wickes (USC, postgraduate student)
- Ms Natasha Hawkins (Buranga Indigenous Students Committee, undergraduate student)
- Ms Keicha Adams (Buranga Indigenous Students Committee, undergraduate student)
- Ms Sally Johnston (Indigenous Education, Queensland Department of Education and Training)
- Ms Sharelle Eggmolesse (community representative)
- Mr Henry Neill (community representative)
- Mrs Betty McMahon (community representative, Elder)
- Ms Beverly Hand (community representative, traditional custodian)
- Mr Lyndon Davis (community representative, traditional custodian)
- Ms Debra Bennet (community representative, traditional custodian, Elder)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Student Liaison Committee

- Ms Keicha Adams (Buranga Indigenous Students Committee, undergraduate student)

Buranga Indigenous Students Committee (BISC student group)

In addition to these appointments, Indigenous staff and students at the University participate in meetings with state and national bodies which involve them in educational decision-making:

- Mr Corey Czok represents USC on the Queensland Indigenous Higher Education Network
- Mr Corey Czok is a member of the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Mr Corey Czok represented USC at the Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Forum, Widening Participation State Workshop
- Ms Susan Gould represents USC on the National Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) Network
- Ms Keicha Adams (student) represented USC at the National Indigenous Students Conference (Sydney University)
- Ms Tara Houston (student) attended the 5th Annual Queensland Servant Leadership Forum (Brisbane)

- Mr Jamie Hagan (student) attended the National Student Leadership Forum (Canberra)
- Ms Natasha Hawkins (student) sat on a student discussion panel at the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association Conference 2009, representing both regional and Indigenous students (Queensland University of Technology).

The Buranga Centre and the Vice-Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Committee continue to be the peak Aboriginal education and cultural advisory bodies to the University of the Sunshine Coast. The Buranga Centre also hosts the annual USC Indigenous Education Symposia.

Goal 2: Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed as academic and non-academic staff in higher education institutions.

The University is strongly committed to improving the recruitment, development and support of Indigenous people in employment in higher education. In 2009, USC was successful in a DEEWR funding bid with John Pearson Consulting (www.jpearson.com.au) to develop and finalise an Indigenous employment strategy. The drafted USC Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2010-2012 will be informed by rigorous community and staff consultation, and reflect the employment priority areas identified by the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council. The Strategy document is due to be finalised in July 2010.

The University aims to raise the percentage of Indigenous staff to be more reflective of the percentage of Indigenous students at USC (1.84% in 2009). Full-time staff employed by the University in 2009 included:

- Indigenous Services Officer (Student Services and University Community), Buranga Centre
- Indigenous Services Officer (Student Services and Regional Engagement), Buranga Centre
- Lecturer, Marketing, Faculty of Business
- Lecturer, Early Years Education, Faculty of Science, Health and Education
- Teaching and Research Fellow, Faculty of Business
- Administration Assistant, Teaching and Research Services.

In 2010 the University expanded the Indigenous Employment Coordinator role to a full-time position located in the Buranga Centre. This initiative is consistent with the COAG goal to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes. The Indigenous Employment Coordinator is responsible for:

- finalising the USC Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy for the current triennium;
- facilitating employment opportunities at USC for Indigenous people;
- building the profile of the University as a workplace of choice for Indigenous people on the Sunshine Coast;
- providing Indigenous staff with appropriate induction to the University;
- facilitating ongoing mentoring and support for all Indigenous staff, and promoting scholarships and internships where available;
- coordinating mentor training for indigenous people who are academic and/or community leaders; and
- coordinating cultural awareness training for University staff to understand and respect the culture and background of Indigenous people.

Goal 3: Ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to higher education.

The University of the Sunshine Coast continues to develop opportunities to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing higher education through its undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Indigenous students are actively recruited through a range of equity initiatives including:

- Pursuing growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment through links with community organisations, schools, TAFE and other RTOs (for example, John Pearson Consulting).
- The Buranga Centre is a member of the Sunshine Coast Indigenous Network Group.
- Indigenous Services Officers are registered referrers for North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health (NCACCH).
- "Murri Pathways", a collaborative strategy established in 2008 with Education Queensland – Sunshine Coast Indigenous Education Unit, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE(SCIT), North Brisbane Institute of TAFE(NBIT), and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), Australian Defence Force Recruitment, Centrelink and North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health deliver

presentations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Sunshine Coast, Cooloola and North Brisbane high schools. This project demonstrated positive outcomes towards improving enrolments in higher education, with the number of Indigenous students admitted to the Tertiary Preparation Pathways and Headstart Programs increasing significantly in 2009 (Appendix). Post-school options promoted include traineeships and apprenticeships, certificates and diplomas, defence jobs, sports and health careers, the Headstart program, TPP and undergraduate courses.

- Representation at NAIDOC events in Brisbane and on the Sunshine Coast.
- Representation on the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE Indigenous Advisory Committee.
- Representation at the North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health "Well Person's Health Check Days" at Maroochydore and Gympie.
- Representation at the Gympie Regional Careers Expo 2009.
- Information stall at Indigenous Service Providers Expo, Nambour PCYC, October 2009.

- Promoting workplace learning opportunities and experience available through the Indigenous Cadetship Support Program.

- Targeted scholarship opportunities including:

- scholarships for Headstart students (in Years 11 and 12 of high school);
www.usc.edu.au/Students/Future/FinancialAssistance/ScholarshipsBursariesPrizes/IndigenousScholarships
- in 2009, USC student Renae Silver receiving the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund: Indigenous Health Scholarship; and
- three students receiving Rotary Aboriginal Health Science Scholarships.

- Indigenous Alternative Entry Program:

- All QTAC applicants who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are invited to participate in the Indigenous Alternative Entry Program. The panel interview and assessment of applicants' skills, experience and aspirations, may lead to an offer of admission into a degree program or could guide applicants to consider the TPP pathway as a preparatory program.
- Admissions procedures enabling a more seamless transition to undergraduate study from the TPP program.

- Tertiary Preparation Pathway alternative entry:

- Allowing prospective undergraduate students to experience university life before committing to a degree program.
- Courses completed as part of the program are free of charge.
- Students undertaking TPP are provided with the same assistance offered to all Indigenous University students through the Buranga Centre.

- Headstart entry:

- Allowing prospective visiting students to experience university life before leaving High School.
- Students gain guaranteed entry into most USC degrees if they successfully complete two courses within the Headstart program and obtain a Queensland Certificate of Education.
- Academic credit for Headstart courses is awarded towards related USC degrees.
- A number of scholarships are available to Headstart students. These scholarships assist students from low-income families, or students who identify with other recognised equity groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or students with a disability. The scholarships are for one semester of study, and cover the \$375 Headstart course tuition fee furthering the incentive to participate in the Headstart program.
- Students undertaking the Headstart program are provided with the same assistance offered to all Indigenous University students through the Buranga Centre.

- Other recruitment activities include the annual USC Courses for Careers open day, Indigenous Job Market (Brisbane) and other careers fairs in the state including Tagai State College (Thursday Island Secondary Campus).

-Future opportunities to strengthen relationships with schools, TAFE, industry and community:

- Northern and inland expansion of the Murri Pathways strategy.
- Growth in scholarships and bursaries to improve equitable access for Indigenous students.
- Establishment of a formal Elders in Residence program to link students with the experience and knowledge of important members of the local community.
- Recruitment and training of Indigenous Peer Mentors to provide peer support for new undergraduate, Headstart and Tertiary Preparation Pathway students.
- Partnership with Chancellor State College to provide Indigenous undergraduate student mentors to high school students.
- Public lectures to highlight Indigenous issues and profile student and staff successes and achievements.
- Cultural exchange through staff and student involvement with other Indigenous programs and communities both nationally and internationally.

Goal 4: Achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of other Australians.

As a young regional campus, the University is able to maintain close contact and support for many students. High levels of participation and retention for Indigenous students are achieved through:

- An Indigenous orientation program:

- Including academic skills workshops, tours of the campus and facilities, and personal introductions. This enables a comfortable integration into University life. Indigenous students also meet Student Services staff and are encouraged to access generic support available including: Counselling; Disability Services; Graduate Careers and Employment; and the Student Engagement Officer.

- Dedicated study areas and a social room on campus:

- Including access to reference books and laptop computers.
- Plans for relocation of Student Services to a new teaching building in the future include an expanded Buranga Centre with outdoor recreation area and a healing circle.

- The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme tutoring program.

- Assistance in accessing the Indigenous Cadetship Support program:

- USC is committed to continuing the excellent outcomes achieved by the Cadetship Coordinator from 2005 to 2007. The Indigenous cadetship project is vitally important in assisting students to gain valuable vocational work for integrated learning experiences. In addition to the financial support provided, USC students have had a high transition from cadetships to graduate positions.
- The new Indigenous Employment Coordinator role incorporates facilitation of cadetship opportunities for students.
- Four cadets were placed with employers in 2009.

Goal 5: Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in higher education as for other Australians.

Increasing the retention and completion rates for Indigenous students is a priority of the University, particularly as excellent employment outcomes have been demonstrated for Indigenous graduates. The University focuses on providing academic and personal assistance, and a culturally supportive environment on campus through:

- Student mentoring program and dedicated support for Indigenous students:

- Personal and academic support is also accessed through the generic assistance of Student Services, often via referral from Buranga Centre staff. Students are able to access academic skills advice; financial assistance; accommodation support; and health and wellbeing advice.
- Buranga Centre staff members are registered referrers through the North Coast Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health and can organise free medical and dental consultations for Indigenous students.

- Student achievement is acknowledged and celebrated through an annual Indigenous graduates and family morning tea, where students are presented with an Indigenous graduate stole and a certificate of achievement.
 - The Buranga Centre also acknowledges three Indigenous students with highest GPAs each year, as well as the recipients of cadetship placements. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor presents each of the students with their certificates.
- Future opportunities to develop the “Buranga Synergy Program” for accommodation and learning support:
 - dedicated student residences distributed throughout existing student accommodation facilities;
 - formal on-site and culturally appropriate pastoral care - through the Program Leader who will be an advanced-level Indigenous student living in the residences and providing on-site pastoral support;
 - peer mentoring of new Indigenous students, particularly those who have re-located from a rural or remote area to attend the University - new students will be matched with a mentor who can share their own experiences managing the challenges and responsibilities that a first year student may encounter;
 - facilitation of a peer “learning community” for new students in the residences - a sustainable community of engaged learners who will be encouraged to collaborate, reflect and learn from each others’ thoughts and experiences; and
 - regular on-site academic support through the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme - ITAS tutors will be available to provide regular learning support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in the residences.

Goal 6: To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures.

Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage is a powerful initiative for engaging and uniting all communities in this country. USC recognises the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council’s priority of enhancing the prominence and status on campus of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies, and achieves this through:

- The University of the Sunshine Coast Reconciliation Action Plan 2009-2011:
 - <http://www.usc.edu.au/University/AbouttheUniversity/Governance/Policies/RAP20092011.htm>
 - The University’s Reconciliation Action Plan, endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, was launched in October 2009 by Dr Jackie Huggins.
 - The RAP builds upon the University’s: Equity – Governing Policy; Learning and Teaching Plan; Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy.
- Traditional blessings opening every University of the Sunshine Coast Graduation Ceremony.
 - Maroochy Barambah (Song Woman) singing “Monda Barita” – a traditional song of prayer asking the Almighty and our ancestors to be with everyone at the gathering.
- High cultural visibility and respect through Welcome to Country statements by traditional custodians at all formal University events:
 - Mr Lyndon Davis, traditional custodian and leader of the Gubbi Gubbi Dance Troupe performs Welcome to Country with Didgeridoo (Yirdaki).
 - Mr Brent Miller and Ms Beverly Hand also conduct Welcome to Country addresses at many USC events and Orientation activities including International Women’s Day and the annual USC Indigenous Education Symposia.
- Protocols for acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land are published on the USC website:
 - <http://www.usc.edu.au/Students/Future/StudentSupport/IndigenousServices/welcometocountry.htm>

- Hosting of the 3rd Indigenous Education Symposium in October 2009

- Focusing on raising awareness of Indigenous culture and facilitating understanding between educators, students and Indigenous Australians. The Symposium's keynote address was delivered by Professor Yvonne Cadet-James, Chair of Indigenous Australian Studies at James Cook University and Chancellor of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Yvonne presented the work being done through the Empowerment Research Program by a team of researchers from James Cook University and the University of Queensland in partnership with groups and communities.
- The Symposium program expanded to four days in 2009 and continues to be a significant event on the education calendar, with growing numbers in both school streams and general registrations.
- In 2010 the USC Vice-Chancellor's Learning and Teaching Colloquium will be held in conjunction with the annual Indigenous Education Symposium.

- Cross-cultural training

- A culturally sensitive and supportive environment is fostered through cross-cultural training provided annually for non-Indigenous ITAS tutors, and on a more regular basis for all staff since 2008.
- Ecological knowledge tours of the USC campus, increasing the knowledge and appreciation of Indigenous issues and culture and developing staff and student cross-cultural understandings.
- Guest lectures into courses by Buranga staff.
- Connecting students to the experience, inspiration and vision of important members of the local community including Mr Evan Blackman (Murri Court, Caloundra) and Ms Beverly Hand (community leader and conservationist).

- Events celebrating Indigenous culture

- NAIDOC events held at Cotton Tree, Sunshine Coast and at Musgrave Park, Brisbane.
- The annual multicultural Festuri festival.
- Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week
- National Apology Breakfast
- Oxfam – National Close the Gap Campaign.

PART 3**EXPENDITURE OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAMME GRANT**

In 2009, all Indigenous Support Program funds were expended on provision of USC's Indigenous Services. The grant was primarily utilised for the salaries of Buranga Centre staff employed to provide services to the Indigenous students. The University allocated additional funds for remaining operational costs from its Student Services central budget allocation.

INCOME for Indigenous higher education purposes	
1. Indigenous Support Programme 2009 grant only.	\$ 217,000
2. Unspent 2008 ISP funds, carried over to 2009.	\$ 0
3. TOTAL ISP income for 2009	\$ 217,000
4. Other funds provided to Indigenous higher education	
- ITAS	\$ 105,000
- Commonwealth grants, Scholarships/Cadets/Eidos	\$ 238,197
- Philanthropic funds, USC Scholarships	\$ 23,000
- USC central budget, Student Services	\$ 43,000
5. Total Indigenous higher education income for 2009	\$ 409,197
6. EXPENDITURE of Indigenous Support Program 2009 grant only	
6a. Operating costs - Salaries	\$ 214,503
6b. Capital items – laptop computer/software	\$ 2,030
6c. Higher education provider overheads (incl. publications, travel, postage, IT)	\$
6d. Other ISP expenditure	\$ 467
6e. Total ISP expenditure for 2009	\$ 217,000
7a. EXPENDITURE of other funds in 2009	
Higher education provider overheads & capital items	\$ 37,650
Operating costs – ITAS (including tutor wages)	\$ 105,000
Indigenous Education Symposium (printing, catering, accom)	\$ 5,350
Eidos Pathways Project (printing, wages, travel)	\$ 2,167
Commonwealth grants, Scholarships/Cadets	\$ 236,030
Philanthropic funds, USC Scholarships	\$ 23,000
7b. Total other expenditure for 2009	\$ 409,197

PART 4**HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Director, Student Services	Ms Eva-Marie Seeto Phone: + 61 7 5430 1226 Email: eseeto@usc.edu.au
ITAS Coordinator	Ms Su Gould-Thornalley Phone: + 61 7 5459 4439 Email: sgoul1@usc.edu.au

Appendix

USC Indigenous student and staff data

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of Indigenous students (enrolments)	26	41	40	52	58	74	86	100
Tertiary Prep Program	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	6	10	18
Headstart (Yr 11 & 12)				1		1	2	7
Proportion of Indigenous students (Access rate)	0.80%	0.99%	1.14%	1.42%	1.19%	1.50%	1.63 %	1.84%
Graduates - Bachelor	1	3	3	2	7	5	10	14
Graduates - Postgraduate	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	1
Indigenous persons in Sunshine Coast region (Census data 2001/2006)	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
USC retention ratio		1.08	0.75	1.14	0.89	0.93	0.96	n/a
QLD retention ratio		0.81	0.81	0.82	0.85	0.88	0.84	n/a
USC success ratio	0.91	0.73	0.83	0.79	0.89	0.97	0.90	n/a
QLD success ratio	0.79	0.78	0.80	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.83	n/a
Number of Indigenous USC full-time staff	2	1	1.4	2	3	5	7	6
Indigenous cadets at USC					1	2	2	3
Indigenous ITAS tutors / (total ITAS tutors)				4 (15)	5 (14)	6 (21)	12 (26)	14 (32)