HT-2457

University of Western Sydney

Bringing knowledge to life

Regional and Community Engagement Plan 2004–2008

Engagement begins with bringing knowledge to life in the communities of Greater Western Sydney, and extends to the University's wider role and reputation in the Sydney region, as well as its activities and identity as an Australian and international University.

Summary Statement: Regional and Community Engagement

UWS will be distinguished by the range and quality of professional activities that generate mutual benefits for, and develop productive relationships between, the University and its communities. UWS communities encompass geographic, ethnic, economic, religious, political, generational and cultural communities within Greater Western Sydney (GWS), Australia and overseas. These community engagement activities include:

- collaborative research and development programs with local industry
- development of academic programs in partnership with regional organisations
- consultancy and problem solving for local communities
- community involvement in the development of University policy
- community service learning for students
- development of communication, mutual respect and understanding between the University and its diverse communities
- social justice programs to address educational under-representation

UWS will be distinguished by its commitment to excellence in community engagement. The University will promote engagement in all of its activities, embedding it in the sense of UWS identity and culture held by staff and students, as well as the community's perceptions of the University. Engagement begins with bringing knowledge to life in the communities of Greater Western Sydney (GWS), and extends to the University's wider role and reputation in the Sydney region, as well as its activities and identity as an Australian and international University. Excellence in engagement is grounded in education, scholarship and research, together with a commitment to social justice and working in partnership with communities and other organisations.

Strategic Goals 2004 – 2008

1. Achieve national and international renown for leadership and scholarship in community engagement
2. Excel in the development and application of scholarship and knowledge in regional and community contexts
3. Make strategic use of resources and partnerships to provide leadership in community engagement and regional development
4. Promote civil society and sustainable communities by building their social and intellectual capital

Strategic Goal 1

Achieve national and international renown for leadership and scholarship in community engagement

1.1

Encourage and promote community engagement in all UWS activities, and in the sense of UWS identity and culture held by staff and students. This will be achieved by:

- promoting an understanding of community engagement among UWS staff through a targeted program of internal communication, including staff induction
- promoting community engagement as a key aspect of UWS identity and common culture, consistent with the University's value of relevance and responsibility to our communities
- communicating, aligning and consolidating engagement activities across the University
- embedding community engagement in operational activities and workload agreements
- identifying measures of excellence in community engagement for all fields of academic study and other University activities

- including relevant engagement-related criteria in recruitment processes for academic and general staff
- ensuring that excellence in community engagement is a criterion for staff promotion and the award of study leave (see the UWS 'Human Resources Plan')
- implementing reward, recognition and publicity schemes for staff and student excellence in community engagement
- promoting community engagement in student learning; through curriculum development (see 'Teaching and Learning Plan')

1.2

Develop the University's national and international reputation for excellence in community engagement. This will be achieved by:

- taking a leadership role in activities and organisations such as: Association of Commonwealth Universities; Community Engagement Forums; the Australian Engaged Universities Interest Group
- developing media policies and strategies for promoting UWS as an engaged University within Greater Western Sydney (GWS), Sydney, nationally and internationally

1.3

Promote community engagement as a valuable scholarly activity, and achieve excellence in the scholarship of engagement. This will be achieved by:

- improving the UWS community's understanding of 'scholarship of engagement', and publicise examples of excellence in this area
- developing nationally and internationally recognised research programs in various aspects of the scholarship of engagement
- supporting the dissemination of scholarship in this area, and increasing the levels of publication and conference activity
- encouraging, rewarding and promoting staff and student excellence in the scholarship of engagement

1.4

Identify, coordinate and allocate resources for engagement with key communities in Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and beyond. This will be achieved by:

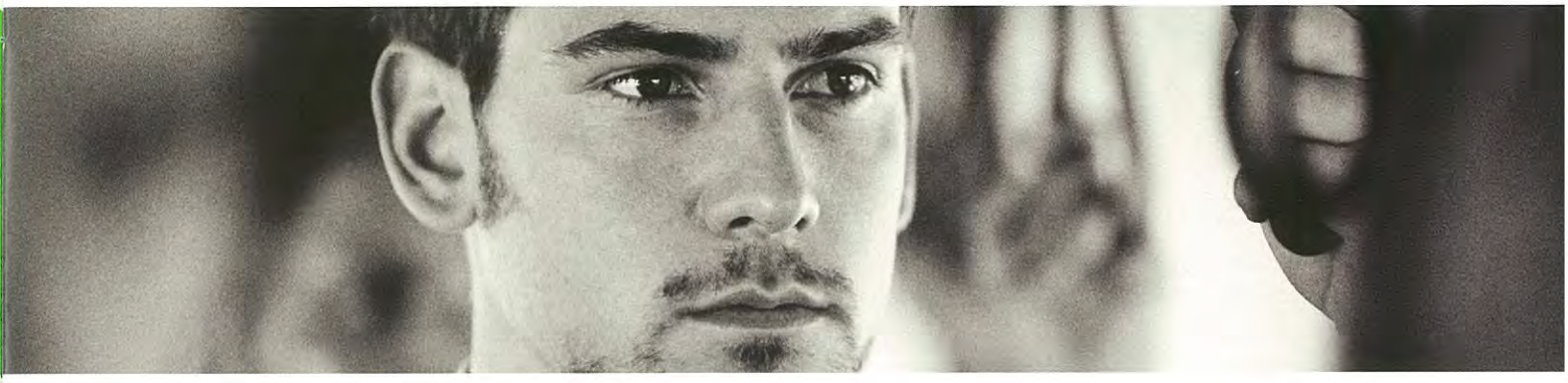
- identifying key regions and communities as a focus for the University's community engagement, recognising the particular significance of Indigenous communities
- periodically reviewing the University's understanding of these communities, and develop best practice for engaging with them
- developing and implementing an ongoing plan for international engagement (see UWS 'Internationalisation Plan')
- developing UWS alumni as a resource for community engagement in Greater Western Sydney and internationally

Strategic Goal 2

Excel in the development and application of scholarship and knowledge in regional and community contexts

2.1
Strengthen the University's position as the leading educational institution in the region through relevant and distinctive academic programs and in partnership with other regional and community institutions. This will be achieved by:

- gaining increased recognition for flexible, intellectually challenging, practical/professionally oriented and community based academic programs (see 'Teaching and Learning Plan')
- developing the region's social and intellectual capital through a student profile that reflects the communities served by UWS, and the University's commitment to the social justice principles of access, equity and participation
- increasing participation by Indigenous Australians and students from low socio-economic backgrounds in undergraduate and postgraduate study
- incorporating community engagement activities into the UWS academic program
- offering a suite of continuing education programs that address community needs and the professional education requirements of local employers
- providing enrichment activities, access to undergraduate units, and pathways to UWS for gifted and talented students from GWS
- building long-term partnerships with schools, TAFE colleges and other educational providers in GWS
- increasing liaison and support activities with local schools



2.2
Increase the scale and impact of research in areas of regional and community priority (see 'Research Plan'). This will be achieved by:

- identifying and regularly reviewing regional and community research priorities and opportunities
- establishing nationally and internationally recognised research groups or programs that address regional research priorities, including the University-wide programs in Water Futures, and Urban and Community Development
- heightening awareness of UWS research strengths and achievements within regional communities, and strengthening collaborative links with regional industry, organisations and research communities (see 'Research Plan')

2.3
Gain recognition as a key cultural and intellectual resource for Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and the wider Sydney region, and be acknowledged as the leading provider of critical thought, commentary, research and problem solving in GWS. This will be achieved by:

- promoting the University's expertise in regional, urban, community and environmental issues
- promoting the Whitlam Institute as a forum for studying the factors that shape the environments of urban regions
- hosting regional, national and international conferences
- developing links with cultural organisations in GWS, and national or international organisations with interests in the region

Strategic Goal 3

Make strategic use of resources and partnerships to provide leadership in community engagement and regional development

3.1
Use the University's national and international perspectives for the benefit of Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and other key communities. This will be achieved by:

- expanding the University's role in providing expert, independent advice on regional issues to governments, public organisations and the private sector
- extending the University's role in providing leadership and co-ordination for regional partnerships and strategic alliances
- maintaining and extending regular programs of forums and meetings with regional leaders
- using the University's economic and political significance in the region to promote the improvement of regional facilities, infrastructure and institutions
- promoting the UWS Regional Council in its roles of assessing the University's performance in community engagement; identifying issues of concern and initiating partnerships; reporting University decisions, strategies and outcomes to the region
- ensuring active participation of senior UWS staff in regional governance structures
- appointing regional leaders and experts as adjunct University staff and members of University committees and working parties
- serving as local host organisation for regional branches of national and international organisations

3.2
Strengthen and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships with community groups, regional organisations, businesses and industry. This will be achieved by:

- developing a plan for identifying new community partners, including businesses and industries, and managing existing relationships (see 'Commercialisation Plan')
- building partnerships to increase community-engagement opportunities for UWS students through regional sponsorships, scholarships, internships and mentoring
- maintaining a co-ordinated, up-to-date and widely accessible database on community and regional partnerships, relationships and networks

- increasing the reach and range of careers and employment services for UWS graduates to maximise their employment opportunities

- providing co-ordinated and highly visible points of contact for prospective community partners, and ensuring that they are recognised both inside and outside the University

- expanding the portfolio of and number of participants in Co-operative Programs

- providing staff training in entrepreneurship and business skills

- offering seminars, visits and short courses on topics of interest to local organisations and businesses

- continuing to promote the UWS Regional and Community Grants Scheme

Strategic Goal 3

3.3
Provide leadership in regional development for Greater Western Sydney (GWS). This will be achieved by:

- taking a leading role in establishing key priorities for regional development through collaborative engagement with government, regional and community organisations
- contributing to and benefiting from major regional development projects
- transferring technology and knowledge to GWS industries through research partnerships, consulting and licensing of UWS intellectual property

3.4
Promote environmental sustainability in Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and beyond through excellence in environmental scholarship, practice, partnerships and advocacy. This will be achieved by:

- developing and publicising excellence in environmental education and research at UWS
- identifying key environmental priorities in GWS and take the lead in developing collaborative research on those priorities
- implementing best practice in land care, waste disposal and energy use for UWS campuses
- providing expert advice on environmental issues and sustainability in GWS

3.5

Promote the regional economy through engagement with business and industry, and strategic use of the University's physical resources. This will be achieved by:

- promoting the UWS Business and Industry Advisory Panel and other organisations for sharing knowledge, resources and ideas for mutual benefit
- implementing strategies to promote engagement between UWS and Small/Medium Enterprises (SMEs), including incubators, networks and cluster developments
- developing and implementing strategies for the use of UWS campuses and other properties for optimum economic benefit to the University and region, including joint ventures between UWS, businesses, educational institutions and other organisations (see 'Campus Development Plan')

3.6

Promote the role and responsibility of each UWS campus to engage with the communities that surround it, and serve as portals for the overall University. This will be achieved by:

- strengthening links between individual campuses and their immediate communities
- developing and promoting the roles of Campus Provosts as key links between campuses and communities
- encouraging community use of educational, conference, library, cultural, sporting and other facilities, based on guidelines developed in consultation with relevant UWS stakeholders
- promoting cultural and sporting contacts between campuses and their local communities

Strategic Goal 4

Promote civil society and sustainable communities by building their social and intellectual capital

4.1
Produce graduates who are good citizens, and who contribute to their communities. This will be achieved by:

- ensuring that UWS students 'learn to learn', and graduate with the capacity to participate actively and responsibly in a diverse and changing world (see 'Teaching and Learning Plan')
- providing students with the opportunity to learn about diverse community and international perspectives
- incorporating community engagement activities into the UWS academic program
- providing opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurial skills in collaboration with businesses and other organisations in Greater Western Sydney (GWS)

4.2
Encourage and equip graduates with skills to build enduring organisations that promote civil society and sustainable communities. This will be achieved by:

- identifying and promoting sustainable community organisations that provide role models for UWS partners and graduates in their future lives and careers

- developing networks of UWS alumni to promote community development in Australia and internationally

4.3
Conduct research into the development of civil society and sustainable communities beginning with the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) Region, to build the social and intellectual capital of the Region

Performance Measure and Targets: Regional and Community Engagement

Measure	Current Position	Target
Regional and Community Engagement		
Level of engagement (local, national, international)	Indicators of engagement under development	Indicators of engagement published by end 2004
Number of GWS partnerships	Data being collected	Development of community engagement directory and database to identify partnerships, relevant organisations and boards and UWS memberships by 2005
Membership of key GWS organisations and boards	Data being collected	
University Reputation		
UWS share of first to third preferences of all eligible school leavers	15.6%	Improved share of first to third preferences each year
Regional Reputation		
First to third preferences of eligible GWS school leavers	35.3% of first to third GWS preferences	Improved share of eligible GWS first to third preferences each year
% Commencing students from GWS	72% from GWS	Maintain high level of GWS commencing students
Regional Visibility and Impact		
Scale of positive media coverage: – number of stories (print, radio, TV)	2,957 stories (2002)	Increased positive media coverage of University achievements and outreach annually
Regional support and relevance		
Level of funded research and consultancy partnerships and projects in GWS	Data being collected	Annual increase in number of partnerships Average annual increase of 10% in income 2004-2008
Student Engagement		
Number of students in Cooperative Programs	182 students in Cooperative Programs (2003)	At least 500 students participating in UWS Cooperative Programs by 2008
% of courses with community-engaged learning	86% of UG courses	Increased community-engaged learning opportunities in GWS
Engagement of UWS Alumni		
Level of participation by alumni	2,000 alumni (2003)	increased numbers of UWS alumni actively involved in the University community each year

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