THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

EQUITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN
2010 – 2014

CONTEXT

A recent review of The Equity Office at the University of Queensland (UQ) noted that the levels of understanding and acceptance of equity and diversity issues vary considerably across the University from active engagement to minimal compliance.

The University's staff profile is not reflective of the wider community nor is there widespread competency in managing the increasingly diverse workforce and student cohort. However, one tangible improvement is the increase in the number of women in senior positions, particularly Level C academic staff.

The timing of the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Report) and the recent Federal budget makes it imperative for all universities to take immediate and decisive action to increase undergraduate enrolments of Australians from low SES and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby better reflecting the diversity of the broader population within their university.

The key external drivers for change that will influence the University's equity and diversity agenda are illustrated below.

The need to achieve sustained change at UQ is evident in the recent commitment to embed performance measures into University-wide and faculty-based plans. Despite the efforts to date, any improvement has been limited. However, a number of enablers now exist which can be leveraged to accelerate change. For example, Ipswich campus is well advanced in developing relationships with local organisations, high schools, TAFEs and community groups to raise the aspirations of students towards pursuing higher education.

Diagram: Arrows pointing towards central circle labelled **UQ EQUITY AND DIVERSITY**

- Global financial crisis
- Increased unemployment
- Change in the number and make up of the international student body
- Post Review of Higher Education "Bradley Review"
- Tensions between international and national communities
- More competitive cut-off
- UQ's strategic fund
- Limited access to technology by the socially disadvantaged
- Male dominated leadership throughout the sector
- Change in government policy
- Aging workforce
- Rapidly changing technology
- Socially toxic environments
- Funds given to high schools to build aspirations
- Post Apology and Closing the Gap Indigenous strategy
- New agreements/performance requirements via "compacts"
- Changing roles for universities
- Expectation of high participation and engagement

ASPIRATIONS

The following statement summarises what the University is striving to achieve in terms of equity and diversity.

UQ contributes to an equitable and diverse higher education sector in Australia, and more generally, to a more equitable, culturally aware society

Evidence that will demonstrate the aspirations have been achieved include:

- The UQ community is representative of the diverse community in Australia
- Students and staff choose UQ as it is a safe, accepting and inclusive environment
- Everyone takes responsibility for living the equity values and embedding equity and diversity into the fabric of the UQ culture
- Staff and students have developed diversity competencies which they use when engaging with others inside and outside the University
- Inclusive pedagogies are demonstrated across all disciplines
- Flexible, responsive work practices reflect the diverse needs of equity and diversity groups
- Staff are represented at all levels and across disciplines with respect to gender, ethnicity and racial diversity including at the most senior levels

PRIORITIES

For the next three years, six priorities have been chosen which have a strong action orientation.

1. Promote tertiary education aspirations of people from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in schools, communities and the VET sector
2. Provide and widely promote multiple pathways to facilitate the entry of prospective students from equity and diversity groups
3. Focus on the quality of the first year experience of students from target groups to ensure retention
4. Recruit staff with diversity competencies which reflect the diverse nature of the community
5. Build the diversity competencies of staff across the University
6. Set the equity and diversity KPIs at the University, faculty and school levels for staff and students

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Each priority has been selected based on the best available data and information.
A summary of the rationale for each priority is described below.

1. Promote tertiary education aspirations of people from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in schools, communities and the VET sector

The proportion of undergraduate enrolments from Low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds has remained persistently at a level below that of other student cohorts across the nation, and at UQ access has been declining over the past eight years.

Recommendations from the Bradley review of Higher Education of achieving 20% of enrolments at undergraduate level from Low SES backgrounds by 2020, combined with the social inclusion agenda and recent budget measures of the current government provide direct imperatives for universities to increase enrolments and improve graduation outcomes for people from Low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Within Queensland, there is little unmet demand for university places. In order to meet these goals it will be essential to build the base from which students with academic potential might be recruited. There is a need, therefore, to develop aspiration to higher education for students from those groups significantly underrepresented.

Figure 1: Retention into second year as a percentage of total enrolments for all students, Indigenous and Low SES students (2001-2008)

2. Provide and widely promote multiple pathways to facilitate the entry of prospective students from equity and diversity groups.

Access to enrolment at UQ is presently available through one of a number of pathways:

- QTAC application on OP score and ranking
- QTAC application with bonus points for special consideration – variation between Faculties as to how this is applied
- ATSIS unit – assessment of academic potential on RPL and experience - variation between Faculties as to how this is applied
- UQ LINK – special consideration may be given where a UQ Link Year 12 student does not meet the cut-off – variation between faculties as to how this is applied.
- Ipswich Early Offer Scheme– based on previous year's cut-off, an early offer can be made to students within defined geographic location.

Evidence suggests that these pathways may not be widely known to potential students. Elsewhere, universities offer a wide range of alternative entry pathways that could be considered to assist those with academic potential who come from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups (e.g. enabling, preparation and bridging programs, direct entry from TAFE, portfolio entry, and various mechanisms that provide either standard bonus points, special consideration, and/or direct entry for potential students with: major disruptions to school education, educational disadvantage, or coming from identified disadvantaged schools).

3. Focus on the quality of the first year experience of students from target groups to ensure retention.

Increasing access is only one part of the equation to improving the numbers of those graduating from Low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Retention is a major component in improving outcomes in this area.

Research demonstrates that retention of Low SES students in Australia is on a par with the rest of the student cohort. UQ performs well in terms of retaining students from Low SES backgrounds and is above the State and national average in retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. There has also been a recent significant improvement in the retention rate for this group. However, an approximate 20 % first year attrition rate for undergraduate students at UQ still unacceptably high.

"What happens to students during their first year at university has a powerful impact on whether they persist in higher education. Of the one-third of all students who fail to graduate in Australian Universities, approximately half will withdraw in their first year of study (Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), 2000), which is supported by considerable research (Krause, 2005; Tinto, 2002; Vest, 2005; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005; Yorke & Thomas, 2003).

Improving the retention rate of all undergraduate students is therefore an issue for the University. A focus on retention for students from disadvantaged groups will benefit all undergraduate students.
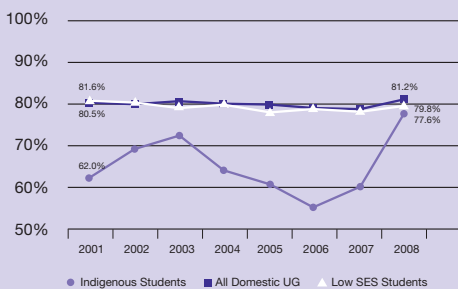
4. Recruit staff with diversity competencies which reflect the diverse nature of the community

The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) represents over 1,700 organizations and 2,500 individuals involved in public sector human resource management from over 35 different countries. This group identified diversity competencies as being of key importance in leading organisational human resource practice in response to changing demographics of an increasingly diverse workforce. In a benchmarking activity between IPMA and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE), the benchmarking committee remarked, "diversity efforts in the workplace facilitate the exchange of new perspectives, improve problem solving by inviting different ideas, and create a respectful, accepting work environment, all of which make good business sense."

Best Practices in Diversity Management, Neil E. Reichenberg, International Personnel Management Association

http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/ viewcontent.cgi?article=1311&context=gladn etcollect

5. Build the diversity competencies of staff across the University

The assorted talents of a diverse array of individuals can provide many benefits for organizations, such as improved individual and organizational performance, enhanced internal and external customer service, and an improved bottom line (Cox, 1994; Cox & Beale, 1997; Hayles & Russell, 1997; Kossek, Zonia, & Young, 1997; Society for Human Resource Management & Fortune, 2001). To realize these benefits, organisations must: recognize the benefits of diversity, include culturally diverse members as full participants, reflect the contributions and interests of its diverse membership, and act to eliminate forms of cultural bias… Organization members must develop a core set of attitudes, behaviors, and skills that allow them to communicate, resolve conflicts, and solve problems with a diverse array of individuals… to create and support environments that improve performance and maximize the likelihood of success for a diverse range of organizational members."

(adapted from Holmes, 2004)

http://www.doctorholmes.net/Designing%20a nd%20Facilitating%20Performance-Based%2 0Diversity%20Training.pdf

6. Set the equity and diversity KPIs at the University, faculty and school levels for staff and students

Key Performance Indicators are quantifiable measurements, agreed to beforehand, that reflect the critical success factors of an organization. Setting KPIs assists organisations measure progress towards goals, and focuses the behaviour of employees towards achieving these

adapted from F John Rey
http://management.about.com/cs/ generalmanagement/a/keyperfindic.htm).

Awareness building, developing knowledge and understanding and effecting attitudinal change is key to diversity training. (Diversity and Cultural Competence Training in Health Care Organizations: Hallmarks of Success Curtis, Ellen Foster DBA; Dreachslin, Janice L. PhD; Sinioris, Marie MPH The Health Care Manager:

July/September 2007 - Volume 26 - Issue 3 - pp 255-262)

Those organisations at the cutting edge of diversity management have now began to focus on the behaviour of their people and in particular their managers and leaders. Research has shown that those organisations with leaders modelling and demonstrating inclusive and appropriate behaviours are the same organisations who are successfully integrating diversity into the mainstream business

(Creating behavioural change in leaders. Jon Whitely. Industrial and Commercial Training Volume 36, Number 4, 2004, pp. 162-165)

The authors suggest that trainees with low competence in the diversity domain are unaware of their low competence levels and therefore are not motivated to participate in training programs designed to increase diversity competence.

(The Rich get Richer: Predicting Participation in Voluntary Diversity Training Carol T. Kulik , Molly B. Pepper, Loriann Roberson , Sharon K. Parker. Journal of Organizational Behavior. Vol 28, Issue 6, pp 753 – 769.)

PRIORITIES INTO ACTION

The actions leverage off the identified equity and diversity strategic enablers, particularly those established over the last three years. (Appendix 1)

PRIORITY 1

Promote tertiary education aspirations of people from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in schools, communities and the VET sector

1.1   In discussions with faculties, schools, divisions and institutes, strategically identify a select number of communities with significant low SES and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations

1.2   Develop and implement a collaborative engagement model to build sustainable partnerships with schools, TAFEs and community organisations in the selected communities which includes a specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy

1.3   Enhance the current programs at Ipswich and share the learnings of these and other collaborations

PRIORITY 2

Provide and widely promote multiple pathways to facilitate the entry of prospective students from equity and diversity groups

2.1   Identify and negotiate partnerships with selected TAFEs to define the articulated pathways

2.2   Ensure administrative systems are in place to facilitate student admission from different pathways into UQ programs

2.3   Promote to target groups the diversity of pathways to enter UQ

2.4   Establish articulated pathways between UQ College, the VET sector and UQ

PRIORITY 3

Focus on the quality of the first year experience of students from target groups to ensure retention

3.1   Identify the key factors causing attrition amongst students from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in their first year

3.2   Review and enhance the infrastructure, transition support and university preparation for students from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

3.3   Review existing academic and support programs to ensure they continue to create confident, independent learners amongst students from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds

PRIORITY 4

Recruit staff with diversity competencies which reflect the diverse nature of the community

4.1   Review and refine the policies and practices for staff recruitment at all levels to reflect the diverse nature of the community

4.2   Continue to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy

4.3   Develop and implement strategies that encourage women to apply for senior positions in academic, research and professional areas

PRIORITY 5

Build the diversity competencies of staff across the University

5.1   Identify a framework for, and definition of, diversity competencies

5.2   Incorporate the diversity competencies into the leadership and staff development programs

PRIORITY 6

Set the equity and diversity KPIs at the University, faculty and school levels for staff and students

6.1   Build equity and diversity targets into the School-based Performance Framework

6.2   Build equity and diversity targets into the Faculty, Institute and Divisional operational plans

6.3   Identify and incorporate priority actions into the annual operational plans

6.4   Review and report progress of actions and their outcomes at the end of the planning cycle

PRINCIPLES

- Ensure decision-making structures reflect the diversity of the UQ community
- Demonstrate sustainability to secure any funding for proposals
- Have the heads of organisational units commit to sustainable outcomes beyond the life the project
- Have the leadership and senior staff visibly and frequently discuss equity and diversity issues with staff and students to debunk myths and publically demonstrate their support

- Continue to develop partnerships to implement equity and diversity initiatives within and outside UQ
- Think both inclusiveness and excellence
- Increase the level of coordination and collaboration internally and externally to achieve equity and diversity aspirations

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Commitment at the leadership level (Senate and University leadership)
- Equity and diversity is appreciated and cemented at the most senior levels
- There is senior level representation on the Senate Equity, Diversity and Status of Women Committee
- The Equity Office and other staff around UQ who exemplify good practice are held in high regard
- A stronger leadership program is being developed which is capturing women

Capacity
- Capacity and expertise exists
- Positive change in the culture at the University around equity and diversity
- Faculties are more aware of the expectations of the performance around the pending equity and diversity KPIs
- Change in HR leadership

Ipswich
- The campus is geographically well positioned and has a reputation for being a hothouse for programs and innovation
- Partnerships have been established and the campus has successfully engaged with local organisations, including high schools, TAFEs and community groups

Supportive structures
- The Boilerhouse, ATSIS Unit and other structures exist
- Resources are available through the strategic fund
- The Scientist in Residence program is now embedded in undergraduate courses
- The library has opened up free of charge access to remote schools
- The Jump Start Transition program is still running

APPENDIX II: ACCOUNTABILITIES

PRIORITY		ACCOUNTABILITY
1	Promote tertiary education aspirations of people from low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in schools, communities and the VET sector	DVC (A)
2	Provide and widely promote multiple pathways to facilitate the entry of prospective students from equity and diversity groups	DVC (A)
3	Focus on the quality of the first year experience of students from target groups to ensure retention	DVC (A)
4	Recruit staff with diversity competencies which reflect the diverse nature of the community	Director HR
5	Build the diversity competencies of staff across the University	Director HR
6	Set the equity and diversity KPIs at the University, faculty and school levels for staff and students	SDVC