The University of Western Sydney Schools Engagement Program provides primary and high school students with opportunities to not only improve their academic performance, but also to expand their horizons.

UWS offers budding young artists and those interested in the arts a range of opportunities to participate in events and learn more about Australian art and the art world. Schools can hold their own art exhibitions at the UWS Margot Hardy Gallery, Bankstown campus. Since 2008 this gallery has been used solely for exhibitions of work by school students and community groups, and is open to the public on weekdays. Schools are provided with curatorial assistance including help with framing the students’ work.

A special information kit has been developed to guide schools through the process of mounting an exhibition. This is available on CD or online at http://www.uws.edu.au/campusartproject.

Teachers have found the kit a valuable learning resource. They have also said that the whole exhibition experience helped to build their professional skills. The students are very proud to see their works hanging in a gallery where they can be viewed by the many staff, students and members of the public who visit the gallery or walk through the building. Each exhibition is preceded by a special launch attended by teachers, parents, UWS staff and other guests.

The gallery is also used for exhibitions of themed student work submitted for externally-run competitions, such as the Harmony Day poster competition run by Moving Forward Together Inc. and the Western Sydney Environmental Calendar competition run by the Western Sydney Parklands.

The biennial UWS Acquisitive Sculpture Award and Exhibition also offers exciting learning experiences for school students and teachers. The exhibition features about 20 outdoor works shortlisted for the UWS prize and the Landcom prize. These are installed around, and sometimes in, the lakes on the campus. Many of the works are created by leading Australian sculptors, with some specifically designed for the lakeside or marine setting.
The exhibition began in 2004 and the winning works from 2004, 2006 and 2008 are permanently installed around the exhibition site, along with a number of other highly-regarded sculptures.

The 2010 exhibition will open at the end of April and run for a month. Educational resource materials on the 2008 and 2010 exhibitions are available for teachers. Schools and members of the public can visit at any time during daylight, including on weekends. Special guided tours feature talks by some of the sculptors. Exhibition visitors can picnic by the water while deciding on what to vote for in the People’s Choice award.

The Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize’s touring exhibition ‘Celebrating 10 Years in 2010’, featuring all the previous winners of that prize, will be on show in the UWS School of Medicine at the same time as the UWS sculpture exhibition.

The next UWS sculpture prize and exhibition will be in 2012, with artists entering works in 2011.

For more information contact the UWS Art Curator, Monica McMahon on Monica.McMahon@uws.edu.au or phone 4620 3450.

The collection focuses on:
- 20th and 21st century Australian Indigenous art
- 20th and 21st century Australian paintings and print-media art
- 21st century Australian sculptures
- works by international artists who have participated in artist residency programs at the University.

Another resource for schools is the art collection pages on the UWS website. At http://virtualtours.uws.edu.au/home there are virtual tours of current and past art exhibitions at the University’s galleries and in open spaces, as well as reproductions of a selection of works from its art collection.