The UWS Office of Widening Participation undertakes activities that contribute towards the participation targets set by the Federal Government: that by 2020, twenty per cent of higher education (HE) enrolments at undergraduate level should be from people from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds.

This aim is achieved by targeting students from non-traditional backgrounds in local schools and is a fundamentally important initiative contributing to the ideals of social justice and the wider financial and economic health of Australia in providing well-qualified and motivated entrants into the workforce.

Widening participation in higher education is a crucial part of our mission. Our aim is to promote and provide to all potential students the opportunity of access to, and successful participation in, higher education and to assist and support them to successfully complete their course of study.

We strive to:
- provide interactive experiences both on and off the university campus in order to raise awareness and aspirations and to contribute towards achievement levels
- provide targeted outreach activities to meet the needs of a wide range of learners and prospective higher education students in primary and secondary schools, colleges, employer and community settings
- provide information, support and link activities for education facilitators including teachers, lecturers, career and pastoral guidance staff, training providers, community workers and parents/carers
- remove barriers to higher education, whether these are financial, physical, emotional, social, or cultural.

UWS approach to Widening Participation

Targeting to succeed
Distinctively, our activities target schools and communities identified as disadvantaged on multiple socio-economic indicators and target within schools to reach students from non-traditional backgrounds who may be first in their family to attend higher education but have the potential to benefit from studying at a higher educational level.

Evidence based policy
Ongoing work to provide comprehensive data and detailed evidence of outcomes forms a vital element of our impact analyses. All modes of intervention are assessed for measures of success and reviewed on a regular basis.

Early intervention
Research in widening participation consistently demonstrates that intervention with students at the youngest age possible has a greater impact on aspiration-building and academic motivation.

Long term investment and sustainability
For 25 years, since the inception of UWS and through forerunner institutions, there has been a mission commitment to Widening Participation; this has resulted in an ever-improving success in rising participation figures which results in more students studying in HE from non-traditional backgrounds. The most successful activities are those creating “generational” impact – a student who is the first in their family to attend university then has children for whom HE becomes a natural consideration. Projects that ‘root’ in communities provide ‘routes’ to HE!

Every Student Matters
Using a teaching and learning scaffolded framework that links to the educational curriculum, we offer the following engaging experiences for students in primary school and high school:

**First Foot Forward**

By giving primary aged students the opportunity to learn about higher education options prior to beginning high school, the First Foot Forward Primary Program aims to reach students at a younger age and plant the seed needed to start students thinking seriously about their future. By working with students early on in their schooling journey, it is hoped that they recognise the need to take a more diligent approach to their studies and therefore gain the most out of their education. The First Foot Forward Primary Program runs a variety of events for participating students and their families, including: on-campus visits, in-school workshops and family open nights.

**Fast Forward**

The Fast Forward program provides school students with opportunities to increase their awareness of university and further study beyond high school and helps to raise their educational aspirations. This program seeks to engage selected students from year 9 with UWS staff, students and resources and work with them through to year 12. Through interactive, fun and practical activities, students are given a positive experience and understanding of university life and other pathways to achieve their goals for the future. Some examples of activities the students can be involved in are: awards evenings, university days, in-school workshops, UWS day, Year 12 conference, HSC preparation, yourtutor, SkillsBuilder and scholarships.

**STEPS@UWS**

Steps@UWS (Strive Towards Educational Participation and Success) works with students in years 10–12. The program encourages and supports the aspirations of the students and works with them to provide as much practical information as possible so that they can make better-informed and more assured choices about their futures.

**KiC**

KiC (Kids in Care and Kids including Carers) is a project designed to stimulate the interest and aspirations of primary and high school children who are in out of home care (OOHC) or who are young carers. The UWS KiC program operates in a number of areas to support young people. Promoting the benefits and opportunities provided by a university education, the program endeavours to make university more appealing and accessible by hosting on-campus events and by providing scholarship opportunities to prospective students. The program strives to develop stronger ties between UWS and the OOHC and Young Carers Community in the Western Sydney region by engaging with carers and OOHC organisations.

**Indigenous Programs**

Three programs encourage and support the educational aspirations of ATSI primary and high school students, with a range of learning opportunities to enhance their prospects. Pathways To Dreaming, Rural Student Visits and Heartbeat involve students in academic and cultural enrichment workshops on UWS campuses with the guidance of UWS student mentors and community elders.

**PATHEx**

PATHEx (Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education) strives to develop vocational and career aspirations of young Pacific people and their families through on-campus activities, outreach, innovative resources and projects. These include a series of school and community workshops, campus tours, family events and a career expo. Resources such as the PATHEx Facebook page and relevant YouTube videos are also part of this vibrant approach towards student engagement and retention.

**PANGO**

Provides high school students with a free online social-learning platform to support students during years 8, 9 & 10 of their studies. The interactive feature of Pango encourages students to use tools designed to provide useful guidance towards potential career options and videos to help prepare for exams. Free online tutoring from accredited teachers is available for students from years 4 to 12 five days per week from 4 to 8pm.
UWS current student programs

Once students are attending UWS, our programs continue to support and address their needs. Samples of the programs offered to students are outlined below:

- **UWS Jobs on Campus** – A University-wide initiative to coordinate and expand on-campus employment opportunities for UWS students.
- **The Academy** – A unique professional development and personal enrichment program that has been specifically designed by the University of Western Sydney to cultivate and enhance the leadership qualities of students.
- **PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions)** – A free and voluntary student centred learning program, based on an internationally recognised program, called Supplemental Instruction.
- **Transition to Success** – An outreach program for commencing students which aims to increase student retention through the provision of peer contact, assistance and support.
- **MATES@UWS (Mentoring and Transition Equals Success at UWS)** – A mentoring program for first year students to give them an opportunity to connect with other new students and mentors in later years of study.
- **UWS Scholarships** – A wide range of scholarships is available to prospective and current students to commence and continue their chosen area of study at UWS.
- **WP Student Ambassadors** – Current UWS students who are part of the student ambassador program are invited to assist with various events run by Widening Participation, where they act as positive role models to inspire and engage young students.

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