

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
AND COMMUNICATION ARTS



Indigenous Strategy

2020-2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal (also referred to as Tharawal) and Wiradjuri peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands (Greater Western Sydney and beyond).

COVER IMAGE:
CHRIS EDWARDS
SWIMMY CREEK
MIXED MEDIA ON LATVIAN LINEN
100 CM X 145 CM
2010
WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTION
IMAGE REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF ARTIST

INTRODUCTION

The School's commitment to Indigenous Australian success shapes our core values and goals.

I am delighted to introduce the Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025 for the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. The Indigenous Strategy is well aligned with our deep commitment to Indigenous research and education. It sets out the School's strategic objectives across seven significant areas of Indigenous engagement in order to value, promote, and nurture Indigenous Australian success.

As one of the School's key initiatives to progress its strategic objectives in learning and teaching, community engagement, leadership, and cultural viability and knowledge, senior leaders will work with academics, Indigenous advisors, and the School's Indigenous Committee members to Indigenise the core elements of our curriculum. The strengths of the School's Indigenous Australian Studies units over the past six years have served to catalyse the School's Indigenisation process and the development of important cultural interface methodologies.

We are committed to increasing the numbers of our undergraduate and postgraduate students who are Indigenous, and to enhancing and supporting Indigenous leadership, employment, and research for the benefit of the School and its wider communities and networks.

This is an exciting time for the School and for Western Sydney University, one of renewal and innovation. The School's Indigenous Strategy promises to engender enriching and culturally meaningful opportunities for synergistic exchange, relationship building, and reconciliation.

**Professor Matt McGuire
Dean, School of Humanities
and Communication Arts**

STATEMENT OF INTENTION

The School's Indigenous Strategy 2021-2025 demonstrates our commitment to foster Indigenous research, learning and teaching, and leadership.

Our Strategy supports the University's Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025.

The School will prioritise Indigenous knowledges and practices as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the impact of colonisation on First Nations Peoples (FNP).

As part of the Indigenisation of the curriculum, the School will ensure that, where appropriate, core units will contain material on Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and practices. Our School values systemic ways to effectively utilise decolonising practices that can promote the holistic social-emotional wellbeing of FNP stakeholders, create culturally meaningful contexts for learning and exchange, and nurture opportunities for reconciliation.

The School will prioritise culturally informed pedagogical practice in future curriculum development by ensuring that all staff are provided with professional development opportunities in diverse Indigenous cultural protocols. This important work will be overseen by trusted FNP colleagues within our School.

The School will actively address colonisation and its impacts, and it will ensure that all FNP stakeholders are provided with culturally safe and meaningful learning and teaching forums. The School will create a communal "cultural meeting place" (website) that is designed around a strengths-based approach and prioritises FNP ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The School will continue to build on and extend its current culturally safe forums, in which knowledges are shared and new knowledges are learned.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Provide opportunities for Indigenous Australian students to learn and succeed in an environment that promotes Indigenous excellence.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Continue increasing the percentage of Indigenous domestic students enrolled in the School's programs¹ – for example, by promoting the School's Indigenous Australian Studies major at University events; continuing to build University outreach and Indigenous entry schemes; and promoting the School as a culturally safe environment that prioritises Indigenous knowledges and practices.
- 02** Develop strategies to ensure the same retention outcomes for domestic Indigenous students as for non-Indigenous students – for example, by updating learning guides around cultural protocols, and by continuing to explore flexible modes of access to learning and teaching.
- 03** Launch enhanced cadetship and internship opportunities for Indigenous students.
- 04** Establish an Indigenous student network in the School.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

Increased population of enrolled domestic students who are Indigenous to 3% by 2025.

Retention of Indigenous students at the same rate as that of non-Indigenous students.

Increased population of completing students who are Indigenous to 3% by 2025.

1. In 2021, 1.8% of domestic students enrolled in the School's programs are Indigenous (i.e., below population parity).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

Position Western Sydney University as an employer of choice for Indigenous Australians. The School's environment supports and nurtures Indigenous Australians' careers.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Create and facilitate greater opportunities for professional development, mentorship, and support for Indigenous staff members.
- 02** Prioritise the establishment of early career positions within the School for Indigenous academic and professional staff with clear, supported, and reliable career pathways.
- 03** Develop strategies to welcome, recruit, and retain Indigenous staff and build cultural safety in School and WSU workplaces.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

Employment population of Indigenous people in the School has increased to 3% by 2025.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Grow the breadth and depth of Indigenous research by promoting a vision of research that empowers Indigenous Australians.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Promote Indigenous research by supporting WSU's Indigenous Research Network and its events.
- 02** Establish a research mentorship program for Indigenous Early Career Researchers (ECRs).
- 03** Develop a strategic initiative to target external research funding that includes opportunities for Indigenous researchers, such as peer-to-peer research mentoring that targets specific external grants.
- 04** Foster collaboration with Indigenous researchers and the co-creation/co-design of research with Indigenous peoples, acknowledging and involving Indigenous knowledges and culture in situations of respectful reciprocity.
- 05** Develop an Indigenous HDR student network in the School.
- 06** Train supervisors to supervise Indigenous higher degree research.
- 07** Work with the GRS, other WSU bodies, and external partners to secure Indigenous-identified HDR scholarships.
- 08** Run a minimum annual number of Indigenous-curated and -led research forums, e.g., in the Writing & Society Research Centre's seminar series, and the annual HDR conference.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

- Increased proportion of research in FOR 45 Indigenous Studies.
- Increased population of HDR students who are Indigenous.
- Increased proportion of Indigenous-led research events.
- Increased research collaboration activities and outcomes that include Indigenous researchers and Indigenous HDR students.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR

INDIGENOUS LEARNING AND TEACHING

Ensure that all students develop understanding of and knowledge about Indigenous Australians in order to demonstrate cultural competence and professional capacity with regard to the Indigenous Graduate Attribute.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Ensure every program in the School has implemented measures whereby students can master skills relevant to the Indigenous Graduate Attribute – for example, by ensuring that, where appropriate, core units will contain material addressing Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and practices.
- 02** Support Indigenous academic staff to achieve formal, institutional recognition through the University's learning and teaching awards.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

All students will have the opportunity to engage with, and learn from, Indigenous knowledges.

Indigenous academic staff will be formally recognised for quality learning and teaching.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FIVE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Promote Western Sydney University as a place that works with and for the Indigenous Australian community.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Establish an Indigenous alumni network.
- 02** Promote and participate in Indigenous events across the University and within the broader community.
- 03** Foster opportunities for employment of Indigenous alumni within the School – for example, within mentoring programs, or to develop resources concerning cultural protocols.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

New forms of communication are established across the School with Indigenous staff and students.

Indigenous community engagement activities are expanded and have become normalised as an important part of business-as-usual practice.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE SIX

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Provide and facilitate leadership opportunities for Indigenous Australians across the staff, students, and the wider Western Sydney University community.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Appoint at least one Indigenous person to a senior leadership position within the School.
- 02** Create leadership opportunities for Indigenous academic and professional staff within the School.
- 03** Develop opportunities for Indigenous students to take up leadership roles within the School.
- 04** Consult with Indigenous staff and students on the most culturally appropriate forums for continuing to build non-hierarchical Indigenous leadership networks within the School.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

Establishment of the Associate Dean (Indigenous Education) position.

Increased student participation in leadership activities and roles.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE SEVEN

CULTURAL VIABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Build Indigenous viability and knowledge across Western Sydney University.

STRATEGIC SCHOOL ACTIONS

- 01** Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country is performed at the start of each formal meeting and gathering within the School.
- 02** Incorporate visual Acknowledgement of Country identifiers within School areas across the University.
- 03** Ensure all academic and professional staff have professional development opportunities to learn diverse Indigenous cultural protocols. These opportunities will be overseen by FNP colleagues in our School who are trusted by FNP students with feedback about their learning experiences, University experiences, and other perspectives.
- 04** Develop a communal “cultural meeting place”: a School website that is designed around a strengths-based approach, and that de-prioritises European learning and administrative and tertiary institutional hierarchies while prioritising FNP knowing, doing, and being. This communal meeting place will form an online repository of resources and links for all staff.

KEY SUCCESS MEASURES

Acknowledgement of Country is consistently performed at the beginning of all formal meetings and gatherings.

Indigenous country is acknowledged and represented across all School areas.

All School staff are provided with professional development opportunities in diverse Indigenous cultural protocols.

All School staff have access to an online repository (i.e., the “cultural meeting place”) of Indigenous resources and links.

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25-11-21



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