Bridging The Gap

Refugee, New and Emerging Student Communities at Western Sydney University
Background

Western Sydney

- Multilingual skills
- Area with large cultural/social diversity
- Many from disadvantage backgrounds

Students of refugee background face additional barriers

- High percentage with history of trauma
- Language challenges
- Competing priorities/obligations
- Loss of identity/educational opportunities
Office of Widening Participation

Who are we?

• Undertake activities to contribute to the ideals of access, equity and social justice
• Aim to promote and provide all potential students with the opportunity of access to, and successful participation of higher education
• Provide support to assist students in successful completion of study
• Assist in removing barriers to higher education: financial, physical, emotional, social and/or cultural

Our Program

Community Education Liaison: Refugee, New and Emerging Communities Program

What we do:

• Provide options regarding access to higher education
• Enhance engagement with communities, community groups and stakeholders
• Create awareness of opportunities for non-traditional students
• Create positive opportunities for engagement and learning through university based retention programs
• Collaborative approach involving students, communities and stakeholders
• Reduce barriers to higher education
Uni Taster Day

What do we do?
- Bringing communities to Western and bringing Western to the community
- Programs developed through collaboration and consultation with community groups and stakeholders
- Programs aimed at prospective students and their families

A typical 'Taster Day'
- Transport and lunch provided
- Opportunity to engage with Western staff and students (student ambassadors, academic and professional guest speakers
- University campus tour
- Inspirational sessions
- Feedback

Uni 'Campfire' Chats

What do we do?
- Encourage and motivate students currently studying at Western
- Provide targeted support (Academic assistance, jobs on campus, welfare

The 'Campfire'
- Provide a sense of community
  - Shared discussion, friendships, mentoring
- Promote resilience
  - Overcoming barriers and challenges
Community Engagement and consultation

What do we do?
- Attending and participating in community events
  - Blacktown Refugee Welcome Picnic
  - SSI Youth Collective - E3 Youth Forum
  - Community forums, dinner and cultural festivals

Investing in the Community
- Provide information and targeted support
  - Scholarship workshops, aspiration building
  - Community presence
  - Overcome cultural barriers

Thank you

Any questions?