

1. Equity outcomes and strategies

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

Access (pre-entry and admission):

- Work in partnership with regional and local schools, the VET sector and communities to build confidence and motivation and improve academic readiness for higher education.
- Provide a diverse range of alternative entry pathways and access arrangements to continue to grow access and participation rates of students from equity groups.
- Continue to exceed national access and participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from low SES and Regional backgrounds.

Participation (transition and during studies) Progress and attainment (successful completion and preparation for graduate employment):

- Improve the retention and success rates of students in equity groups.
- Provide an inclusive university experience for students.

Lifelong engagement with the higher education sector, including mentoring and supporting others and further study:

- Facilitate life-long learning career development for students.

b) Strategies for achieving the outcomes

- Continue to improve and enhance school and community outreach programs.
- Increase the number of Equity Scholarships available to students in equity groups.
- Develop a suite of tools to assist students prepare and transition to university study.
- Enhance and expand academic and non-academic support for identified students at risk including first in family at university.
- Increase the number of commencing students from equity groups participating in the UniMentor Program.
- Implement inclusive teaching strategies that value students' diverse ways of knowing and learning.
- Promote and affirm diversity through workshops, promotional materials, celebrations and events.
- Implement a University wide student alumni mentoring program.

2. Evaluation Plan

The SCU HEPP Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Improvement Plan (MERI) outlines the approach that the SCU Equity and Diversity Office takes to the ongoing monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement of its HEPP funded programs. The Plan links monitoring and evaluation at the University level with ongoing equity reporting requirements. It has established a framework that includes all University wide HEPP funded projects. All HEPP funded projects/programs at SCU are required to implement an evaluation strategy for measuring the impact and success of the project/program applying qualitative and quantitative measures to determine outcomes against equity objectives.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data is collected through:

- Participation data (numbers, equity groups, events, activities)
- Baseline data collection
- Pre and Post event surveys (students, teachers & stakeholders)
- Interviews and focus groups
- Retention and Completion Data

3. Partnerships and collaboration

The University as a partner in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) will continue to participate in joint projects with regional universities to foster a broad coverage of regional issues.

The University works with North Coast TAFE to offer alternative access pathways for students through SCU College, to encourage greater participation in higher education across the region, from Coffs Harbour to the Gold Coast, by providing additional pathways into university. Courses are offered at Southern Cross University campuses, and students can now access 6 learning spaces on North Coast TAFE campuses.

The University currently partners with schools, local councils, community groups, the Department of Education and Communities North Coast Region and universities in delivering programs to improve the access and participation in higher education of students in equity groups. The University will continue to develop and foster partnerships and collaborations to achieve equity goals and targets and promote higher education during the life of this plan.