

Building Better Relationships with Schools: 2008-10

Rationale

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) was established with explicit aims to increase higher education opportunities and access in the region of Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and to help build social and intellectual capital. It aspires to bring positive change to the life opportunities of its students and to be a source of creativity and new knowledge that contributes to individual and community development. The University's connection and commitment to GWS is integral to its identity and reflected in its learning and teaching strategies which involve University/community partnerships, and its community-based research. To ensure UWS fulfils its role as a catalyst for positive change in the region, one of the key focus areas in its blueprint *Making the Difference* is "Nurture a mutually beneficial relationship with GWS communities". This is linked to four strategic imperatives:

- involve community and industry in academic programs
- link research to community benefits where possible
- develop close ties to community leaders and institutions
- enhance the ethic and evidence of service to the region and people

By working collaboratively with the school sector, UWS can pursue these imperatives in ways that support its goals and address the sector's needs, priorities and interests, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Strategic Plan will facilitate University/school partnerships that contribute to school student engagement in learning, educational aspirations and confidence, opportunities, skills and educational attainment. This will enrich students' lives and increase their options, including a greater preparedness for participation and success in higher education, and an interest in lifelong learning. UWS can help to support the needs of school students, teachers and staff while enhancing the learning of its own students and staff and adding to the body of knowledge. Familiarity with the University and what it has to offer may lead academically talented students and students with the capacity to succeed but disadvantaged by circumstances to make UWS their first choice. Indigenous school students will be encouraged and supported to engage in education and aspire to University.

The Strategic Plan will help to address the national priorities of building teaching skills in science and maths, increasing the number of science and maths teachers, and ensuring all teachers have an adequate background in these subject areas.

The Strategic Plan will be of benefit to the region, enhancing capacity in the school sector and helping students at all academic levels and from all backgrounds to realise their potential, so they can contribute more effectively and thoughtfully to the community. The plan will also provide a mechanism for recognition and promotion of the achievements of GWS school and University students and educators, and engendering regional pride.

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Vision

UWS is engaged in mutually beneficial activities and relationships with the schools across GWS and is regarded as their University. UWS and the school sector work in partnership to enhance educational opportunities and pathways, build knowledge and skills, encourage and support educational aspiration and lifelong learning, and foster University/schools awareness, interchange and involvement. Innovative models of teaching and learning and collaborative programs help to increase student engagement and educational attainment. UWS is a University of first choice for GWS students. The University/school sector partnership contributes to the growth, prosperity and profile of the Region.

Aims

1. To build sustainable University/school relationships that facilitate identification and achievement of common or complementary goals
2. To increase knowledge and capacity in Greater Western Sydney through University/school partnerships and collaborative activities
3. To provide opportunities for school and University students which increase their options and help them to achieve, educationally and in other spheres
4. To encourage school students, teachers, staff and parents in Greater Western Sydney to feel a sense of ownership about UWS and to become advocates of it so it is increasingly a destination of first choice for university aspirants

Strategies

Strategy 1 – Engaging with the school sector

Develop and maintain school sector relationships to enable open communication, matching of goals, alignment of priorities and formulation of programs, and to foster understanding, cooperation and interchange

(supports all aims; other strategies contribute)

- Engage with the school sector at all levels with a focus on GWS, including government, governance and representative bodies, professional associations, groups of schools and individual schools of all types, to build mutual awareness, cooperation and partnerships

- Develop joint goals and agreed program areas linked to the State Plan and school sector priorities, and reflecting UWS teaching and research strengths
- Ensure ongoing involvement of the sector in decision-making on implementation and review of the Schools Strategic Plan and Action Plans

Strategy 2 – Collaborating to achieve results

Extend and establish collaborative programs and activities with schools and provide schools with access to expertise and resources to help them meet their needs and goals

(supports aims 2 and 3 particularly, also 4)

- Maintain and develop University/school partnerships and implement programs and activities that are linked to UWS teaching and research strengths and address identified sector needs, issues and interests
- Implement and enhance the Indigenous school student outreach program
- Work with the GWS school sector on initiatives to increase interest and skills in science and maths among teachers, trainee teachers, undergraduates and school students
- Provide GWS schools with access to academic and technical expertise, relevant research results and other data, online resources, facilities and equipment

Strategy 3 – Enriching and empowering students

Enhance students' confidence, knowledge, skills and educational attainment through enrichment and equity programs

(supports aims 2, 3 and 4)

- Enhance educational opportunities and pathways, and students' confidence and ability to reach their potential and realise their aspirations
- Provide specific opportunities for high-achieving school students, students with a demonstrated capacity to succeed but disadvantaged by circumstances, under-achieving students with identified potential, and Indigenous students
- Develop and implement innovative learning programs and run events to address students' needs and interests in specific subject areas, particularly science, technology, engineering and maths

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Strategy 4 – Enhancing professional skills

Enhance the skills of GWS school staff through professional development activities and provide opportunities for school and UWS staff to learn from each others' experience

(supports aims 2, 4 and to a lesser extent 1)

- Help to address school staff development needs which have been identified by the school sector
- Provide and facilitate opportunities for University and GWS school staff to share knowledge and learn from each other's experience

Strategy 5 – Building awareness

Foster UWS/school interaction and information exchange, and raise awareness of the achievements of GWS school and University students and educators to engender regional loyalty and pride

(supports aims 1 and 4; other strategies contribute)

- Run events, activities and platforms, and provide information, to increase familiarity with the University and how it can assist schools and students to achieve their goals
- Run programs that recognise and reward the achievements of school students and schools in GWS to build relationships and promote the Region
- Publicise UWS/school achievements and engagement activities in the wider community to raise the profile of the University and the schools and engender support

Strategy 6 – Conducting research and sharing the results

Undertake school-related research, particularly research linked to sector and regional priorities, and disseminate the results to inform policy and practice

(supports aim 2 and to a lesser extent 1 and 4)

- Undertake school-related research and evaluation partnerships that meet sector-identified needs in practical ways
- Identify and implement mechanisms for involving the school sector more closely in decision-making on research proposals and sharing results

- Research/evaluate the effectiveness and impact of program strategies for different types of students and use findings to inform future strategies and investments
- Identify sources of research funding where UWS/sector/school partnerships could leverage funding for projects of mutual benefit and develop joint submissions

Strategy 7 – Ensuring support from the UWS community

Promote, nurture and systematically support school engagement activities within the University to help ensure the Strategic Plan and Action Plans are effective and sustainable

(indirect but essential support for all aims)

- Ensure the Strategic Plan and Action Plans are owned and contributed to by all relevant areas of the University and establish the necessary internal infrastructure to support implementation of the Plans and the monitoring of progress

Strategy 8 – Seeking support from the wider community

Seek external support to enhance and extend UWS/school sector activities

(potential support for any/all aims)

- Identify and pursue external funding and sponsorship opportunities for University/school engagement activities
- Link with business, community and other organisations, particularly in GWS, to contribute to or develop programs and activities for schools

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Build sustainable University/school relationships that facilitate identification and achievement of common or complementary goals

AIM 2

Increase knowledge and capacity in GWS through University/school partnerships and collaborative activities

AIM 3

Provide opportunities for school and University students which increase their options and help them to achieve, educationally and in other spheres

AIM 4

Encourage school students, teachers, staff and parents in GWS to feel a sense of ownership about UWS and to become advocates of it so it is increasingly a destination of first choice for university aspirants

Strategy 1

Engaging with the school sector
Develop and maintain school sector relationships to enable open communication, matching of goals, alignment of priorities and formulation of programs, and to foster understanding, cooperation and interchange

Strategy 2

Collaborating to achieve results
Extend and establish collaborative programs and activities with schools and provide schools with access to expertise and resources to help them meet their needs and goals

Strategy 3

Enriching and empowering students
Enhance students' confidence, knowledge, skills and educational attainment through enrichment and equity programs

Strategy 4

Enhancing professional skills
Enhance the skills of GWS school staff through professional development activities and provide opportunities for school and UWS staff to learn from each others' experience

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Building awareness
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Conducting research and sharing results
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