

Multicultural Planning and Services

Strategic Level Planning

The UWS Equity and Diversity Plan 2008–2010 articulates the University's commitment to making a difference to the lives of students, staff and the broader community of Greater Western Sydney by supporting equity and valuing the diversity of the community. It clearly demonstrates the commitment of UWS to the principles of multiculturalism which are enunciated in the NSW Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 and it contains strategies that are relevant, innovative and continually improving.

A policy framework also exists to give intention to the principles of multiculturalism. The Policies are:

- » Equal Opportunity Policy: covering both staff and students.
- » Inclusive Curriculum Policy: all courses and programs will be developed as Inclusive Curricula, which values the culture, background and experience of all students.
- » Inclusive Language Policy: promoting inclusion and avoiding discriminatory language.
- » Bullying Prevention Policy: procedures and processes to deal with unacceptable behaviours and promote inclusion and respect.

Planning for staff and students

Staffing data is regularly monitored and used for planning purposes. In 2009 17% of General Staff and 27% of Academic Staff were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Data is compiled annually on the place of birth, residency status, first language of students and learning outcomes. Informed by this data, UWS has developed a comprehensive integrated strategy to address the major aspects and stages faced by students and prospective students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Research into success and retention of students by analysis of Exit Surveys and Student Satisfaction Surveys has contributed to the development of improved retention rates for students at risk.

Details of student equity program developments and achievements are reported on annually to the Federal Government in the Institutional Assessment Framework Report.

Admissions Processes

Admissions processes take into account that many UWS students come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

- » Educational Access Scheme – Special Consideration: Individuals who believe that they have suffered long-term educational disadvantage can apply to UWS under this scheme. The scheme allows applicants to provide personal statements of their circumstances and takes into consideration several factors, including, whether the applicant is from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- » Regional Bonus Scheme: Provides adjustment to entry criteria to acknowledge the social disadvantage of students from Greater Western Sydney.
- » Some domestic students with a culturally and linguistically diverse background will have completed much of their school or even university education outside Australia. Educational qualifications are evaluated for equivalence to Australian qualifications to determine eligibility for entry. As tuition at UWS is in English, prospective students who have not undertaken a two-year course taught in English are strongly urged to complete additional English language study before their application can be considered.
- » Once students attend UWS they can participate in programs that will further assist their ability to study in English. Programs include: Introduction to Academic Writing Style; Introduction to Assignment Preparation; Introduction to Critical Analysis; Developing Your Writing; Introduction to Essay Structure; Introduction to Essay Writing.

Programs and facilities for Students

UWS provides a welcoming, supportive, innovative, and aware environment for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with the following programs:

- » Fast Forward: An outreach program which encourages higher levels of aspiration to, and participation in Higher Education.
- » Transition support such as the Student Services Orientation DVD and the employment of Orientation Assistants (UWS students) from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Religion is very important to many UWS students and the Multi-faith Chaplaincy service is accessed by students from a diversity of backgrounds. Multi-faith prayer and meditation facilities and separate Muslim prayer rooms are provided on each campus.

Brochures are provided, on line and in hard copy, on the major world religions to promote understanding:

- » What do you know about Buddhism?
- » What do you know about Christianity?
- » What do you know about Hinduism?
- » What do you know about Islam?
- » What do you know about Judaism?

Multicultural Initiatives 2009

The UWS Year of Respect and Inclusion 2009, a joint initiative of Equity and Diversity and Student Services, was extensively promoted through print media, web, forums and cultural events. Students designed posters and zines to communicate the university's strong commitment to inclusiveness and equity of access for all.

Student Administration staff, particularly those with student contact, undertook training in cultural diversity to learn how to communicate more effectively with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, identify the contexts that create cross-cultural tension and how to deal with them and how to develop strategies to create positive cross-cultural interaction.

Multi-faith events were held on two campuses in August 2009. Titled "My Faith Our Australia- Sharing our Stories" these events provided opportunities for conversations about the diverse backgrounds and faiths students come from.

The Bankstown Campus Kitchen received "Halal" certification.

The UWS Centre for the Study of Contemporary Muslim Societies was officially opened in July 2009. This new research centre will explore Muslim culture and promote in-depth discussion about the place of Muslim communities in multicultural societies such as Australia and its establishment is a reflection of the University's ongoing commitment to building greater understanding and cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim people.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Centre at the UWS Westmead opened on 6 October 2009. IELTS is an internationally accredited test for students who need to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language, and is recognised by education institutions, employers and government agencies. The IELTS Centre is the regions' first dedicated English language testing centre and will greatly assist new migrants, refugees and overseas students on the path to greater participation in the community, work and further education.

The hosting of "Creative Explosion in the West" at UWS Penrith Campus. Music and film are important ways of sharing and celebrating our diversity. Throughout October 2009, UWS gave western Sydney communities the opportunity to celebrate their musical and cultural traditions with an intercultural creative arts festival that drew its inspiration from Korean, Philippine, Japanese, Iranian and Macedonian traditions. The "Creative Explosion in the West" festival featured academic forums and workshops, film demonstrations, improvised music sessions, and performances by professional musicians and filmmakers including UWS staff and students.

Celebration of Harmony Day 2009 with an Art Exhibition at UWS Bankstown Campus. Entries from school children across NSW and the ACT in the Harmony Day Poster Competition were displayed in the art exhibition to promote the theme of 'Growing together in harmony'. This provided a unique opportunity to witness Australian children's visual representations of a world that accepts and embraces Australia's cultural and religious diversity.

Annual Report 2009

Addendum

Key strategies for 2010

- » Development and continued monitoring of the UWS Equity and Diversity Plan to ensure that equity and diversity principles underpin all university planning, policies and programs.
- » A Model UN Conference for Students hosted by Student Equity is in the planning stages for implementation in 2010.
- » Development of a booklet for International Muslim students.
- » Continued research into and development of existing student equity projects including the Fast Forward and Student at Risk Projects.
- » Investigating the feasibility of testing the English language capability of all students entering the University and the development of embedded support in academic units for students.