

# Student Support Review

Moving towards greater social inclusion: throughout 2009 the University worked to enhance opportunities for participation by equity groups.

## Financial support

**Financial support available to students** by way of scholarships, bursaries and prizes increased again in 2009, improving access to the University for people from low socio-economic groups. Some 600 undergraduate students received scholarship support in 2009, worth more than \$1.8 million. Of these, 150 students were supported by scholarships funded by the support of University sponsors and donors, to a total value of almost \$200,000.

**The University's six academic excellence scholarships** were awarded to first-year undergraduate students in April. Established in 2008 by USC Foundation using donations, the Renouf Family Scholarships, Tim Fairfax Regional Scholarships and USC Chancellor's Scholarships are worth \$12,000 each.

**A first-year engineering student** was awarded the inaugural Les and Mary Hall Family Scholarship, established in 2008 following a \$100,000 donation from the Hall family. Other notable scholarships awarded in 2009 included:

- three \$1,000 equity bursaries from the University of the Third Age;
- five \$1,000 bursaries from the Australian Federation of University Women;
- three postgraduate Rotary Scholarships worth \$2,500; and
- 28 Headstart Scholarships given to local high school students to streamline their transition from school to tertiary study.

**Students starting at the University in 2010** were able to apply for a share of \$383,500 of scholarships by the end of November. The 60 scholarships on offer ranged in value from \$3,500 to \$12,000 over three years, and were funded by USC and by private donors. Eligibility depended on a variety of factors including academic merit, community/extracurricular activities and financial need.

**The continued increase in scholarship provision**, and the anticipated introduction of the Commonwealth Start-up Scholarships in 2010, positions the University well with regard to the recommendations stemming from the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education—specifically the report's recommendation that by 2020, 20 percent of undergraduate enrolments be from low socio-economic backgrounds.



Academic Excellence Scholarship winners (left to right): Jayden Lowrie, Felicity Cunningham, Holly Warland, Christine Beutel and Roseanna Langmead.

## Indigenous support

**Participation rates for Indigenous students** at USC continued to exceed national averages in 2009. Compared to 2008 full-year data, new Indigenous student enrolments increased by 35 percent, with the largest increase in non-award programs, particularly the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP).

**The Employment and Participation Strategy** for Indigenous Australians at USC 2005-2008 was reviewed during the year, and expanded to include opportunities for student internships.

**The new Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy** 2009-2011 is being developed to increase teaching, mentoring and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at USC. A DEEWR Indigenous Employment Program grant of \$250,000 was secured in 2009 to support this work over two years.

**In other support activities for Indigenous students**, four USC undergraduates received \$5,000 Indigenous health access scholarships from Australian Rotary Health—out of 10 awarded in Queensland. It was the seventh year the scholarships have been issued nationwide, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government.



Professor Paul Thomas AM and Dr Jackie Huggins AM, Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit of The University of Queensland, jointly launched USC's first Reconciliation Action Plan at the University's third annual Indigenous Education Symposium. See also page 18.

The University launched its first Reconciliation Action Plan in October, setting specific targets in developing greater relationships, respect and opportunities for Indigenous people. Developed over two years, the plan will help ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people studying at USC have real opportunities to improve their social and economic outcomes.



## Academic support

**Enrolments in the Tertiary Preparation Pathway (TPP) continued to increase in 2009**, with both semesters experiencing greater intakes than in 2008. Classes were held in the community at a local school, where students included eight teenage mothers from the Nambour-based group 'Supporting Teenagers with Education, Mothering and Mentoring' (STEMM). Four STEMM graduates gained entry to USC degrees in 2010.

**The Tertiary Enabling Program (TEP) expanded its offerings**, adding courses in physiology, business spreadsheet skills, and fundamental accounting to the existing suite of chemistry, general mathematics, mathematics for physics, statistics, biology, writing skills, computer literacy, and research methods. More than 300 students were enrolled in TEP in 2009.

**The University continued its focus on encouraging students** to seek support services throughout their studies. The academic and social activities of Orientation were well-attended, with Semester 1's program of events attracting 1,500 new students (out of a possible 2,400 commencing students).

## Careers support

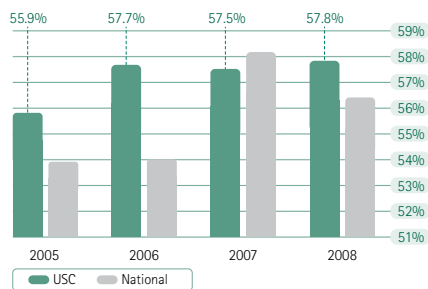
**Students gained valuable information** on how to "future proof" their careers at the annual Careers Fair organised by Student Services. The event in March included displays by 30 companies and four guest presentations by industry experts about finding work and staying employed during tough economic conditions.

**Students also had access to** a record number of student placement opportunities with local organisations in 2009. More than 400 businesses participated in the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program, providing students with valuable workplace experience to prepare for their careers. *See also page 11.*

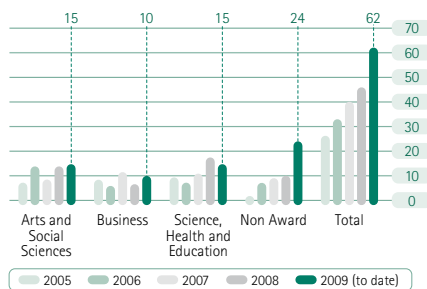
In a step forward for encouraging low socio-economic students to enter university, USC became a partner in The Smith Family's Learning for Life program early in the year. Under the agreement, the University will contribute \$20,000 each year for the next three years to assist the organisation in supporting financially-disadvantaged students.



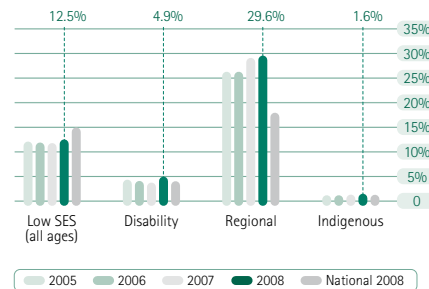
Scores of new students attended the 'Speed Meeting' session during Orientation.



■ Annual percentage agreement<sup>1</sup> for the AGS Student Support Scale



■ Number of new<sup>1</sup> (commencing) Indigenous students<sup>2</sup> (enrolments) annually



■ Participation rates (%) for equity groups<sup>1</sup> at USC for 2005-2008, including the 2008 national participation rate

# Student Support

## PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS

### Student feedback on infrastructure and services as measured through Australian Graduate Survey (AGS)

Target	Performance
Improve the annual percentage of Agreement responses in the AGS Student Support Scale	Increased from 57.5% to 57.8% in the 2008 AGS (as reported in 2009) Note: AGS results for 2009 are released in 2010.
Improve the annual ranking relative to other higher education providers for percentage of Agreement in the AGS Student Support Scale	Remained in sixth place in the 2008 AGS (as reported in 2009) Note: AGS results for 2009 are released in 2010.

The Student Support Scale is not a compulsory component of the AGS, therefore the national average is based on a limited number of institutions. In 2005 and 2006 only 12 institutions provided results, with 14 institutions providing results in 2007 and 2008.

Overall, USC's graduate satisfaction in the Student Support Scale increased from 55.9% in 2005 to 57.8% in 2008. An annual increase was achieved in 2006 and 2008, with little change in 2007. USC was above the national average for 2005, 2006 and 2008 (see above). USC's annual ranking improved from 5th to 4th between 2005 and 2006, but decreased to 6th in 2007 and 2008.

### Participation and access rates for equity groups

Target	Performance
Annual increase in the number of commencing Indigenous students	35% increase in the number of commencing Indigenous students
Achieve national annual participation rates for equity groups	Exceeded 2008 national participation rates for Indigenous, regional and disability; low SES target not met Note: Figures for 2009 are released in 2010.
Achieve national annual access rates for equity groups	Exceeded 2008 national access rates for Indigenous, regional and disability; low SES targets not met Note: Figures for 2009 are released in 2010.

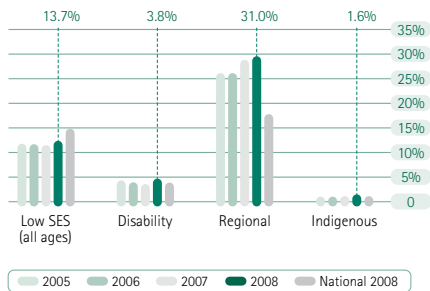
2009 enrolment figures after Census 2 showed a 35% increase in new Indigenous student enrolments, compared to 2008 full year data. Non-award programs had the largest growth in Indigenous enrolments for this period, with the majority enrolled in TPP programs.

**Notes for:** Annual percentage agreement for the AGS Student Support Scale

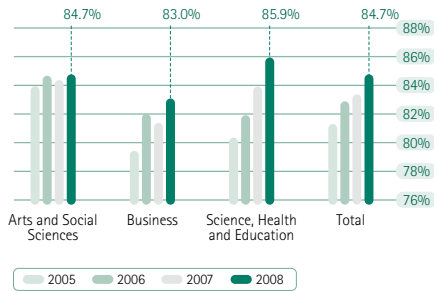
- Combination of percentage of responses that Agree or Strongly Agree with the Student Support Scale items:
  - I was able to access information technology resources when I needed them
  - Relevant learning resources were accessible when I needed them
  - Health, welfare and counselling services met my requirements
  - The library services were readily accessible
  - I was satisfied with the course and careers advice provided

**Notes for:** Number of new (commencing) Indigenous students (enrolments) annually

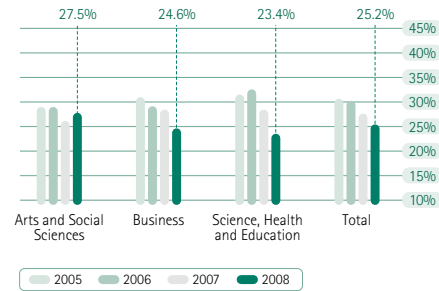
- A student is defined as a new student if they have been admitted to the University for the first time; re-admitted into a program following completion of a program, withdrawal, abandonment or exclusion; or when admitted to a new career (eg. from non-award to undergraduate).
- As per the DEEWR definition, only domestic students with a permanent home residence in Australia are included.



■ Access rates (%) for equity groups<sup>1</sup> at USC for 2005-2008, including the 2008 national access rate



■ Undergraduate<sup>1</sup> progress rates by teaching faculty<sup>2</sup>



■ Domestic Bachelor attrition rates (inverse retention) for all students by faculty

## GOAL To set standards in student support which will help attract, support and retain students

### Undergraduate student progress rates

Target	Performance
Improve annual undergraduate student progress rates	Increase of 1.4% to an annual undergraduate student progress rate of 84.7% in 2008 Note: Figures for 2009 are released in 2010.
Improve annual ranking relative to other higher education providers for undergraduate student progress rates for each DEEWR LTPF grouping	Improved annual ranking for each DEEWR LTPF grouping, relative to other higher education providers

Progress rates include new and continuing, domestic and international undergraduate students (and do not include TPP or Enabling students). Undergraduate progress rates have improved each year since 2005, and increased from 83.3% in 2007 to 84.7% in 2008.

In addition, student progress rate comparisons for all institutions are produced by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). These rates are adjusted to be comparable across institutions and are used in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) to assess excellence and improvement in learning and teaching in Australian universities.

USC's overall performance for progress rates remains low, but is improving, as is its ranking relative to other higher education providers. USC was ranked nationally 34th, 34th, 35th in the 2007 LTPF; 30th, 27th, 33rd in the 2008 LTPF; and 25th, 25th, 32nd in the 2009 LTPF, for Group 1 (Science, Computing, Engineering, Architecture and Agriculture), Group 2 (Business, Law and Economics) and Group 3 (Humanities, Arts and Education), respectively.

In the 2009 LTPF an assessment of improvement for each performance indicator was also undertaken. The results from the improvement assessment indicate there has been some increase in progress rates. The average annual change was 1.9% per year for the Science, Computing, Engineering, Architecture and Agriculture Discipline Group 1, 0.9% per year for the Business, Law and Economics Discipline Group 2 and 0.7% per year for the Humanities, Arts and Education Discipline Group 3.

LTPF assessments are based on progress rate data two years prior. For example, the 2009 LTPF is based on 2007 data.

### Undergraduate student retention rates

Target	Performance
Improve annual undergraduate attrition (inverse retention) rates	2.2% improvement in annual undergraduate attrition (inverse retention) rates for all students from 2008 to 2009
Improve annual ranking relative to other higher education providers for retention of commencing students for each DEEWR LTPF grouping	Improved annual ranking for one of three DEEWR LTPF groupings, relative to other higher education providers

The attrition rate (inverse retention) for all domestic bachelor students for the 2008 to 2009 period was 25.3% (compared to 27.5% in 2007 to 2008). The domestic Bachelor attrition rate for new students has declined since 2006, from 41.6% in 2006 to 2007, to 34.0% in 2008 to 2009. For continuing students, there was also a decline in attrition, from 23.1% in the 2006 to 2007 period, to 20.3% in the 2008 to 2009 period.

Student retention rates are used in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) to assess excellence (and in 2009 also improvement) in learning and teaching in Australian universities. Following the LTPF assessments, DEEWR released results for each institution, adjusted to be comparable across institutions.

Overall performance for retention rates remains low. USC's ranking for retention rates was placed in the range of the lowest to fourth-lowest performance nationally, for all three of the assessed Discipline Groups for 2007, 2008 and 2009. In all instances these results are below the national average, but could be related to the effect of the 'feeder institution' role of USC.

In the 2009 LTPF an assessment of improvement for each performance indicator was also undertaken. The results from the improvement assessment indicate there has been some increase in retention rates for the Humanities, Arts and Education Discipline Group 3 (2.8% per year), however there has been a decrease in retention rates for the Science, Computing, Engineering, Architecture and Agriculture Discipline Group 1 (-0.5% per year) and the Business, Law and Economics Discipline Group 2 (-0.8% per year).

## FORWARD PLANNING FOR 2010

- Increase the number of University-funded scholarships, prizes and bursaries available to students to 170.
- Develop a Student Retention Plan to ensure a supportive academic and social environment in which students from all backgrounds can achieve their full potential.
- Review post-VSU service provision with the Student Guild and Student Liaison Committee, with recommendations to be implemented.
- Participate in the national Ally project, supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer students and staff on campus.
- Establish an Indigenous Employment Coordinator position to assist students in accessing cadetship opportunities, and to build the profile of USC as a workplace of choice for Indigenous people on the Sunshine Coast.
- Improve Indigenous student recruitment, support and success in undergraduate and postgraduate study, to see Indigenous enrolments proportionate to, or exceeding, the population of Indigenous people in the region.
- Increase the number of students with disabilities to a proportion comparable to, or in excess of, the national average, through targeted promotion of the University's support services.

**Notes for:** Participation rates (%) for equity groups at USC for 2005-2008, including the 2008 national participation rate and Access rates (%) for equity groups at USC for 2005-2008, including the 2008 national access rate

1. Domestic students with permanent home residence in Australia only.

**Notes for:** Undergraduate progress rates by teaching faculty

1. Level - UG: undergraduate - courses offered to undergraduate and honours students (does not include TPP). Most cross institutional, visiting, Study Abroad and Exchange students enrol in undergraduate courses. As per DEEWR calculation, Enabling students are not included in the calculation of the progress rate due to the nature of their assessment.
2. Teaching Faculty - faculty responsible for the teaching of a particular course. Up until 2006, EFTSL for core courses was distributed evenly across faculties. Since 2007 EFTSL for core courses has been attributed to the faculty responsible for teaching the course.