

LEAP

(Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation)

Macquarie Mentoring



MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY



Progress Report 2013

LEAP Macquarie Mentoring

Supporting high school students from refugee
backgrounds



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A message from

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching, and Diversity
Professor Sherman Young



Macquarie, as a university of service and engagement, prides itself on giving people the opportunity to benefit from a higher education, to study at university and to flourish in their chosen field. The LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program does just this for high school students from refugee backgrounds.

The program is a cornerstone initiative of Macquarie's widening participation agenda and has been a fantastic success over the past few years. Since the program began, we have seen hundreds of young people benefit from the strong bond that is the mentoring relationship. Macquarie mentors and mentees have learnt from each other, shared experiences, and grown through the program. Importantly, many of the mentees have been exposed to the university, and seen how a tertiary education may be beneficial to themselves and the wider community.

I'm delighted to be able to share in the experience of participants in the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program, and am excited to be part of an initiative designed to broaden the accessibility of higher education.

Widening Participation at Macquarie University

Widening Participation remains an integral component of Macquarie University's strategic direction as an innovative, modern and dynamic educational institution and is built upon a "commitment to inclusiveness through targeted and sustainable collaborative programs" (*Our University: A Framing of Futures*, 2013, Strategic Priority 3 – *Aligning the nature and size of the university for the future*). The Widening Participation team seeks to empower students affected by educational disadvantages to access higher education opportunities through targeted support programs, such as the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program. We are committed to inclusive education and support for students who are affected by educational barriers, and seek to empower and equip these students with the capabilities and information required to provide the best educational outcomes. We acknowledge the value of diversity and the transformative potential of higher education for both individual students and the wider community.

A message from

Manager, Widening Participation

Ruth Tregale



2013 was an exciting year for the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program. It saw the addition of a new school to the program, a new program coordinator and program assistant, extended mentor training, and more students and mentors in the program than ever before.

As the manager of the Widening Participation I am filled with pride to see how what started as a fledgling program in 2011, has become an established and essential part of Macquarie University's commitment to Widening Participation. Testament to the program's growing reputation is the overwhelming number of applications that we receive each semester from Macquarie students wishing to give up their time freely to participate in the program.

This year the program continued the great work of the past two years working with high school students from refugee backgrounds and promoting their successful transition into higher education. It is with great excitement and expectation that I look forward to the next year of the program.

Refugee Student Programs Advisor

Department of Education and Communities

Jane Wallace

The Department of Education and Communities highly values the partnership it has with Macquarie University through the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program.

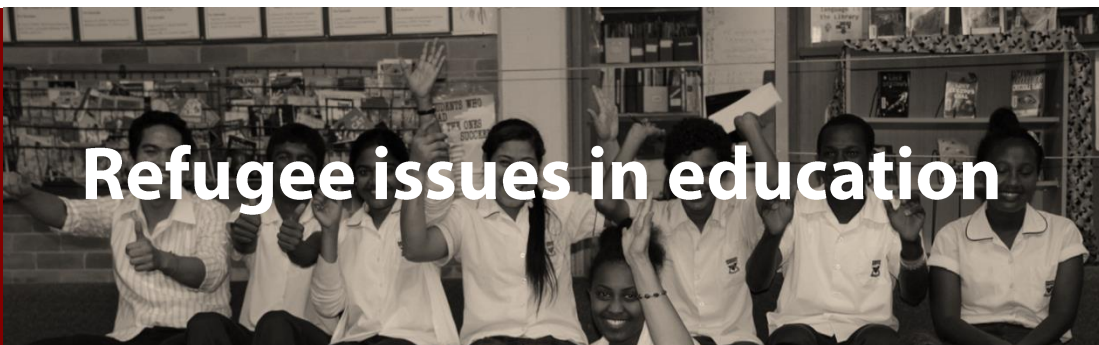
Young students from refugee backgrounds face significant challenges settling into high school in Australia: making new friends, learning English well enough to succeed in their secondary studies and finding out about post-school options. Schools support refugee students in a variety of ways however the mentoring program complements these beautifully by providing extra individual attention and support for refugee students. University students visit schools each week to provide the mentoring. In the weekly sessions, they give practical suggestions about study, organising time, useful resources and skills for research. They take an interest in their mentees, help them work out their goals and discuss possible education and career pathways.

The high school students gain confidence through their relationships with the mentors. The program helps restore young refugees' hope and assists them in developing the social capital they need for their future lives in Australia.



Background

Refugee issues in education



Many school students from refugee backgrounds have experienced significant disruption to their education and may have had little or no schooling prior to enrolment in an Australian school. As a result, they face great challenges in education and training. Many struggle emotionally and practically to acquire the language, literacy, cultural knowledge and everyday skills required for academic success at high school and to progress to tertiary education.

Access to, and participation in, higher education bestows a huge advantage on a student entering the competitive Australian job market, both in terms of earning potential and through the building of social capital. This is especially important for people from refugee backgrounds, to be comfortable and integrate into Australian society. However, many students from refugee backgrounds and their families have little access to and knowledge of the range of higher education options available, and possess limited social capital, knowledge and confidence to navigate the maze of vocational and educational pathways in Australia. The result is that disproportionately low numbers of students from refugee backgrounds are currently studying at Australian universities.

As part of its plan to reform the Australian higher education system, the Federal Government has worked to increase the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds participating in higher education. An important means to achieving this has been projects undertaken by universities in partnership with other stakeholders, including schools and communities.

The LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program is one such partnership, recognising the need for ongoing support of high school students from refugee backgrounds to enable and facilitate their successful transition into higher education and future vocations.

Background

Developing the program



Throughout the planning and implementation of the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program it was essential that there remained a focus on the lived experience of refugees and the barriers high school-aged young people experience in school and their everyday life. In doing so, Macquarie University students and student groups from a variety of backgrounds were consulted regarding their experiences, ideas and views on the program.

In addition to this, various stakeholders including the participating high schools and the NSW Department of Education and Communities remain an integral part of the successful day-to-day running of the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program.



Mohammed Bangura was one of the students who played an integral role in the development of the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program. Mohammed came to Australia as a refugee from Sierra Leone in June 2004 aged 17. His schooling in Sierra Leone was ended by the civil war when Mohammed was in Year 9. In Australia, he attended the Marrickville Intensive English Centre and went on to successfully complete Years 10-12 at Ashfield Boys High School. It was his English teacher at Ashfield who encouraged him to consider university, an option that would not have been available to someone from his background in Sierra Leone. Mohammed has now completed a Bachelor in Economics and Finance at Macquarie University, a Masters in Finance and is now currently undertaking his Chartered Financial Analyst accreditation.

2013

The team



Robert Ephraums is the current coordinator of the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program, taking over from Aakifah Suleman at the end of 2012. Robert has been heavily involved in mentoring throughout his time at Macquarie University while undertaking a Bachelor of Arts/Psychology (Hons) degree, which he completed in 2011. Outside of the program, Robert is involved in running youth-leadership programs, both in Australia and in East Timor. Throughout his time as the coordinator of the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program, Robert has worked to increase the depth of the already comprehensive training provided to mentors on the program.

Hina Khan is a Project Assistant for the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program and is currently in her fifth year of studying a Bachelor of Social Science (Sociology) with a Bachelor of Laws at Macquarie University. Hina has been a passionate supporter of the Macquarie Mentoring program since it began and was a LEAP Macquarie Mentor for two years. This has given her invaluable skills and inside knowledge about the mentoring process that are continually useful to her role as a LEAP Project Assistant. Hina is also engaged in social justice related extra-curricular activities on campus, and hopes to pursue a career that is focused on empowerment and equality for all.





About the program

Aims, objectives, structure

The LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program matches high school students from refugee backgrounds with Macquarie University student mentors.

The program aims to broaden the aspirations of the students and support their investigation of and successful transition into higher education.

The program specifically aims to:

- Develop confidence, resilience and agency
- Develop study and research skills
- Broaden aspirations towards further study
- Develop awareness of school and university cultures in the Australian context
- Empower students to make informed decisions about educational pathways



The program comprises of a flexible 3-part structure that allows mentors to tailor the program to the individual needs of their mentees.

Weeks 1-3

Objective

Developing rapport & personal goal setting

Types of activities

1. Overview of program; mentors' stories
2. Introduction to mapping; student narratives
3. Goal setting

Expected outcomes

Personalised learning plan for each student

- Ability to identify areas for development and set goals
- An understanding of the importance of goal setting

Weeks 4-6

Objective

Skill building

Planning and organising work
Study and research skills

Types of activities

1. Study skills
2. Time management, task setting skills
3. Peer support networks
4. Information literacy: search engines

Expected outcomes

Increased tertiary efficacy

- Improved information literacy, technological and research skills
- Research skills

Weeks 7-9

Objective

Informed decision making

Researching pathways to tertiary education

Types of activities

1. Career research strategies
2. Exploration of pathways / Universities Admission Centre website
3. Macquarie University Visit
4. Reflection

Expected outcomes

Development of pathway knowledge

- Knowledge of relevant information sources
- Understanding educational pathways

About the program

On-campus events

University Experience Day

The University Experience Day provides the high school students of the program with the chance to gain valuable first-hand experience of university life. The day gives students the opportunity to experience university for themselves, and acts to demystify the concept of university, as many students have never visited a university before. The day also provides students with the chance to address any concerns or uncertainties that may arise about university with their mentors.

The University Experience Day aims to increase awareness, knowledge, and promote greater participation in future learning through a practical experience and engaging activities on campus. It gives students a chance to experience the environment and facilities available at a university, and provides an insight into what life on campus is like.

The Macquarie Mentors attend the day with the students of the program, and several speak to the group in the opening session of the day, sharing their own personal refugee experiences and their journey through school and into higher education. It is a powerful experience and one that sticks with students and mentors alike.

In 2013 we had the pleasure of having Professor S. Bruce Dowton, Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University attending the opening of the University Experience Day.



90% of students had increased desires to attend university in the future after attending the Campus Day

87.5% of students reported being more positive about university after the Campus Day

"Every experience in Macquarie University was fun, interesting and unforgettable"



About the program

On-campus events

University Experience Day

Professor Dowton addressed the students personally, and shared his own story and inspiring insights about higher education.

One of the integral parts of the University Experience Day is the tours of the campus, undertaken by the Macquarie Mentors. This allows the students a chance to explore the facilities and university grounds, as well as gain stronger insights about university life.

The campus tours expose the students to the many facilities and services that make Macquarie University, including the Ancient History Museum, Biological Sciences Museum, Library, Gym and Aquatic Centre, Campus Hub and Student Support Services. The tour helps students to build up a comprehensive picture of all that a university can offer them.

To finish off the day, students are treated to the Science Show, run by Professor Joanne Jamie from Macquarie University's Faculty of Science. The Science Show allows students to engage with staff members and Macquarie University students and get some hands on science experience.

This day is always a great success and helps students to redefine in their minds just what it means to study at university.



About the program

On-campus events

Refugee Week and World Refugee Day 2013

Each year the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program endeavors to raise awareness of refugee issues through an event for Refugee Week. The aims of these events are to promote education and awareness of the issues in the refugee situation, and to provide the community with a chance to show its support.

This year, Macquarie's Widening Participation team partnered with the Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre to launch the very first "Macquarie's Messages of Hope", where students and staff of the Macquarie community, as well as members of the community were invited to write messages of support and hope to members of the community who have recently arrived as refugees. The event aimed to not only raise awareness of refugee issues, but to allow the Macquarie community to engage in the issues surrounding refugees in Australia, providing an opportunity to actively support asylum seekers and refugees living in the local Ryde area. The day was a great success with a fantastic turn out of staff, students and local community members, including Counselor Jerome Laxalle of the Ryde City Council. All messages of hope were passed onto the Eastwood Migrant Support Centre who distributed them to asylum seekers and refugees living in the local Ryde community.



About the program

On-campus events

Mentor celebrations

At the end of the program each semester, the LEAP team holds a celebration for their Macquarie Mentors. These celebrations are a chance to thank the mentors for their efforts, enthusiasm and commitment towards the program and their student mentees. As the mentoring journey is a growing experience for both mentors and mentees, the celebration is a chance for the mentors to get together to share the lessons they have learnt during their participation in the program. The mentor celebration is such an important event as it acknowledges the immense voluntary contributions that the mentors have made to Widening Participation at Macquarie University.



"My mentees astounded me with their unique, inspiring stories."

"Witnessing their perseverance through their own personal struggle to fight for their education is really humbling and has opened my eyes to the value of education."

"They gave me motivation and passion. They were inspirational kids that reminded me that with passion and belief in yourself, the world is your oyster."

The Schools

In 2013, the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program worked in partnership with the following high schools



Arthur Phillip High School

This year, we were lucky enough to begin a partnership with Arthur Phillip High School. It was a pleasure to begin working with the fun and engaging students at Arthur Phillip and exciting to see how eagerly they engaged in the program. We would like to thank and give a warm welcome to Rachel Hennessy, the coordinating teacher for the program at Arthur Phillip, who provided great support and guidance to our mentors at Arthur Phillip. A total of 37 students participated in our first year at Arthur Phillip.



Bankstown Senior College

Bankstown Senior College is the only senior college participating in our program. Being a secondary college, many students are above the age of 18, and are very driven to achieve their goals. We would like to thank Maria Georgiou, the coordinating teacher at Bankstown Senior College, for all her hard work and support. This year, 48 students from Bankstown Senior College participated in the program, with a total of 127 students from the College participating in the program to date.



Blacktown Boys High School

The Macquarie Mentoring program has formed a strong bond with Blacktown Boys high School. The students at Blacktown Boys High participate in the program for an entire year and the benefits of this are reflected in the strong engagement consistently seen from the students. We would like to thank Pushpa Lal, the coordinating teacher, who has been an ongoing support to our program since its beginning. 30 students from Blacktown Boys participated this year, which makes a total of 76 overall since the start of our program.



Blacktown Girls High School

The spirit that comes from the students of Blacktown Girls High School is a constant inspiration to the LEAP Macquarie Mentors. Karin Harrison, the coordinating teacher at Blacktown Girls, offers support to the fun and friendly Blacktown Girls' students, as well as the Macquarie Mentors, which in combination makes for fantastic and progressive sessions. 15 Blacktown Girls students participated in the program this year, totaling 49 girls since the beginning of our program.



Evans High School

Evans High School is a unique school that offers great support to students of non-English speaking backgrounds. The coordinating teacher, Sonja Rajic has been a continuously supportive contact within the school, and we thank her for all her hard work. We would like to send a warm welcome to Vesna Veljkovic, who contributed as a school coordinator in Semester 2, 2013. This year, 30 Evans students participated in our program, totaling 110 student mentees from Evans, since the beginning of our program.



Miller Technology High School

Miller Technology High School has been in the program since its beginning in 2011, with the coordinating teacher Suzanna Romic, providing consistent support and enthusiasm in her efforts to support her students, and the LEAP Macquarie Mentors as well. This year, 26 mentees from Miller participated in our program, with a total of 105 mentees from Miller Technology that have benefited from the mentoring program to date.

2013

Key facts and figures



The LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program has been running since semester 1 of 2011. This year has seen the end of the third year of the program, with the addition of a new partner high school. This year, our program involved 193 high school students, and 98 Macquarie Mentors spread within the 6 high schools across West and South Western Sydney.

	Semester 1		Semester 2	
School	Mentors	Mentees	Mentors	Mentees
Arthur Phillip High School	10	20	10	17
Bankstown Senior College	12	26	8	26
Blacktown Boys High School	9	14	8	17
Blacktown Girls High School	10	15	-	-
Evans High School	7	15	8	15
Miller Technology High School	8	16	8	12

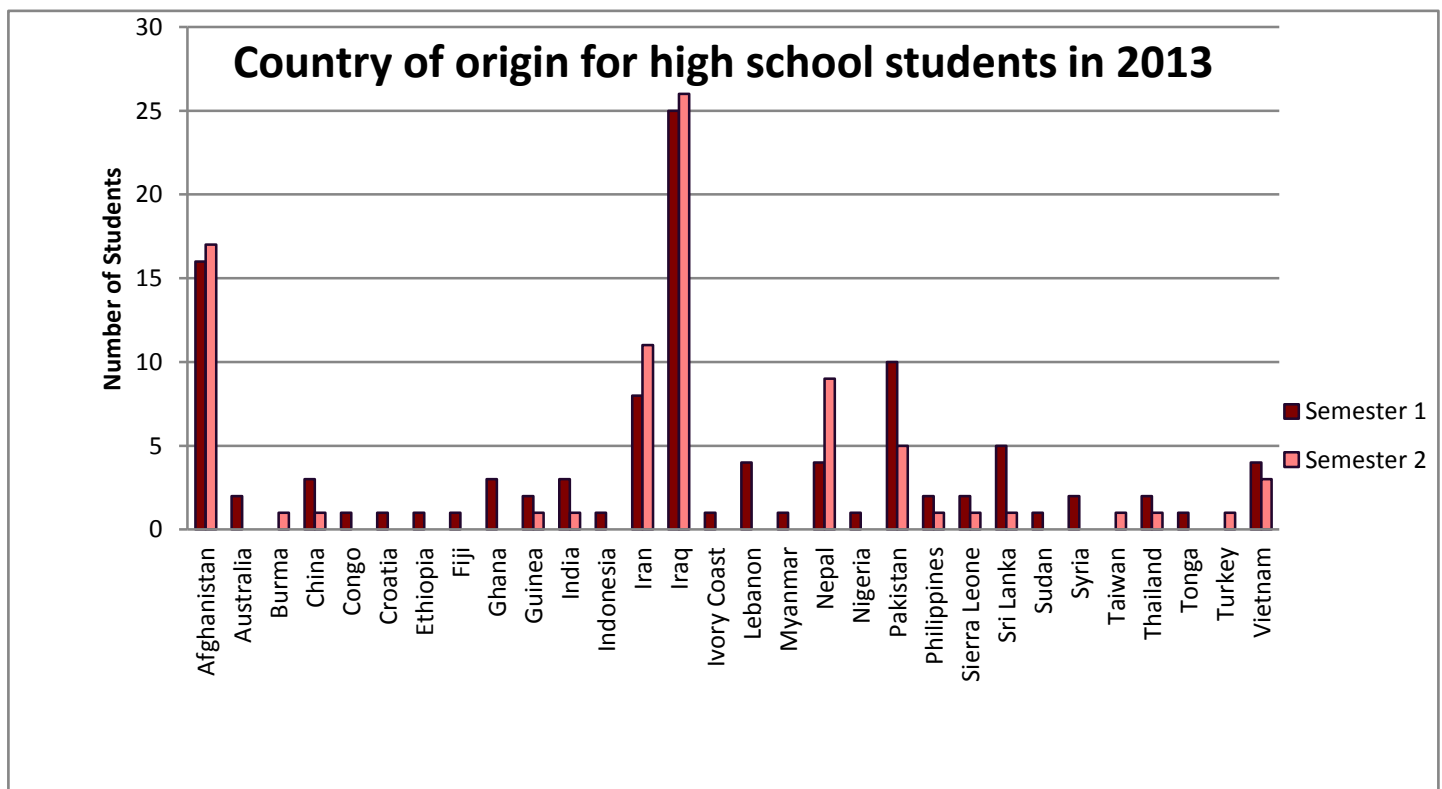


2013

The participants

The Mentees

The mentees that participate in the program come from a diverse range of backgrounds, each with their own unique stories and histories. Mentees from our partner high schools are given the choice to nominate themselves to participate in the program, or may be recommended by their teachers to be involved. Below is a graph that illustrates the diverse countries of birth of the mentees that participated in the program in 2013:



"The Mentoring Program was just a pleasant experience, to meet a whole group of great new people and learn from them"
(student from Arthur Philip)

"It gave me insights of career choices and a view of University life"
(student from Bankstown Senior)

"I have learnt so much to prepare me for my future"
(student from Blacktown Boys)

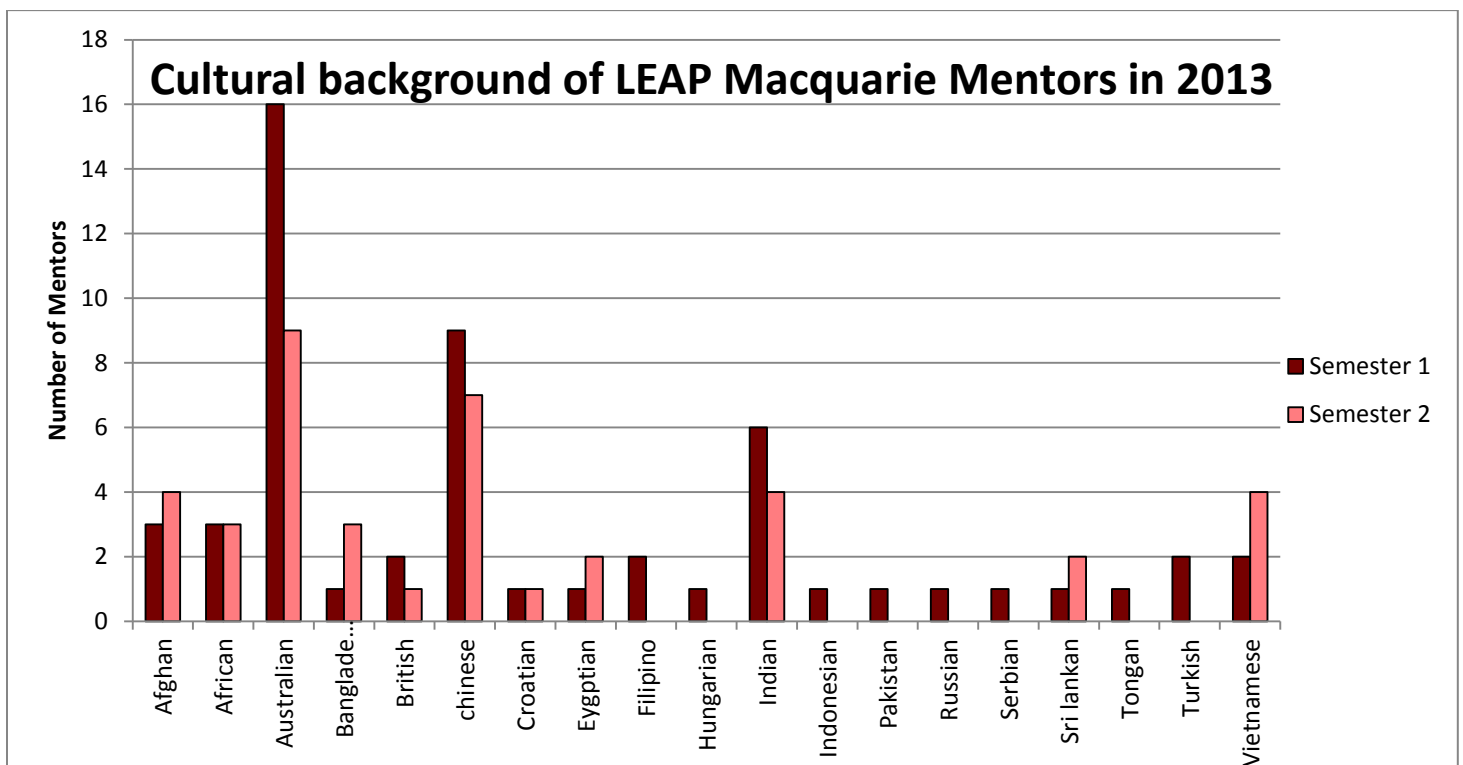
"I have learnt that you need to start planning for your future now. I have decided to study Engineering at University"
(student from Blacktown Boys)

2013

The participants

The Mentors

The volunteer mentors that participated in the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring Program this year came from various backgrounds and different faculty areas throughout Macquarie University. Although our mentors are diverse in degree choices, they all share a common interest and passion for supporting people from refugee backgrounds. All our mentors hold a genuine enthusiasm to participate in our mentoring program and give up their time freely to do so. The mentors are matched with mentees with reference to common interests, degrees and areas of study, as well as cultural background. The program offers the mentors the opportunity to share their distinct experiences of school, university and life in general, with their mentees. These sharing of experiences allow an establishment of rapport with the mentees, as well as the chance to dispel any concerns or misconceptions about the future. We see our Mentoring Program as an opportunity to celebrate the value and power of multiculturalism.



2013

Mentors have their say



Did your mentee influence you?

"Yes, they gave me motivation and passion and I loved seeing them every week. They were inspirational kids that I believe have grown so much and show that if you have passion and believe in yourself, the world can be your oyster." – LEAP Macquarie Mentor

Vivienne Lam

I am currently completing my final year of my double degree of Laws and Arts-Psychology. At the end of 2013, I finished my second year as a volunteer mentor with the LEAP Mentoring Program. I have always held a strong passion for human rights, especially those of children. Having volunteered in various organizations assisting disadvantaged children, the LEAP Mentoring Program caught my interest as it focused on supporting students from a refugee background.

I found the program to be a unique way to be proactive in assisting high school students to discover their full potential, and discover the pathways to achieve their goals. I have gained a wider perspective of the world through the interactions I've had with my mentees. Their resilience and enthusiasm for their future inspires me each session. The Mentoring Program gave me the opportunity to understand my influence in the world, and the responsibility I hold to create a safe and caring environment for the community around me.

I am continuously grateful for the opportunity to participate in the program, meeting like-minded individuals and inspirational mentees.

2013

Mentors have their say



Ali Mohsen

I have been part of the LEAP program for two years at both Blacktown Boys High School and Evans High School and it has been a fantastic experience. Coming from an Afghan background, what interested me the most about LEAP was the experience of mentoring and helping high school students from various cultural backgrounds realise the importance of their education and assist them in fulfilling their potential.

LEAP understands the difficulties that some of the students face coming from refugee backgrounds, socio economic and cultural disadvantages may have a lasting effect on their academic and personal lives. The student's confidence in their ability rose notably through the weekly sessions and the thought of further education in particular at tertiary level did become more prominent towards the end of their involvement in the program.

The major benefit of the program is exposing students to the basic university environment and current university students who do come from similar backgrounds to show them that there is a place for them and it is attainable and not beyond their ability as well as highlighting that there are multiple pathways into further education beyond high school.

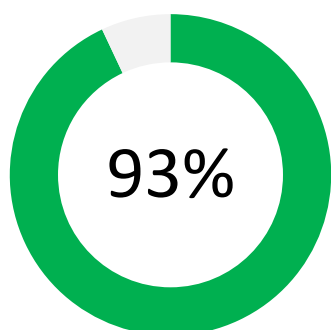
Our journey so far...

Outcomes

Following the overwhelmingly positive feedback from 2011/2012, the LEAP team has focused on expanding the depth and breadth of the program in 2013. The feedback received from teachers and students in participating schools, as well as the LEAP Macquarie mentors, has demonstrated that the program is continuing to have the impact and effects that were found in 2011 and 2012.

We utilized a range of evaluation techniques to measure the effects and to judge the success of the program. Below are the results of some of our evaluations focusing on the changes in students through the program.

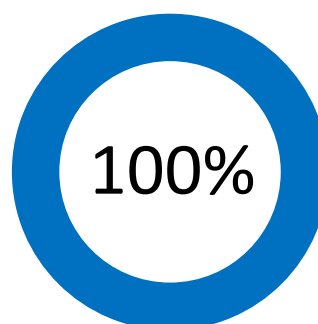
INTEREST IN FURTHER EDUCATION



Were **more interested in further education** upon completion of the program.

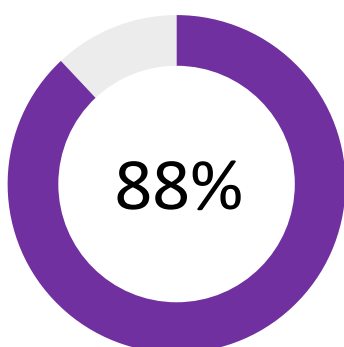
- The remaining 7% were just as interested in higher education upon completion of the program

PROGRAM SATISFACTION



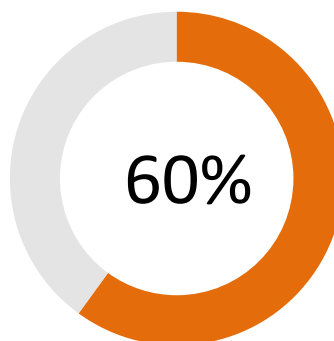
Of students were **pleased** that they participated in the Macquarie Mentoring program

MOTIVATION



Of students reported being **more motivated to attend University** in the future after attending LEAP Macquarie University Campus Experience Day

STUDY ROUTINES



Of students reported that they improved or were motivated to **improve their study routines.**

2013



Whitney, Blacktown Girls High School

"Before I participated in this program, I was thinking about dropping out of school, thinking about what's [the] use of going to school if I know that I won't have enough ATAR to get into uni. Now I know there are many other programs to help me get into uni. Thanks to this program."



Shamsia, Arthur Phillip High School

"The most important thing I will take away from this program is to never give up...always be confident in what I'm going to do."

**Shamsia is now currently studying at
Macquarie University**



Looking forward

The past three years have been an exciting time for the LEAP team. The LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program has continued to support the Widening Participation agenda at Macquarie University and continues to raise awareness among staff and students about the issues refugees and asylum seekers face in their everyday lives. As issues around refugees and asylum seekers in Australia continue to be issues of national debate, we hope that the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring program continues to be an empowering and affirming experience for the students of Macquarie University, and for the high school students with whom they work.

Looking forward and planning for the future, the LEAP team plans to continue to expand and develop the program to meet the needs of high school students from refugee backgrounds.



“Education is a life long journey whose destination expands as you grow.” - Jim Stovall



LEAP Macquarie Mentoring



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