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. The **Fast Forward** program is a partnership between the University of Western Sydney and Greater Western Sydney schools, which helps students to see the value of continuing their education through to year 12 and beyond. Expanded to 22 schools in 2009, the program encourages students to strive for their personal best and to see tertiary study as a realistic and viable post-school option.

**Fast Forward** recognises the importance of engaging students with the concept of lifelong learning and the benefits of post-school education as early as possible so that they can more knowledgeably plan their pathways in the senior years of schooling and post-school study.

The program gives students the chance to be involved in a range of activities, including:

- **Fast Forward Awards Night:** students selected for the program and their parents are invited to attend a UWS campus early in Year 9 to take part in the Awards Night, which recognises their academic and leadership potential.

- **Skills Days:** in Years 9, 10 and 11, Fast Forward students from schools in the local area attend skills days on a UWS campus. The activities on these skills days enhance students’ knowledge, capabilities and self-awareness.

- **Year 11/12 UniM8s:** students have the opportunity to be matched with a UWS student whose course of study relates to their interests and ‘shadow’ that student to uni classes for a day. In 2009, over 150 UWS students volunteered for the program.

- **Support in First Year Uni:** students who go on to study at UWS are offered any additional information or support needed to make the transition to university smoother. Many students become role models for the younger students entering the Fast Forward program, creating further leadership opportunities.
As part of the program, students also receive a Fast Forward workbook, quarterly newsletter and personal invitations to attend other UWS events such as Open Day, UWS Day and Parent Information evenings.

**Fast Forward** is a key program under the UWS Schools Strategic Plan, which focuses on working with schools to improve the educational opportunities and attainment of students in Greater Western Sydney.

For more information contact Kerry Fielding at k.fielding@uws.edu.au or email SchoolsEngagement@uws.edu.au