

Annual Report 2004



University of the
Sunshine Coast
Queensland, Australia



Our Mission

To be the major catalyst for the innovative and sustainable economic, cultural and educational advancement of the region, through the pursuit of international standards in teaching and research.

Report to the Minister

April 2005

The Hon Anna Bligh, MP

Minister for Education and the Arts

In accordance with the provisions of Section 46J(1) of the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1997*, I have the honour to present to you, on behalf of the Council of the University of the Sunshine Coast, the Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2004.

Ian Kennedy, AO
Chancellor



"Throughout the year we continued to advance our prime objective of providing the people of the Sunshine Coast with access to quality higher education. It is pleasing that as student demand increased, 40 percent new students in 2004 were the first members of their families to attend university."

Communication Objectives

This Annual Report provides a comprehensive record of the University's performance in 2004 and outlines plans for the future. Our achievements are documented against the aims and objectives of the University's *Strategic Plan 2001–2005*.

The report highlights our teaching and research activities during the year and reflects our commitment to the region and its community. It presents the University's financial statements, and meets the University's reporting requirements to the State Minister for Education and the Arts.

Potential readers of the Annual Report include members of State Parliament, the University community, business and media, potential benefactors, international visitors and members of the public.

Copies of the Annual Report 2004 are available from the office of Marketing and Communications, University of the Sunshine Coast, by telephoning + 61 7 5459 4558. An electronic version of the report is available from the University's website <www.usc.edu.au>.

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University of the Sunshine Coast
90 Sippy Downs Drive
Sippy Downs
Queensland 4556
Tel: 5430 1234
Fax: 5430 1111
Email: information@usc.edu.au

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Front cover

The new Information, Communication and Technology Building and Art Gallery.

Year in Review

Vice-Chancellor's Review

For the University of the Sunshine Coast, 2004 was a year of transition. It was challenging in that it was the last year of a dated funding formula. It was also the commencement of a new regional funding formula, ahead of the new and more comprehensive arrangements for 2005.

The Federal Government confirmed its strong support by allocating 1,080 growth places over the next four years. These figures, the largest allocation to a single campus, go some way to meet increasing demand from a growing region, and allow for the expansion of courses from 2006, in particular.

Nursing was offered in 2004 and Education was planned for introduction in 2005.

Development of the Sippy Downs Knowledge Precinct advanced in 2004 with the opening of Chancellor State College, located adjacent to the University, and the Queensland Education ICT Learning and Innovation Centre on the University campus, signalling strong cooperation with Education Queensland into the future.

During 2004, the Innovation Centre's Incubator doubled in size, becoming one of Australia's largest technology/business incubators. Plans were formulated for an 'Accelerator' for more advanced businesses, and in an attempt to catalyse a Technology Park. The proposed technology precinct is supported financially by Maroochy Shire Council, as well as being given support by SunROC and being identified as part of the Sippy Downs 'Knowledge Hub', recognised by State Government within the Draft South-East Queensland Regional Plan.

To support the projected growth, the Queensland Government has initiated a study into the establishment of a major bus interchange at the University.

Throughout the year we continued to advance our prime objective of providing the people of the Sunshine Coast with access to quality higher education, and it is pleasing that as student demand increased, 40 percent of new students in 2004 were the first members of their families to attend university.

A First Year Experience Officer was appointed to assist these students in settling into university life and ensuring they have the resources they need to stay



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committed to completing their degrees. Demand rose significantly for the Headstart Program which gives high school students a taste of university life and aims to ease the transition from high school to university. The number of scholarships we offer was increased to 136 with a combined value of \$333,779.

Stage V of the University's Master Plan, the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Building, was completed at a cost of over \$16 million. Architects were also appointed to undertake the design of two Stage VI buildings to be commenced in 2005.

Study support for students increased with the opening of the University's new information Commons which houses 76 new computers with DVD, CD-ROM and floppy disk facilities, and eight express workstations for quick email and printing resources. In 2004 we received commendation for our student:computer ratio of 8:1 and the 24 hour access to computer laboratories.

As I reflect on 2004, I am reminded of our many successes. I was particularly pleased with our successful application for an ARC Discovery Grant which reinforces our national standing among Australian universities and will establish key research opportunities for the University in the future. As only 20 percent of applications are approved, this grant is a significant step forward for USC.

Two new research facilities were opened in 2004. In February, the Institute for Sustainability, Health and Regional Engagement (iSHaRE) was launched. iSHaRE is a University-wide research institute with a strong research focus on environment and health. As a result of iSHaRE's research capabilities on Fraser Island, we entered into an agreement with Yellowstone National Park and the University of Wyoming. And in July, the Centre for Health Activities, Sport and Exercise (CHASE) was launched by one of Australia's leading sports identities, Robert de Castella.

Our staff have maintained exceptionally high standards in their own professional careers which is reflected by USC having one of the highest proportion of academic staff with Doctoral or Masters degrees of any Queensland institution and the fifth highest in Australia. Their commitment to the human scale aspect of teaching has also been recognised with a five-star rating from graduates for their education experience.

Year in Review

Our links with the people, businesses and industries within our region have expanded and continued to gain strength. A successful highlight of the year was the opening of the new Art Gallery – made possible only by the financial support of the Sunshine Coast community and Friends of the University. During 2004, 7,295 people visited the Gallery.

In support of lifelong learning, and to provide an opportunity for people to network, socialise and learn, the University signed a further agreement to support U3A (University of the Third Age), this time for a further five years.

Over 2,000 people attended the Graduation Ceremony to watch the largest number of our graduates process across the stage and receive their awards from the Chancellor, Mr Ian Kennedy.

We continued our support of many community events, proudly sponsoring, for example, the literary festival Voices on the Coast, and Festuri, a multicultural festival.

Internationalisation of the University continued. The number of international students increased. Of our partner institutions, 20 attended an International Partners' Conference on campus and a further 18 partnership agreements were signed with universities providing our students with the opportunity to study in institutions around the world.

With the prospect of further sectoral change, it was an opportune time to review the University's Strategic Plan, which was finalised in the latter half of the year.

Ahead of 2005 expansion, the University prepared for extra students and senior management restructuring arrangements, and participated and responded to the proposed changes emanating from the Federal Government.

Conclusion

We can all look back on 2004 with pride. We have met and exceeded our prime objective of offering the people within our region the opportunity to enhance their education. We provide quality learning and offer close student contact and support. We have advanced research relative to the region and increased international opportunities for students and staff wishing to study overseas. The confidence shown by the Federal Government allocation of places heralds an exciting future for USC staff, students and alumni, and I look forward to the further expansion of the University and to meeting the demands of regional education and engagement, whilst interacting even more concertedly with the world of universities in the years ahead.

Professor Paul Thomas
Vice-Chancellor
April 2005



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