In 2017 the Office of Widening Participation conducted a program-wide analysis of the Social Return on Investment (SROI) to evaluate the impact of four Widening Participation programs at Western Sydney University (WSU). These included Fast Forward, Striving Towards Educational Participation and Success (STEPS), First Foot Forward, and Pasifika Achievement To Higher Education (PATHE).

**WHAT IS SROI?**
The Social Return On Investment (SROI) is a principles-based methodology for measuring additional financial value relative to the resources invested. The methodology assigns a financial proxy to the impacts and places participants at the centre of the research process — students, Western Sydney University Project Officers and support staff for this evaluation. Their perspectives, shared through the surveys, determined what the program was doing well, and how people have been assisted by their program participation. The SROI ratio is represented as a return, in dollar value, for every dollar invested (see Calculating Value table overleaf).

**MEASURING THE IMPACT**
A cross-section of participants across each of the programs were asked for their perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of the programs. Participants were asked basic details about their school level and professional background, as well as what they considered important from a list of study-related topics, what the best parts of the program were, and what had improved and what had changed as a result of the program. This research investigated the impact of projects throughout 2017 — a one-year analysis. Results were analysed and developed into academic journal articles by the research team.

**WIDENING PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS**

**Fast Forward**
The Fast Forward program is a partnership between Western Sydney University and Western Sydney schools which helps students to see the value of continuing their education through to year 12 and beyond. The Fast Forward program has been running since 2004 and, in 2017, operated in 64 high schools across Greater Western Sydney working with 3,671 high school students. Fast Forward has encouraged thousands of students to aspire towards further study after secondary school. The program is delivered through different workshops and on-campus visits to WSU campuses, with an annual whole day on campus and 2–4 workshops per year for year 9–12 students.

**Striving Towards Educational Participation and Success (STEPS)**
The STEPS program has been running since 2014 in 20 high schools across Greater Western Sydney, inspiring students to consider university and other tertiary educational pathways as a viable option for their future. The program is delivered through two full days on campus and one in-school meeting per year for year 9–10 students. In 2017, the STEPS program worked with 2,233 high school students.

**First Foot Forward**
The First Foot Forward program has been running since 2013 in 39 primary schools across Greater Western Sydney, inspiring students in their final two years of primary education to start thinking about university and other tertiary educational pathways. The key features of the program are in-school workshops and on-campus events for year 5–6 students, Family Open Nights on campus as well as professional learning workshops for teachers. In 2017, the First Foot Forward program worked with 3,659 primary school students.

**Pasifika Achievement To Higher Education (PATHE)**
The PATHE program has been running since 2012 and, in 2017, partnered with 58 primary and high schools across Greater Western Sydney, inspiring students from a Pasifika heritage to increase their aspirations to access, progress and complete tertiary education and transition into their chosen professions. The program includes on-campus visits, in-school workshops and a conference, working with year 5–6 and 7–12 students across each participating school. The program also involves community participation in workshops and meetings, one-on-one support for PATHE university students, and workshops and mentoring sessions for Student Ambassadors. In 2017, the PATHE program worked with 2,150 primary and high school students.

**WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH TEAM**
School of Social Sciences and Psychology
- Dr Jioji Ravulo
- Dr Shannon Said
Office of Widening Participation
- Mr Jim Micsko
- Ms Gayl Purchase
INSIGHTS

Fast Forward
A total of 63% of year 9–12 students said their parents either did not attend university or they were unsure of their attendance, while 88% of these same students were encouraged a lot or somewhat to attend university by their parents. The Fast Forward program is preparing students for their future at a time when it is needed most and exposes them to what higher education has to offer.

Parents have been made more aware of the opportunities further education can provide their children and are being included as part of the educational journey to help support this transition. Project Officers and WSU Support Staff are encouraged by their participation in the program which provides a sense of vitality and purpose to their work, allowing them to inspire the next generation.

Striving Towards Educational Participation and Success (STEPS)
A total of 73% of year 9 and 10 students said their parents either did not attend university or they were unsure of their attendance. Despite this, 88% of these students’ parents encouraged them to attend university in the future. The STEPS program creates a bridge between parents’ aspirations for their children and giving students the means to seriously consider higher education as a viable option for their future.

Parents were encouraged to see their children exposed to higher education at an early age and the role it can play in their futures. Parents also reported an increase in their own understanding of what university offers their children through their participation in First Foot Forward.

Project Officers enjoyed the fact they were able to inspire students to reach their goals, problem solve and work together, and work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Working with these students allowed Project Officers to consider how different students learn and encouraged open mindedness in the learning process.

Pasifika Achievement To Higher Education (PATHE)
A total of 59% year 7–10 students said that their parents either did not attend university or were unsure of their attendance. A total of 78% of these students’ parents encouraged them to attend university in the future. The PATHE program is building aspirations towards accessing higher education and training for these students.

Teachers are seeing the impact that role-modelling by WSU Pacific students in workshops has on program participation. This role-modelling resonates powerfully with Pacific school students.

Community participants expressed how important it was to share backgrounds and stories with WSU Pacific students that took part in workshops, and how this fostered connection and relevance.

Project Officers stated that being able to serve their Pacific communities and help students achieve their greatest potential is important, as well as providing ongoing support to these students.

PATHE university students valued the assistance provided by the Project Officers, who shared their tertiary journey with them, whilst WSU Student Ambassadors liked the valuable work experience opportunities and the acknowledgement, and appreciation, of Pacific culture that was incorporated through the program.

Calculating Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>NO. OF SCHOOLS</th>
<th>RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>INVESTMENT (PRESENT VALUE)</th>
<th>BENEFITS (PRESENT VALUE)</th>
<th>SROI RATIO</th>
<th>VALUE PER $1 INVESTMENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fast Forward</td>
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<td>$470,286</td>
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<td>$505,356</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>$78,135</td>
<td>$385,365</td>
<td>4.93:1</td>
<td>$4.93</td>
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