



Supporting high school students from refugee backgrounds

BIENNIAL REPORT 2015–2016





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“One of the most outstanding moments would be when my mentee relayed back to me that I really helped him with understanding his choices in university and that he was more set on what he wanted to do in the future.”

MENTOR, EVANS HIGH SCHOOL

PHOTOS: All photos by Effy Alexakis unless otherwise noted

COVER: Photo by Effy Alexakis

The Widening Participation Unit acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Macquarie University land, the Wattamattageal clan of the Darug nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since Dreamtime. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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An online version is available for download from mq.edu.au/leap-mentoring

Message from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

BUILDING FUTURES

The LEAP mentoring program is one of our university's signature activities and goes to the heart of our mission of service and engagement. In supporting young people from refugee backgrounds to aspire to higher education, we are not only fulfilling a humanitarian and ethical duty, we are also contributing to the wealth and well being of Australia more generally. Research in a number of countries shows that refugees who are carefully settled and well treated in their host country will go on to make a net contribution to that country's economy and can join the ranks of the highest profile and most valued citizens, often becoming significant philanthropists in their own right.

Last year we engaged nearly 500 students from refugee backgrounds in a range of activities which included working with parents. This would not have been possible without an extensive team of mentors who work on a voluntary basis to support the refugee students, and I extend my thanks to each and every one of them. I am proud to say our efforts were recognised when we were shortlisted for the Equity and Opportunity prize of the *Australian Financial Review* and won the NSW Humanitarian Award in Education. It is right that the program should be thus acknowledged and I commend this report as a record of a truly valuable activity managed by a wonderful team.

PROFESSOR JOHN SIMONS
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR
(ACADEMIC)



JANE WALLACE**REFUGEE COORDINATOR, NSW
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Schools assist young students from a refugee background to re-establish their lives and become part of the Australian community. The LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program, a partnership between the NSW Department of Education and Macquarie University, helps make this possible.

Many students from a refugee background need personalised support to settle successfully into high school, make friends and connections with the broader Australian community, learn academic English and explore post-school options.

In the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring program, university student mentors visit their mentees at school each week. In their weekly sessions, mentors give their mentees practical suggestions about study, organising time, useful resources and skills for research. They discuss personal goals and education and career pathways. Mentors also host a University visit and take their mentees on a guided tour of the campus.

The relationships that develop through the mentoring sessions and the university visit assist mentees to develop English language skills in a social context and gain confidence and knowledge about the Australian context.

I believe this program helps students from refugee backgrounds to engage with their high school studies, make connections with the broader Australian community and restore their hope for a happy and successful future life in Australia.

RUTH TREGALE**DIRECTOR,
WIDENING PARTICIPATION UNIT**

As we draw towards the conclusion of the 12th semester of the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring, I find myself reflecting on the beginnings of the initiative more than six years ago. Tentatively launching a pilot program at five high schools at the end of 2010, I don't think any of us involved during the early stages anticipated that the program would be so successful right from the start, and that the initial format of the mentoring and campus visits would receive such positive feedback.

Constant evaluation with mentors, mentees, teachers, parents and other colleagues has led to only very minor adjustments in training and program delivery over the years – which really pays tribute to the months of preparatory work carried out in partnership with the NSW Department of Education to design the program.

We now have a very strong basis from which to develop next stages for the program. We are delighted to have been awarded two Australian Government research grants to examine the experiences of students from refugee backgrounds in their transition from school to further education. I look forward to Phase II of this fabulous project that will further support students from refugee backgrounds to succeed in their education.



JANE WALLACE



RUTH TREGALE

Education and the refugee experience

According to the *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis* report (UNHCR 2016), in 2016, only one per cent of young people from refugee backgrounds accessed higher education globally. Anecdotal evidence and studies have indicated that access to quality education is essential for ensuring the successful settlement of young people from refugee backgrounds in their host countries because higher education provides the refugee communities with a unique opportunity to increase their social capital, foster social mobility, ensure long-term career achievements and provide durable solutions for their communities. Despite the known benefits of higher education and the significant academic potential, people from refugee backgrounds often face disadvantages in accessing, participating and succeeding in higher education.

Refugee communities are determined to embrace the range of opportunities available to them in their host countries and have high aspirations for their youth. But they often face barriers to tapping their collective and personal motivation and achieving young people's potential. These barriers take the form of little access to and knowledge of the range of higher education options available; and limited social capital, knowledge and confidence to navigate the maze of vocational and educational pathways in Australia. 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. The effects of trauma, displacement and loss often translate in challenges to engage with education. The result follows the global trends and means 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 Australian 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 (Refugee 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. The program works towards improving students' cultural fluency by increasing their engagement with Australian higher education networks, allowing them to build a positive relationship with educational mentors and enabling them to make informed decisions about their future.



About Widening Participation

EDUCATION IS FOR EVERYONE

The term ‘widening participation’ is used around the world to describe initiatives that support students from groups that have long been under-represented in higher education to successfully participate in university life. Widening participation is a core element of Macquarie’s strategic direction and demonstrates our commitment to inclusiveness and to offering experiences that change the lives of our students.

Our Widening Participation Unit delivers a broad range of LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation) programs that engage with students, parents and teachers to broaden aspirations, create possibilities and actively support people from a wide range of ages and backgrounds to succeed in their education.

We do this through providing mentoring and other interactive programs in schools, hosting visits of school students at our beautiful North Ryde university campus, delivering curriculum enrichment activities to regional and remote students via video conferencing, facilitating collaboration between Macquarie University academics and schoolteachers to deliver subject-specific professional learning, and engaging in research to inform national and international discussions on widening participation.

LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring

REFUGEE MENTORING

The program is targeted at students from refugee backgrounds in school years 9–12, who are matched with Macquarie University student mentors. The program acknowledges the positive effects of mentoring in supporting young people to overcome barriers and make confident decisions about their future. It promotes purposeful relationships in which mentors work collaboratively with their mentees, to assist them in developing a positive sense of self and aspirations, educational pathways and career options post-school.

The program specifically aims to develop students’:

- confidence and agency
- social and cultural capital to navigate the tertiary education system
- study and research skills
- awareness of school and university cultures and expectations in the Australian context
- understanding of available educational pathways and decision making regarding appropriate pathways.

MENTORING SESSIONS

The program runs at each of the partner schools over 11 weeks twice a year and comprises in-school mentoring sessions and University Experience Day, which takes place at Macquarie University. The program is mentee focused. The in-school mentoring sessions provide a flexible three-part structure that enables mentors to tailor the program to the individual needs of their mentees.

UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE DAY

The University Experience Day is the highlight of the program. It gives the high school students the chance to gain valuable first hand experience of university, life and acts to demystify the concepts of university, as many of the mentees have never visited a university before starting the program.

The day brings together the mentors, the high school students, their parents and carers, teachers and principals from all our partner schools. The day is filled with engaging activities – participants are inspired by the personal stories of current university students from refugee backgrounds, go on a campus tour and engage with staff from a range of departments during the Faculty Show. The University Experience Day complements the in-school mentoring sessions and for many of the mentees the day is a transformative experience.

WEEK 1	DEVELOPING RAPPORT
WEEK 2	• Establishing ground rules
WEEK 3	• Mentors/mentee stories
	• Personal goal setting
WEEK 4	SKILL BUILDING
WEEK 5	• Study skills
WEEK 6	• Time management
	• Research skills
WEEK 7	INFORMED
WEEK 8	DECISION MAKING
	• Career research strategies
	• Explore pathways to university
UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE DAY	• University Experience Day
WEEK 10	• Review goals and reflection
WEEK 11	• Wrap-up and evaluation



“The most outstanding moment was the campus experience day as it allowed the students to see for themselves the opportunities and life on campus that we discussed in the sessions. They became more fascinated with the various faculties after all the experiments and activities. This also allowed them to talk with faculty members of what to expect in the course. The session after the campus experience day, a huge change was evident. The boys were more excited about university and became more confident about what they wanted to pursue in the future. It was an incredible moment at the end of the campus experience day and the mentoring sessions following as their interest in higher education became much stronger.”

**LEAP MACQUARIE MENTOR
BLACKTOWN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**



2015–2016 at a glance



Our Widening Participation Unit was awarded with an Australian Government National Priorities Pool grant to further research school-to-university transition support for students from refugee backgrounds.



We worked with eight partner schools across Greater Western Sydney: Arthur Phillip High School, Auburn Girls High School, Bankstown Senior College, Blacktown Boys High School, Blacktown Girls High School, Evans High School, Miller Technology High School and Prairiewood High School.



To celebrate Refugee Week 2015, the program was showcased at an event hosted by the Community Migrant Resource Centre and City of Ryde. In celebration of Refugee Week 2016, we hosted a reception and film screening of *Freedom Stories* (Steve Thomas 2015).



We engaged with a total of 35 parents from our partner schools at Auburn Girls High School and Prairiewood High School.



The program was recognised by STARTTS and the Refugee Council of Australia with the NSW Humanitarian Award 2016 in Education.



The program grew to engage with 460 high school students who connected with 231 Macquarie student mentors.



Macquarie University was one of the founding partners in setting up the national Refugee Education Special Interest Group. The Widening Participation Unit is the host of the national secretariat.



Partner schools

In 2015–2016, the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program worked in partnership with the following high schools.

ARTHUR PHILLIP HIGH SCHOOL



70 STUDENTS

WHO CONNECTED WITH 36 LEAP MENTORS

“This program has definitely engaged my students to consider their future educational options. Many of the students seem to start trying harder in their subjects once the program gets started. I think it actually allows them to better visualise the way tertiary education might turn out for them.”

COORDINATING TEACHER

AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL



53 STUDENTS

WHO CONNECTED WITH 30 LEAP MENTORS

“The one-to-one and group sessions give students an opportunity to reflect and ask questions. This opportunity is rare and I would say the program has increased the students’ awareness of university and its pathways.”

COORDINATING TEACHER

BANKSTOWN SENIOR COLLEGE



90 STUDENTS

WHO CONNECTED WITH 38 LEAP MENTORS

“Education is not just about intensive studying. It is also having fun, enjoying your time and contributing to your society.”

MENTEE

“LEAP made me feel educated, excited and appreciated and taught me about the importance of school.”

MENTEE, AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

BLACKTOWN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**52 STUDENTS**

WHO CONNECTED WITH 31 LEAP MENTORS

"After attending the program the boys have shown positive attitudes towards senior school studies and have shown positive self-esteem."

COORDINATING TEACHER**BLACKTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL****30 STUDENTS**

WHO CONNECTED WITH 14 LEAP MENTORS

"The program has helped students with identifying interests, goal setting and future planning. This has given them direction and focus, which has helped student educational engagement."

COORDINATING TEACHER**EVANS HIGH SCHOOL****64 STUDENTS**

WHO CONNECTED WITH 32 LEAP MENTORS

"With the mentors' thorough planning and caring approach, students were actively engaged in the program."

COORDINATING TEACHER**MILLER TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL****63 STUDENTS**

WHO CONNECTED WITH 29 LEAP MENTORS

"The way I feel about higher education has changed from negative to positive – I'm now more confident."

MENTEE**PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL****38 STUDENTS**

WHO CONNECTED WITH 21 LEAP MENTORS

"LEAP makes me want to study more for a better future."

MENTEE

Words from our partner teachers

RACHEL HENNESSY
COORDINATING TEACHER,
ARTHUR PHILLIP HIGH SCHOOL

Arthur Phillip High School has been involved in the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program since 2013. My involvement with the program has extended into contributing to the training of mentors about issues facing refugee students in schools, as well as being the coordinator for the program at Arthur Phillip.

At first, students are usually a little shy and are not sure what to expect. But the presence of a trusted teacher in the classroom eases this initial caution. By the end of the first session the majority of students are relaxed and from there, anticipate the next sessions eagerly. Students gain important skills from their participation. Some acquire a deeper understanding about the requirements of university and importantly they are advised about the different pathways they can take to reach their goals. By speaking to their mentor each week other students are able to articulate a career or educational goal that had been unclear to them and having young students from uni explain these options to them is a great alternative to us teachers advising them. This program has definitely engaged our students to consider their future educational options. Many of the students seem to start trying harder in their subjects once the program gets started. I think it actually allows them to better visualise the way tertiary education might turn out for them.

MARY SILVER
COORDINATING TEACHER,
AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

The LEAP program built confidence in students and they were able to set goals. Students seem to have a greater sense of direction than previously. Overall, students became engaged and serious about improving their study and research skills. They were happy to catch up on work they missed out on while on the program and often asked if they could do the program again the following year. The individual attention each student was given by the mentor has given them knowledge that is realistic and motivated them to be open to different pathways. To quote some of our students: “I learned that if you put your mind into what you want for your future you will get there somehow” – Mariama; and “You know the expectations of the real world” – Sara. Some students have changed their mind about what they may do in the future while some have realised they have greater options available to them, rather than focusing on one career path. Furthermore, our parents who came to the campus visits built greater communication between their daughters and teachers.

SHAUN ADDY
PRINCIPAL,
BLACKTOWN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

I believe LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring is an excellent addition to the package that our school delivers to refugee students. Every boy who has completed the program has grown in confidence and developed a much broader understanding of Australian culture, together with the benefits of tertiary study and the pathways by which it can be attained. An informal survey conducted at the school indicated that the program re-inspired a desire to learn in these students who had disrupted education and had very low self-esteem. Every student stated that they were glad that they had the opportunity to be involved, feeling that they could now make more informed decisions about their subject selection for senior school. Students have also demonstrated a much more positive approach towards learning. The mentors have drafted study timetables and learning goals for the mentees which the students are happy to follow. Most of all I have observed that my students are engaged in the sessions and genuinely feel valued. Macquarie Mentoring is a stepping stone for students at Blacktown Boys High. It helps them focus on the future and inspires them to achieve their dreams and goals. We are proud to say that this year we had five students who received the Macquarie University Global Leadership Entry Program.

“Macquarie Mentoring is a stepping stone for students at Blacktown Boys High. It helps them focus on the future and inspires them to achieve their dreams and goals.”

PRINCIPAL, BLACKTOWN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

**SOULA GINIS AND MARIA GEORGIU
COORDINATING TEACHERS,
BANKSTOWN SENIOR COLLEGE**

The Macquarie Mentoring program has been extremely successful at our school.

I was really impressed with the earnest, serious and genuine way in which the mentors helped our students. They would be asked questions by our students, and the mentors would spend a lot of their own free time during the week advising, researching and saving our students much time.

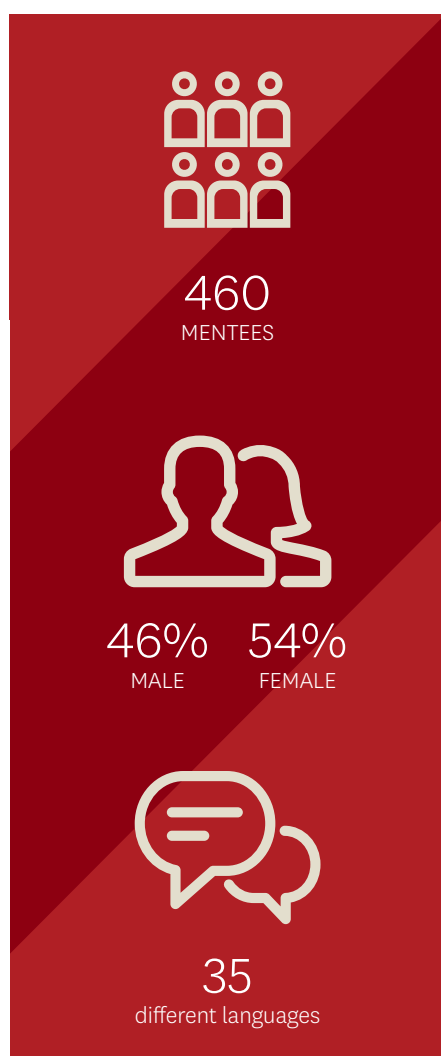
One of the main highlights for our students was the university visit. Our students coming from refugee backgrounds knew nothing about university in Australia, and so showing them around such a wonderful campus really impressed them. They saw the different students there, all from different backgrounds including their own, which also inspired them further, reducing their anxiety. Seeing lectures in progress was also helpful in reducing this anxiety as our students saw it was not a threatening experience.

The close bond between the mentors and mentees was evident at every session and especially at the end, when there were tears shed. Our students really felt respected and supported by the genuine friendliness of their mentors, and really trusted them and their advice. They inspired confidence in our students.



Program outcomes for our mentees

REALISING POTENTIAL



“The combination of mentoring sessions and the physical opportunity of being on campus has definitely increased awareness and enabled students to think beyond their normal boundaries.”

COORDINATING TEACHER, BLACKTOWN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

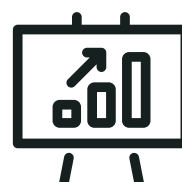


94%

of mentees reported they would like to continue their studies to Year 12.

“The program has changed the way I think. To the importance of year 11 and 12 to my future studies.”

**MENTEE,
AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL**



53%

increase in mentees who reported a greater knowledge of university in the post-program questionnaire.

“Thinking about higher education – giving me more information about universities in general. Learn more about my future.”

**MENTEE,
MILLER TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL**



85%

of mentees reported an increase in confidence in their ability to engage with their studies.

“Before I used to be scared to go to uni or even think about it but now I am more confident and feeling sure to go uni.”

**MENTEE,
PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**



78%

of mentees reported greater awareness of the benefits that university offers. This was a significant increase from the 33% of mentees reported in the pre-program questionnaire.

“It has shown me the advantages of going to uni and given me pathways to achieve higher education.”

**MENTEE,
BLACKTOWN BOYS HIGH SCHOOL**

Top 5 countries of birth	Top 5 languages
1. Iraq	1. Arabic
2. Afghanistan	2. Dari
3. Iran	3. Farsi
4. Pakistan	4. Aramaic
5. Sudan	5. Tamil

“At the beginning, I believed it was so difficult to get into university ... but after I met my mentor, I found that university is fun and we can learn many things at university.”

**MENTEE, ARTHUR PHILLIP
HIGH SCHOOL**

“LEAP gave me a better understanding of university and it made me want to study harder to achieve my goal.”

MENTEE, EVANS HIGH SCHOOL

I THINK	... I learn more about university. How important university is. Talking with my mentor totally changed my opinion.	... it made me more confident and I know what I will be doing after this or next year.	... I know how to find what I'm looking for. I think more positive .
I FEEL	... the program made me feel happy because they gave me more chance to enter university.	... as if I have more options – many opportunities waiting. I feel excited and filled with happiness. I have now developed more confidence.	... I'm more excited to do my homework and go to the university quickly. I trust myself more that I can go to the university.
I LIKE	... the way the mentors help with their big smiley faces and transferring that happiness to us.	... we were able to go to the university and see what different pathways they offered.	... learning so many new things I didn't know about university.
I DO	... start to write my goals and post it in my bedroom to get motivation and I plan my study schedules.	... reading more information about the different careers and deciding my future.	... planning time, working hard, practice my English.



Our LEAP Macquarie Mentors

A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

The volunteer mentors that participated in the program in 2015–2016 who came from diverse backgrounds and faculty areas across the university. Although our mentors are diverse in degree choices, they all share a common interest and passion for supporting young people from refugee backgrounds.

Our mentors hold a genuine enthusiasm to participate in the program and give their time freely to do so. The mentors are matched with mentees based on common interests, degrees and areas of study, as well as cultural background. The program offers the mentors the opportunity to share their experiences of school, university and life in general with their mentees.

Research program outcome has shown mentoring is a rewarding experience for both our mentees and mentors.

Mentors reported on the satisfaction of sharing their experiences with mentees, but also gain a range of other benefits that reward them in their university life. They

- developed valuable personal insights and new life lessons
- increased confidence, appreciation and motivation in their own studies
- gained valuable and transferrable skills for future employability.

Top 10 cultural backgrounds

1. Australian	6. Pakistani
2. Indian	7. Turkish
3. Filipino	8. Lebanese
4. Chinese	9. Afghani
5. Sri Lankan	10. Vietnamese

“The knowledge we mentors gain from the mentees is not something we can find anywhere else – it is amazing to have this chance to learn from others’ experience.”

**LEAP MACQUARIE MENTOR,
AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL**



231
MENTORS



24%
PARTICIPATED FOR TWO
OR MORE SESSIONS



22% 78%
MALE FEMALE



39
DIFFERENT LANGUAGES



27
FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS



70%
FROM CULTURALLY AND
LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS



I FEEL	<p>... I have learned more about communicating with people from different cultures.</p>	<p>... like I was having a real positive impact on the lives of these students.</p>	<p>... I have gained a lot from this experience that will take me into my future career!</p>
I HAVE	<p>... improved my confidence in speaking and forming connections with people.</p>	<p>... met many new people and learned to understand where they are at and be open to understanding their perspectives.</p>	<p>... been so encouraged by the happiness and determination of these mentees.</p>
I AM PROUD	<p>... that I have come to appreciate different backgrounds in a new light.</p>	<p>... watching the kids coming out of their shells, and discussing what they learned from us.</p>	<p>... seeing my mentees feeling more confident in their studies.</p>

In the words of our mentors and mentees



"The program taught me so much information and led me to the right way."
**MENTEE, MILLER TECHNOLOGY
HIGH SCHOOL**

“The program does not take much, but what you get out of it is something you cannot get anywhere else. It is an amazing feeling to watch the mentees go from being unsure about their futures to having so much confidence and passion in something.”

MENTOR, AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL



ASAAD

FORMER MENTEE, BANKSTOWN SENIOR COLLEGE

“We are living in a new country. We have our goals, but we don’t know the paths to take in order to achieve these goals. These mentors guided us to discover the different pathways that would take us to where we want to go.

Becoming friends with a stranger and trusting them because you can see their genuine desire to support you in every way possible was what lifted my spirits. Hearing their personal stories of the difficulties they experienced on their own educational journey inspired me to try even harder to reach my goals, because they are achieving theirs.

Research into types of engineering, keywords to type in a search engine, the syllabuses found on the Department of Education website, how to use a UAC guide, information on HECS and time-management strategies were skills that I was able to develop over the course of the program.

As refugees, we feel great anxiety at the thought of university in Australia. This program, the campus visit to Macquarie University and the friendship with my mentor has been a fantastic way to reduce and eliminate some of those anxieties.

It made us realise how easily we could fit in.”

ISABEL

FORMER MENTOR, EVANS HIGH SCHOOL AND ARTHUR PHILLIP HIGH SCHOOL

“At the start of the program at Evans High, my 15 year old mentee told me outright that talking about university would be pointless. She would not be undertaking further study.

Her parents wanted her to begin work right away to help support her family and she might even have to skip Year 12 in order to begin work sooner. I told her about how I myself had come from a different educational background, having never attended an Australian high school, and how that didn’t discourage me.

As the program progressed, she eventually asked me to help her do research into various universities, TAFE and online courses. The program sparked a change in my mentee’s attitudes towards higher education, potential future employment but also most importantly had her read into the options for taking her future into her own hands.

At the end of the program, she narrowed down the bachelor course that she wanted to study, and was getting an after-school tutor to help her improve her grades.”

SAED

FORMER MENTOR, PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

“My family moved from Jordan to Australia when I was 14 years old, and even though I already learned the language at home, the process of acclimatising to a new culture was difficult. I had to make new friends, study a new curriculum and deal with a new society, all while developing as an adolescent. It was good to see people my age who have been through this experience, and to help facilitate a brighter future for them in Australia. I had a lot of fun getting to know my mentees, two different young men who were smart, positive and have bright futures ahead of them. I got the chance to tell them about my experience with university, and to hear about their experience with their background and education, which was very interesting, as I rarely get to hear the perspective of young people.”

STACEY AND ROSE

FORMER MENTOR AND MENTEE, PRAIRIEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Stacey: “My mentee Rose was a lot like me. From the get-go we got along so well, always laughing with each other. She has really inspired me with how intelligent she truly is. When she came to visit for University Experience Day, Rose got up in front of the group in the lecture theatre to speak about her ambitions of becoming an engineer one day. This was my proudest moment, because despite being nervous, she did really well and had the courage to get up in front of everyone to face her fears. She is strong, capable, determined and is such an inspiration to me. I am so lucky to have had a mentee like Rose and to be a part of her journey. It is something that I will never forget!”

Rose: “I liked that we got along. I felt comfortable asking her questions and I enjoyed the conversations about what university would be like. Stacey helped me to understand the pathways of getting into university that I didn’t know about and now I know a lot more of the courses that I’m interested in. She was very encouraging.”

Accomplishments, events and conferences

AWARDS AND GRANTS

AWARDS

LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) was runner-up in the inaugural *Australian Financial Review* Higher Education Awards in the category of Equity and Opportunity in 2015 and was shortlisted in 2016 for the same category. The program was also awarded the NSW Humanitarian Award (Education) in 2016.

OFFICE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

The Widening Participation Unit was successful in securing funding from the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in 2015. The project '(Re)claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for refugee students into Australian higher education' looked at the pathways taken by students from humanitarian backgrounds to enter higher education and how these students experienced their transitions into and through undergraduate study. The project was in partnership with University of Newcastle and Curtin University.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES POOL

The Widening Participation Unit was awarded a National Priorities Pool grant under the 2016 Australian Government HEPPP to build on the success of its LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program. Specifically, the LEAP – University Preparedness project (LEAP – UP) reviewed international best practice and initiatives at Australian universities with the aim of developing a pilot enabling program specific to the needs of students from refugee backgrounds.

In 2016, a national community of practice comprising researchers, equity practitioners and partner organisations active in supporting students from refugee backgrounds was launched.

ADVOCACY

Our Widening Participation Unit played an active role in establishing a national Refugee Education Special Interest Group hosted by the Refugee Council of Australia. For more information visit refugeecouncil.org.au/educationsig. We also worked closely with the NSW Coordinator General for Refugee Resettlement to design a State-wide mentoring program for refugee youth and participated in the Higher Education Roundtable on Refugee Resettlement.

EVENTS

REFUGEE WEEK

2015 – The program was showcased at an event hosted by the Community Migrant Resource Centre and City of Ryde. To celebrate diversity, those who attended were inspired by refugee stories, filmmaking collaborations, performances and presentations. This was an opportunity for us to highlight the program's objectives and achievements to the citizens and partnering services of the Ryde area.

2016 – The program hosted a reception and film-screening event on campus to raise awareness of the contributions made by refugee communities in Australia. The event was opened by Professor John Simons, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and special guest Jonathan Nanlohy from City of Ryde, who spoke of our collaborative commitment in welcoming and supporting refugee communities to the Ryde area. The highlight of the evening was Rifaie Tammam's personal story of fleeing the conflict in Syria and arriving in Australia with the help of CARA, an organisation which supports at-risk academics.

MENTOR CELEBRATIONS

Mentor Celebrations were held at the end of each semester to thank all of our volunteer mentors for their commitment, efforts and enthusiasm towards the program. The celebrations were also a great way for the mentors to come together again at the conclusion of the program to reflect on and share each other's experiences. It's a unique opportunity for student mentors and program staff to learn first-hand that the program also offers the mentors the prospect to grow and learn from their mentoring relationships.

CAREERS WORKSHOP

Our mentors are the principal asset of the program and investing in their development is important to us. We partnered with Macquarie University's Career and Employment Service to deliver professional development workshops in which the mentors were guided on how to effectively translate the skills and experiences developed through the program into future career opportunities.

“I bonded with my mentees and grew to know them as people; I feel this was the most special gift for the both of us as we both grew to know and understand people, circumstances and opportunities that neither of us would have had without the program. I hope they leave the experience as enriched as I have.”

**MENTOR, MILLER TECHNOLOGY
HIGH SCHOOL**

“Education is not just about intensive studying. It also having fun, enjoying your time and contributing to your society.”

MENTEE, BANKSTOWN SENIOR COLLEGE

CONFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program utilises evaluation data to contribute to the national discussion about how to better support students from refugee backgrounds in their education. Our Widening Participation Unit is actively engaged in a community of practice with leading Australian educational equity researchers and practitioners.

CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS

Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention & Success (UniSTARS) – STARS 2016, ‘Transition support for students from refugee backgrounds in higher education’, workshop facilitated by Ruth Tregale and Sonal Singh.

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) 2016 – The Shape of Higher Education, ‘Bridging the gap for students from refugee backgrounds: LEAP – University Preparedness (LEAP – UP), presentation by Ruth Tregale and Sonal Singh.

HERDSA 2016 – The Shape of Higher Education, ‘(Re) claiming social capital for students from refugee backgrounds: lessons from OLT research’, joint presentation by Curtin University (Jaya Dantas and Shelley Gower), University of Newcastle (Sally Baker and Evonne Irwin) and Macquarie University (Ruth Tregale and Sonal Singh).

Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) Conference 2015, ‘Improving pathways for students from refugee backgrounds’, special interest group facilitated by Ruth Tregale, Sonal Singh, Seamus Fagan, Sally Baker, Evonne Irwin, Helen Cameron and Jaya Earnest.

EPHEA Conference 2015, ‘Transformative learning for university students through outreach programs’ presentation by Ruth Tregale, Semra Tastan and Sonal Singh.

Refugee Education Conference 2015, Auckland, New Zealand, ‘(Re)claiming social capital: improving language and cultural pathways for refugee students into Australian Higher Education’, presentation by Ruth Tregale and Sonal Singh.

BOOK CHAPTER

Singh, S., Tregale, R., Wallace, J. & Whiteford, G., 2016 “Creating Alternate Futures through Higher Education: The Refugee Mentoring Program” in M Shah & G Whiteford (eds), Bridges, pathways and transitions: international innovations in widening participation, Chandos Publishing, Cambridge, MA.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

Singh, S & Tregale, R 2015, ‘From homeland to home: widening participation through the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program’, *International Studies in Widening Participation*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, pp. 15–27.



PHOTO: REFUGEE COUNCIL
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FIND OUT MORE

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