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COVER: Photos by Effy Alexakis and Chris Stacey

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 the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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Macquarie University’s LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation) program is delivered by the Widening Participation Unit, and funded by the Commonwealth Government’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program.

Online version is available for download from mq.edu.au/leap
The issue of access to a higher educational experience which is both affordable and worthwhile is not only a challenge for poorer countries. Wealthy countries also need to confront it and as governments withdraw from the funding of public higher education a greater burden falls upon those who wish to study. Assumptions that there is a necessary correlation between funding regimes and participation can be simplistic but it continues to be the case that in Australian higher education students from low-SES backgrounds are under-represented and that the ATAR score appears little more than a proxy of educational and cultural opportunity. In addition, the multicultural nature of our society, especially as new influxes of displaced people or refugees arrive adds another dimension to the challenge of ensuring equality of opportunity in access to university. As a university of service and engagement Macquarie is committed to the proposition that it can create opportunities for those who have previously been denied them and that what matters is where a student finishes not where she starts.

I am, therefore, delighted to introduce this report which speaks of our achievements in this area and to commend the work which has been done in this area.

PROFESSOR JOHN SIMONS
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)
It gives me great pleasure to introduce this overview of the work of the Widening Participation Unit and our partners over the last two years. There have been many highlights, as you will see on the following pages, and the statistics bear out the effectiveness of our work in increasing the numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds at Macquarie University. We have consolidated our Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation (LEAP) programs, developed robust evaluation mechanisms to measure their effectiveness and guide continuous improvement, and continued to nurture meaningful partnerships with a wide range of internal and external partners.

To give just one example, our LEAP-Macquarie Mentoring program has become increasingly topical, cited by Federal and State Government as a model for best practice in supporting students from refugee backgrounds to succeed in their education. We were runners-up in the inaugural Australian Financial Review Higher Education Awards in the category of Equity and Opportunity, have been awarded a highly competitive Federal Government National Priorities Pool grant to further research school to university transition support for students from refugee backgrounds, and are currently in the process of developing a national Community of Practice of academics and education practitioners working in the area of refugee support.

However, the real highlight for all of us in Widening Participation is working together with the individual students behind the stories and the statistics, their families and communities, and knowing that the very small difference that we are able to facilitate in their lives through education will have a huge flow-on effect now and in the years to come. I would like to thank these students in particular for their incredible resilience and motivation, from which we have all been privileged to learn.

RUTH TREGALE
DIRECTOR,
WIDENING PARTICIPATION UNIT
Our mission

WIDENING PARTICIPATION UNIT

“Macquarie University's strategic priority #3 – Aligning the nature and size of the university for the future ... by building on our commitment to inclusiveness through targeted and sustainable collaborative programs with key external partners to recruit and support Indigenous students and those of low socio-economic status.”

FROM: OUR UNIVERSITY: A FRAMING OF FUTURES
JUNE 2013
Education is for everyone – Widening Participation is a term used to describe this concept and our priority is raising numbers of higher education students from areas that are currently under represented in the tertiary sector. The importance of this has been outlined by the Australian Federal Government as a result of insights through reports such as the 2008 Bradley Review, and Macquarie University is committed to increasing numbers of Australian graduates through widening participation programs and partnerships.

As the Widening Participation Unit, we run a broad range of LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation) programs working with students of various ages towards goals beyond their school years. We achieve this through activities such as mentoring students from refugee backgrounds, exploring a series of topics with rural and remote students via video conferencing, taking Macquarie University academics into schools to run interactive sessions for students across a range of year groups, and much more.

LEAP program participants come from diverse backgrounds traditionally defined as disadvantaged, including students from low socio-economic (low SES) backgrounds, rural and remote students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, refugee students, women in non-traditional areas of study, and mature age students who do not enter university directly after completing school.
In working towards our goal of an inclusive University, the Widening Participation Unit is implementing an Access and Participation Plan from 2015 to 2017. As a condition of our Federal Government funding, our plan was submitted to the Government for approval before implementation. Our approach has three co-dependent elements to ensure success, including measurable equity outcomes and strategies, an evaluation plan to provide continual improvement, and enhanced partnerships and collaboration to build a community of best practice.

1. Equity outcomes and strategies
   a) Outcomes for improving performance for equity groups from 2015–2017
      - Increase the participation rate for:
        - students from low-SES backgrounds from 8% to 12%, with particular focus on students from non English speaking backgrounds
        - students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds from 0.9% to 1.5%
        - students from Rural and Remote backgrounds from 5% to 8%
        - Increase retention and progression rates for equity groups to match those of the general student cohort
        - Increase graduate employment rates for students from equity groups
   b) Strategies for achieving the outcomes
      - Build interest and capability to access higher education:
        - among Year 9–12 students from low-SES backgrounds through the LEAP-University Preparedness and the LEAP-Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) programs
        - among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through LEAP-Indigenous Engagement programs
        - among rural and remote communities through the LEAP-Links program
        - in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for year 5–12 low-SES students through the LEAP-Robotics and LEAP-National Indigenous Science Education programs
      - Build capacity to succeed in higher education:
        - among students from target equity groups through the development of appropriate entry pathways, including new enabling and foundation programs
        - among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Patyegarang Indigenous Advancement Strategy
        - among students with disabilities by creating a safe environment and sense of community, and through targeted support programs and individual case management among students from low-SES backgrounds through targeted learning skills programs
        - among students from all equity groups through engagement/wellbeing programs and staff PD
      - Build workplace readiness among target equity groups through partnerships with business and industry, for example the SBS and NITV Media Mentorship program
2. Evaluation Plan

- Using our existing evaluation framework developed with KPMG and Bridges to Higher Education, together with the national framework being developed by NCSEHE, ongoing evaluation will include qualitative and quantitative data collected through participant observation, focus groups, interviews, case studies, surveys and collection of statistical data related to the enrolment, retention and success of participants in programs.

3. Partnerships and Collaboration

- Continued partnerships with:
  - the NSW Department of Education (DEC), in particular Multicultural Programs Unit, DEC Director Secondary Education, and the Aurora Virtual Secondary School
  - DEC, Independent and Catholic schools
  - community agencies and non-for-profit organisations such as the Country Education Foundation, the Smith Family, Centrelink, local Councils
  - SBS/NITV
  - Bridges to Higher Education partner universities (University of Western Sydney, University of Technology, Sydney, University of Sydney and Australian Catholic University)
  - Development of new corporate partnerships
LEAP
LEARNING, EDUCATION, ASPIRATION, PARTICIPATION

LEAP helps raise aspirations, create possibilities and actively supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds towards higher education and a vibrant future at our diverse and innovative University.
About the LEAP program

LEAP is funded by the Commonwealth Government’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

LEAP provides future students with opportunities to participate in activities that open their minds to how their school studies connect to study options and career goals. For example, students participating in our robotics workshops discover the different types of engineering studies involved in the creation and use of robots, and how these apply to the real world.

LEAP provides current students with opportunities to work as volunteers in schools and communities through programs such as LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring. Our mentors gain valuable training and skills through their involvement and comment on the positive effect that mentoring has on their own studies at Macquarie.

LEAP supports teachers and community leaders in a variety of ways including their work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We provide a range of rigorously evaluated curriculum-based and extra-curricular activities designed to enhance learning opportunities, as well as providing teacher professional development including BOSTES-accredited workshops.

LEAP educates parents and caregivers about higher education and associated support options. Our programs build their child’s confidence in their own ability in the classroom, giving parents peace of mind. University campus visits, for both students and parents, continue to be key in breaking down barriers towards higher education.

More details of the individual LEAP programs can be found on the following pages.

“There is a positive buzz in the school, we have students who are more confident and engaged now – this is also something that benefits not only the school, but the wider community.”

TEACHER SURVEYED DURING A LEAP ON-CAMPUS UNIVERSITY EVENT, 2015
2014–2015 LEAP at a glance

4167 school students took part in our LEAP programs

153 parents and teachers engaged with Macquarie through LEAP

120 community members and organisations worked in collaboration to support our future students

129 dedicated Macquarie students participated in our LEAP programs

21 Macquarie academic staff volunteered their time and expertise to inspire our current and future students

89% of future students reported greater awareness of what university offers*

92% of future students reported greater awareness of potential career pathways*

96% of future students reported improved motivation to study at university*

94% of Macquarie students increased confidence in their academic abilities*

*Data drawn from three LEAP projects, surveying more than 3765 current and future students
Dreaming big

MEET JAKE, FORMER LEAP – ROBOTICS PARTICIPANT AND CURRENT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY STUDENT

I attended school in a low socio-economic area of Western Sydney, and for many years I didn’t have high expectations, goals or any plans for my future.

Before I got involved with the LEAP – Robotics Program during my final years of high school, I didn’t have many close friends. But when I joined the program I got to meet a lot of like-minded people and we instantly clicked! They are still my friends and I thank the engagement aspect of the program for that.

The LEAP program encouraged me to study harder and complete my Higher School Certificate (HSC). It helped boost my confidence and interactions with other students. It gave me the life skills needed to grow as a person, and the confidence to think I could attend university.

I’ve got a real passion for sharing my knowledge and inspiring students to learn something new. It is definitely opening up a lot of doors for me. My big dream is to go and live on Mars, and I am in the process of getting there.

In ten years’ time I will hopefully be sitting on a lawn chair on the surface of Mars. If not, I hope to still be involved with the LEAP program in some capacity, to help spread this type of program to schools throughout Australia. Every person should be given the opportunity to attend higher education, just like me.

Hear more about Jake’s story: youtu.be/OhoJevjwAeM
Making a difference
LEAP NURTURES CURRENT STUDENTS

LEAP assists the growth of current Macquarie students and their University experience through participation in our programs, providing them with an overall sense of satisfaction and a greater understanding of the value of higher education. Through their participation, current students are building an effective student community of practice while improving the educational achievements of both themselves and the school students they work with. An example of this is the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring program, where we train and support our student mentors throughout their LEAP journey. This allows them to connect through community participation and, in the words of our mentors, to “help others achieve their goals” and “be a part of something bigger”.

“It’s a great chance to help others at a critical point in their lives where they are thinking about what they want to do when they leave school.”
LEAP MACQUARIE MENTOR, 2015

“It has given me a broader understanding of students within a refugee background and has provided me with the ability to help those who truly deserve it.”
LEAP MACQUARIE MENTOR, 2015
My family and I came to Australia from Afghanistan for a better future. I started school at Arthur Phillip High School. I made a lot of good friends and loved my teachers, they supported me in my learning.

One day I saw some students come and visit us at school. I was very excited to see them and to hear their stories about university. At the start of the program I didn’t have any plans for my future. I was worried about my English so I didn’t think university was an option for me.

Talking to the mentors and visiting the University opened my eyes. It gave me hope to dream big. I discovered that there are many pathways to university. I wanted to make my father proud and I realised higher education can help me.

I became more confident in school and I was motivated to finish high school. In 2014 I started studying an Arts/Psychology degree at Macquarie University. I’m not scared of university anymore. I’ve made friends here and I’m enjoying learning. There are lots of essays and assignments to do and I have to plan my time well. I remember the mentors telling me I will have to be an adult and manage my own learning at university. They prepared me well for university life.

I want to be a psychologist when I finish my degree. I want to have my own office, with my name on the door. A nice reception area and a receptionist who welcomes people to my office with a smile. I can have this dream because of the support of my father, my family, my teachers and more importantly my mentor – who gave me the confidence to aspire for higher education.

Hear more about Shamsia’s story: [youtu.be/c-3YAY4z0nA](https://youtu.be/c-3YAY4z0nA)
Follow your dreams

LEAP BENEFITS FUTURE STUDENTS

The LEAP team facilitate experiences for students from disadvantaged backgrounds that put university study on their radar. Our outreach programs have allowed us to raise awareness about higher education, while basing these programs on our four key objectives:

1. **CREATING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS, CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION**

   LEAP programs engage with a range of schools and communities, raising their interest in higher education options while supporting high school curriculum. Our programs encourage future students to engage in school life, progress well in their studies and plan their transition from school to further education. As a result, the school students who participate in our programs are empowered and feel confident in making the best decisions about their own future.

2. **FUTURE STUDENTS IDENTIFYING WITH UNIVERSITIES**

   It is important for our program participants to identify with our University, so we create opportunities for future students to participate in on-campus activities and begin to picture themselves as a university student. Through taking part in University workshops, lectures and campus tours, schools students have the opportunity to engage with our Macquarie staff and students. On-campus visits involving students from rural and remote areas also include tours and meals at the University’s associated colleges to assist in breaking down barriers associated with moving away from home.

3. **SENSE OF PURPOSE AND BELONGING**

   LEAP programs promote emotional wellbeing by providing an inclusive environment where students can set goals for their future. Students participating in our programs have improved their academic skills and indicated greater interest in pursuing higher education, particularly students in our LEAP – Mentoring Program. They reported an improvement in school activities, time management and motivation towards education.

4. **POSITIVE INTENTIONS TOWARDS HIGHER EDUCATION**

   Through a range of platforms across our programs, we work alongside students to provide them with skills to build confidence in their school studies. In conjunction with this we offer students the knowledge to show them how their interests translate into post-school studies and career goals.

“| It helped me realise I am now part of university too even though I am in high school. |
| SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP 2015 |

“I didn’t hear about Macquarie University before, but now I feel I am a very special part of the university. I came on a campus visit and felt I knew this place. I belong here.”

SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP 2015

“It made me feel like I’m a part of the university already. It provided me good tips about the support that is available for students at university.”

SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP 2015

“Talking to the mentors has given me a direction...I have seen an improvement in my school work and I feel confident my dream of becoming a doctor can become true.”

SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP 2015
Benefits for academics

LEAP works with a range of academic staff across the University through our various LEAP programs, with benefits to both academic staff and the school students they engage with. Across our programs, the LEAP team facilitate mutually beneficial opportunities, taking the research and teaching expertise of our academics into school settings, both face-to-face and via our LEAP – Links Virtual Classrooms. We focus on supporting our academic staff using three key objectives:

1. Offering learning experiences and supporting our future students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds in raising and achieving their aspirations
2. Developing leading teaching materials through video-conferencing that promote enquiry-driven learning
3. Providing a connected and collaborative learning experience between academics and students.

Our participating academics have reported a greater sense of job satisfaction through their involvement with our LEAP programs. Through programs such as LEAP – Links, the Widening Participation Unit is proving early adopters of the University’s intent to further combine a bricks and mortar campus with virtual learning spaces. Through the use of technology, LEAP programs are facilitating engagement with school students both in the Sydney basin and rural and remote areas. Our various collaborations and partnerships provide many avenues for academics to run face-to-face workshops across metro and regional NSW.
Benefits for teachers and community leaders

LEAP programs support school teachers and community leaders in a range of ways, including professional development provided through LEAP – Links Robotics in Schools and BOSTES accredited workshops run through our Bridges partnership (see p. 27). Teachers have the opportunity to build general practical skills as well as develop specific skills through direct professional development and participating in workshops and virtual masterclasses with their students. Other programs such as LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring provide support to teachers through raising motivation and aspiration of their students.

From a broader community perspective, the Faculty of Science and Engineering’s innovative LEAP – NISEP program runs events, such as community days and cultural immersion activities, to raise awareness of higher education offerings and opportunities for Indigenous students and communities.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **93%** of our teachers reported that they feel better supported in engaging with their students in their learning.
- **92%** of our teachers reported an improved knowledge in their discipline of focus.
- **92%** of our teachers reported that our LEAP workshops helped them to expand their teaching practices.
LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring)

We believe that students from refugee backgrounds have great potential to succeed in higher education. Transitioning to university can be difficult for any student, but those from humanitarian migrant backgrounds face a number of additional challenges. This includes disrupted previous education, adjustment to a new language and culture, lack of parental understanding of the Australian education system, and possible trauma from being a survivor of war or persecution. The LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring team have seen first-hand through our program the positive effects of mentoring to assist students to overcome these barriers and succeed in tertiary education.

We partner with 10 high schools in Greater Western Sydney that have significant populations of refugee-background students to deliver the LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program. Running over 11 weeks, we see high school mentees paired with current Macquarie University student mentors that have similar interests. Many of our mentors are also from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Students are supported to work collaboratively developing academic and research skills, as well as exploring aspirations, educational pathways and career options post high school.

In 2014–15, we engaged 483 high school students who connected with 107 of our Macquarie student mentors. We have also expanded our pilot Pacific Islander Mentoring program from 2014, leading to the mentoring of 66 students from Pacific Islander backgrounds by 27 of our Macquarie student mentors.

We provide our mentors with a flexible three-part structure that enables them to tailor their mentoring efforts to meet the individual needs of their mentees. Evaluation of the program’s development since 2011 has shown it is effective in boosting student confidence and resilience, as well as developing study and research skills. Through broadening aspirations towards and understanding of higher education opportunities, a large number of our mentees have moved into further education, training and employment.

Since the beginning of the program, 46 mentees have gone on to university study including 12 former mentees who chose to further their education here at Macquarie University.

The University Experience Day is the highlight of the program for both our mentees and mentors. High School students, their parents and carers, teachers and principals from all our partner schools join us on campus for a fun and engaging day. Our mentees are transformed by their experience on campus, many of whom have never before visited a university. They gain valuable first-hand experience of university life and are inspired by the personal stories they hear from current Macquarie University students who are also from refugee backgrounds. We were proud to find that 95% of our mentees reported motivation to attend university in the future after attending our University Experience Day.

Our mentors benefit from engaging in the program through developing leadership, communication and other core graduate capabilities. Our work is strongly aligned with Macquarie University’s Strategic Priority of creating a culture of transformative learning in a research-enriched environment by creating life-changing experiences for students. Feedback from participants shows that they feel an enhanced sense of belonging to Macquarie University, increased motivation and confidence, an improvement in academic results, and a sense of global citizenship.

“Since Year 9 started the program, I have observed that the students are more engaged and seem to have a greater sense of direction.”

TEACHER

“When I wake up and look in the mirror, I feel happy and proud of myself. Not only do you build-up your skill set, but you will also grow as a person”

LEAP MACQUARIE MENTOR

“It has changed the way I think by being more encouraged to enter uni. To do what I like and that I can achieve my goals”

MENTEE, AUBURN GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

100% of our mentees reported increased confidence to finish Year 12 as a result of participating in the program.

80% had increased knowledge of pathways to enter university.

83% had greater awareness of the benefits that university offers.

FOR MORE DETAILS ON THIS PROGRAM CONTACT:

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Our world is advancing rapidly. The study of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) puts students at the forefront of technological change and creating the future, which is why encouraging students in these fields is a priority of the Federal Department of Education (DoE). The LEAP – Links program breaks down barriers to entering university for disadvantaged students, while equipping them with dynamic knowledge and skills across the entire STEM curriculum.

To engage a broad spectrum of students in the study of STEM, LEAP – Links is comprised of two distinct programs: Robotics in Schools and Virtual Classrooms.

Our Robotics in Schools Program is based upon three core ideas: training, access and inspiration. We partner with schools to train teachers in robotics, enhancing pedagogy and the curriculum while engaging students through hands-on learning in their classrooms. Schools are provided with our robotics equipment for use over the course of an entire term, during which time they are guided through introductory lessons with an expert robotics facilitator on Macquarie University’s campus. Macquarie University staff also travel to regional areas to provide Robotics workshops for teachers, then offering remote support throughout the program.

Our Virtual Classrooms program represents the classroom of the future, in which high school students from across NSW are able to participate in a ‘virtual’ masterclass presentation that focuses on STEM curriculum and careers. Our use of video conferencing technology empowers students in their learning through facilitating an interactive environment where students can ask questions to the masterclass presenter in real time, despite being thousands of kilometres apart.

Extending our reach using connected classrooms technology means that we can run virtual classroom presentations for up to 15 schools at any one time. In 2015 alone, we have reached over 1200 students from 60 schools across the state using this technology.

We partner with the Department of Education to identify gaps in the STEM curriculum which are then targeted when curating content for our video conferences. We collaborate with academics, PhD Candidates and recent graduates of Macquarie University to connect with schools across the state, from Ulladulla to Lightning Ridge. This process means that students are given the opportunity to engage with cutting-edge research, expertise and career insights regardless of their postcode.

Participants in the 2015 Cessnock robotics teacher training
"I was able to use my programming, problem solving and estimation skills in a whole new activity to increase my learning.”

YEAR 10 STUDENT
WILEY PARK GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

“This has been a personal achievement and proud moment for me to inspire students to study science.”

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC

“I think the biggest thing is they’re open to new ideas now. Because they didn’t have any experience with it, it’s opened their minds to what’s out there.”

TEACHER, CANOWINDRA HIGH SCHOOL
In 2015 LEAP – Links has:

- Conducted 25 Virtual Classrooms sessions with over 1200 students in schools across NSW
- Partnered with 20 schools across NSW for our Robotics in Schools program
- Supported the NSW DoE in their new online school, Aurora College, by providing Virtual Classroom sessions targeted to their students
- Engaged Macquarie academics, who have reported greater satisfaction at work through their involvement in the design of content for presentations

- Boosted interest in STEM subjects for a high number of students and increased skills in teamwork, numeracy and problem solving

At a time when technology is revolutionising learning, we believe in the importance of harnessing interactive learning to engage students that face educational disadvantage due to socioeconomic or geographical factors. Developing technology-based STEM learning experiences helps provide the confidence and skills students need to attend university, enabling them to become adaptable global citizens of the 21st century.

For more details on this program contact:

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mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/offices-and-units/widening-participation/the-leap-program/leap-links-robots
LEAP – Rural and Remote
RURAL STUDENTS UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

The Rural Students University Experience has been running successfully since 2010 and is complemented by co-funded Macquarie University-Country Education Foundation Scholarships to support students from rural and remote areas.

The annual four-day visit is a product of our strong partnership with the Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) and includes a day on another university campus (University of Technology, Sydney 2010–2014 and the Australian Catholic University 2015).

Our LEAP – Rural Students University Experience brings over 60 Year 10 students and their teachers from nine rural and remote NSW schools to Sydney each year to experience ‘a day in the life’ at Macquarie University. Our aim is to break down some of the barriers rural and remote students face by allowing them to experience campus life as a whole and our long-standing partnership with the Country Education Foundation (CEF) helps us achieve this. Visits include not only touring the campus but collaborative activities in our lecture and learning spaces, Macquarie University Sport and Aquatic Centre, and accommodation facilities.

In 2015, our program involved interactive and informative workshops in subject areas including History, Science and Psychology, as well as a hip-hop dance class highlighting the extra-curricular side to life at Macquarie. These activities were complimented by a campus tour and visits to our affiliated colleges – Dunmore Lang College and Robert Menzies College. A representative from our University’s Scholarships Office joins the students for lunch each year at one of the colleges to discuss their financial support options and help make the idea of higher education more achievable. The visiting students particularly enjoy talking to current Macquarie students living on campus about their experiences moving away from home to study, and many leave feeling confident in their own ability to do the same.

In 2015, visiting students and teachers came from the following regional NSW towns:
- Balranald
- Bombala
- Boorowa
- Camden Haven
- Coonamble
- Merriwa
- Murrumburrah
- Narrabri
- West Wyalong

The annual campus visit supports students in rural and regional areas through the familiarisation of learning environments at university, discussing available support networks and an introduction to extra-curricular activities. Not only do students benefit from the annual visit, but teachers remain in contact with our LEAP team after each year’s visit to discuss ways to further their school’s involvement with Macquarie University.

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mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/offices-and-units/widening-participation/the-leap-program/leap-rural-students-university-experience

“For me it was a once off experience that will challenge and help me make further choices about my future.”

“I am glad I came because I learnt a lot about uni and got to talk to some students and learn more information.”

STUDENT FEEDBACK, 2015

SARAH TAYLOR, COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA CEO

“The difference it makes to these kids is incredible. For many it’s the turning point and a realisation there are opportunities out there they either hadn’t considered, or hadn’t considered possible. On behalf of the kids, their teachers, parents, schools and communities I wish to thank the staff and students of Macquarie for making this possible.”

SARAH TAYLOR, COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA CEO
The Smith Family Partnership

In 2014, the Widening Participation Unit partnered with leading Australian non-profit organisation the Smith Family to provide enhanced opportunities for disadvantaged young people. Through several projects, we empowered school and university students with the skills, resources and confidence to succeed in their studies.

Our collaborative partnership was founded on the shared belief that every child deserves a chance regardless of circumstance. We know that education can unlock opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to create better futures for themselves.

**LEARNING FOR LIFE SCHOLARSHIPS**
The Widening Participation Unit co-funded 10 scholarships in 2014 and six in 2015 for students at Macquarie University. The Learning for Life scholarships offered opportunities across all disciplines at Macquarie including our Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Human Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Faculty of Science and Engineering.

**LEARNING CLUBS**
The Widening Participation Unit provided support to establish two new Learning Clubs for primary and high school students from St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox College and Chifley College in Mt Druitt. Learning Clubs offer safe and supportive out-of-school-hours learning environments where students are able to access additional educational resources and guidance from trained volunteers.

Volunteer tutors assisted with homework, study skills and interpersonal mentoring with the aim of helping students transition through their school years with more ease. Students brought tricky school work to have it explained more slowly, and parents with limited education or English language skills were grateful for the assistance given to their children. The program saw ongoing engagement and educational support for the 22 students and 12 parents involved, with positive outcomes across the board. Learning Clubs help students develop to their full potential despite any difficulties they may face in or out of the classroom.

"It enhanced my interest to finish my degree ...it’s now easier to concentrate on my studies"

**LEARNING FOR LIFE SCHOLAR**

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **93%** of the students reported enhanced educational aspirations
- **82%** of students reported improved study skills and greater engagement in their study
- **82%** of the students reported greater ability to work on achieving their goals for the future
- **90%** of the teachers felt the Learning Clubs provided students with better resources

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National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP)

LEAP – National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP) is an innovative program run in collaboration with high schools across NSW, Indigenous communities and a growing number of partner organisations and universities. Staff from our Faculty of Science and Engineering have designed this program to provide secondary students, including Indigenous youth, with the motivation and skills to complete their high school studies and look towards their future. The program has a strong focus on peer-supported learning and uses interactive science to engage low-SES students in both metropolitan and rural and remote areas.

This program comes after The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, released in 2008, outlined the concerning numbers of Indigenous students dropping out of high school.

Through LEAP – NISEP, students are building confidence in their own abilities not only through learning but leadership roles as they demonstrate chemistry, biology and microbiology activities to their peers. This in turn develops literacy and presentation skills that assist students through the remainder of their schooling years and into tertiary education.

In 2014–2015, LEAP – NISEP stimulated interest in education and science through the following activities:
• Sydney Olympic Park Youth Eco Summit
• Macquarie University Science Experience Day
• Maclean High School River of Learning
• Excursions on Country
• Science shows in schools

In 2015 alone, the Faculty of Science and Engineering engaged with 3300 Year K-12 students from over 55 schools throughout NSW, as well as working with 250 Elders and community leaders. As a result, LEAP – NISEP developed links between schools and local communities while providing opportunities for students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to learn about Aboriginal culture.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

96% of teachers reported that our activities have influenced their students’ general self-efficacy and self-belief

90% of teachers reported that our activities have influenced their students’ general engagement with school

82% of students we engaged with reported an increase in confidence with their academic abilities

81% of students we engaged with reported stronger ambitions towards attending university

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The Night Sky Project

Using the information developed by the Warawara Higher Degree Research Master of Philosophy project, “The Astronomy of the Kamilaroi People and their Neighbours”, a DVD and accompanying printed study guide on the Night Sky of the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi Peoples was created for use in the education and inspiration of primary and secondary students in the northwest of NSW.

The Night Sky of the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi Peoples project is an innovative approach to exploring the fascinating intersection between contemporary science and Indigenous knowledge. The goal of the project was to facilitate the re-telling and sharing of knowledge while creating tools for communities to carry on this sharing. The knowledge was then handed over to the participating communities in a ceremony in late 2014 by Macquarie University M Phil candidate and research project owner, Bob Fuller.

The Night Sky project demonstrated links between Aboriginal Astronomy and methods used by Astrophysicists at the CSIRO. The result was a documentary named Star Stories of the Dreaming highlighting the re-telling of select stories by Michael Anderson, a well-known custodian of the Euahlayi people, to CSIRO Astrophysicist Professor Ray Norris. Professor Norris, in turn, shared his own research demonstrating the similarities between his work and the stories that the Aboriginal people have been passing down generation after generation.

The Star Stories of the Dreaming documentary DVD, and accompanying study guide, on the Night Sky of the Kamilaroi and Euahlayi Peoples was shared with Walgett Community College, Collarenebri Central School, Goodooga and Lightning Ridge Central School to encourage youth to understand cultural astronomy, science and astrophysics. Star Stories of the Dreaming is making a big impact among educators and interested persons across Australia and internationally.

This study guide was developed to fit into the New South Wales school syllabus for Years 5 and 6 Science and was also offered as professional development on Aboriginal astronomy for teachers at these schools. To continue sharing knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultural astronomy, Indigenous students studying Education at Macquarie University have taken up the package for use in their own pedagogical practice.

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mq.edu.au/newsroom/2014/12/05/indigenous-astronomy-project-gives-back-to-the-lightning-ridge-community

NIGHT SKY PROJECT PARTICIPANTS (L–R) Michael Anderson, Lockie Dennis, Brenda McBride, Greg Griffiths, Fred Hooper and Jason Wilson with Bob Fuller
LEAP – Robotics

The LEAP – Robotics program is a major strength of the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Macquarie University and encourages students in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The program uses exciting hands-on activities targeted at students while also providing curriculum-aligned teacher professional development. Teachers are then provided with supplementary in-class robotics programs that complement the extra-curricular activities of their students.

Participating students are taught how to design, build, program and test robots of various types via practical activities. They learn different engineering skills, how to work in a team to achieve a goal and how to effectively manage time in order to succeed.

Several participating schools go on to take part in the FIRST® LEGO League, FIRST Tech Challenge, and FIRST Robotics Competitions each year, and students are introduced to our Macquarie campus through dedicated robot ‘build’ days in our Department of Engineering. These on-campus visits allow students to interact with current University students and staff, while picturing themselves as engineering students of Macquarie.

Our LEAP – Robotics program has been extremely well received, with partner schools returning year after year for additional programs. In 2015, we worked with 250 K–12 students and 20 primary school teachers from 10 NSW schools building STEM capabilities through LEAP – Robotics.

*FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology)

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mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/offices-and-units/widening-participation/the-leap-program/leap-robotics

“IT’S FUN TO USE ROBOTICS TO LEARN ABOUT STEM. I WOULD LIKE TO BUILD MY OWN ROBOTS WHEN I GROW UP.”
STUDENT FEEDBACK, 2015

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 95% of our future students reported an improvement in their mathematical skills
- 82% of our future students reported having greater confidence in their academic abilities
- 85% of our future students reported an increased interest in attending university and STEM subjects
Our LEAP – Community of Schools (ACOS) program is a partnership between LEAP and NSW Department of Education schools from the Auburn/Granville area. Like many of our programs, we focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) capabilities to equip students with necessary 21st century skills. LEAP – ACOS achieves this through school enrichment programs, professional learning support, on-campus programs and university transition support.

In 2014, we ran the following activities with 331 K–12 students and 16 teachers from Auburn Girls High School, Granville Boys High School, Auburn North Public School and Auburn Public School:

**YOUNG EINSTEINS** – targeting Year 5 students, using both critical and creative thinking skills through curiosity to invent something to be showcased at an end of term Invention Convention.

**OFF TO A GOOD START** – a one-day study skills program designed for Year 11 students to begin the year with a positive attitude and with sound understanding of fundamental learning principles. Students worked on a range of activities including effective time management, identifying personal learning styles and developing strategies to best leverage their strengths.

**MACQUARIE ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM (MAPP)** – providing a platform where students meet every week to explore a range of strategies for educational success. Selected students were identified as having the potential to succeed but needing some extra skills, strategies and motivation to engage more effectively in their curriculum studies.

**BUILD A BOAT** – engaging Year 5 students, the program introduces the basic conceptual design of building successful boats. They looked at how varying materials impacted the effective design of boats as a mode of transport, and learnt about the principles of floatation, buoyancy and the Archimedes Principal.

**ROBOTICS** – focusing on Year 7–10 students using robotics as a platform to more effectively develop Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) aptitude.

**MACQUARIE CAMPUS VISITS** – involving a range of activities which highlighted the experiences and options that Macquarie University provides, with a particular focus on STEM-related courses.

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** – providing teachers from each of our partner schools the opportunity to participate in collaborative workshops, focusing on ways to further engage with students and provide richer learning experiences.

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**LEARNING FOR LIFE SCHOLARSHIPS KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **80%** of future students reported better study skills
- **72%** of future students reported increased confidence in their academic abilities
- **75%** of future students reported stronger ambitions towards attending university

**“Many have been inspired and want to come to Macquarie University. They had lots to talk about on our trip home. Thank you again for all you support and help.”**

**TEACHER, 2014**

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**FOR MORE DETAILS ON THIS PROGRAM CONTACT:**

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Bridges to Higher Education is a multi-year initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government’s Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). The initiative is aimed at improving academic outcomes, increasing awareness, confidence and motivation towards higher education, building teacher and community capacity, and increasing capacity to access higher education to improve the participation rates of students from communities currently under-represented in higher education. The first phase of Bridges to Higher Education involved five universities working collaboratively through the Schools Engagement Project, Parents Project, Indigenous Project, Rural and Remote Communities Project, Pathways Project, Bridges Connect Project, Onwards and Upwards Project, and University Projects. 2015 saw a new phase of the initiative called Building on Bridges, involving collaborative efforts between Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, the Australian Catholic University and the University of Sydney.
Bridges intensives

The main focus of Building on Bridges activity was running a series of 'intensives' in Greater Western Sydney and regional NSW, aimed at bringing university staff, students and a broad range of workshops to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. While previous Bridges activity has been undertaken over longer periods of time, these 'intensives' involved a couple of days to a week worth of university experiences, involving students, parents, teachers and communities.

In 2015, the partnership extended to collaborate with all NSW and ACT universities, TAFE NSW and a number of local community partners in an effort to achieve our over-arching goal of increasing participation in higher education by students from these areas.

As a result of the partnership, Macquarie University staff and students representing a range of disciplines participated in three regional NSW intensives and two days of workshops held in Greater Western Sydney.
Over three days of activities, Bridges ran an accredited teacher professional development session, a parent and community information session, as well as two days of student workshops in Kyogle and Grafton respectively. The participant numbers across the three days of activity were testament to the need for more engagement in regional NSW.

The Macquarie representatives of the project group facilitated a series of Macquarie University workshops as part of the Bridges events, including a focus on introducing students to the concept of Big History in the lead up to the launch of The Big History Institute's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). A psychologist from Macquarie's Centre for Emotional Health also ran a short workshop based on the centre's acclaimed 'Study Without Stress' program which was well received by students, parents and teachers alike.

**DUBBO/FORBES INTENSIVE: 13–16 OCTOBER, 2015**

The second regional NSW intensive was primarily held at Dubbo Secondary College (Senior Campus) with a day of workshops also run at Forbes High School. The Forbes High School English workshops, run by a Macquarie Department of English academic, was particularly captivating for students. The attending academic is a former student of the school and positively demonstrated to the current Year 11s where motivation and hard work can lead.

The Dubbo Senior Campus component ran across four days with visiting academics running workshops on a variety of HSC topics, as Year 11 students began their Year 12 studies. These sessions allowed students to make connections between topics and potential university study areas, including workshops run by staff from Macquarie University’s Museum of Ancient Cultures and Department of Modern History.

Two parent and community information sessions were held throughout the week, including an Indigenous community forum which was also attended by members of the University’s Office of Indigenous Strategy. By the end of the week, 150 Year 11 students, 13 local teachers and 20 parents from six schools had heard the Bridges message about higher education for everyone.

**BEGA/MERIMBULA INTENSIVE: 21–22 OCTOBER, 2015**

The final regional NSW intensive had a focus of raising interest and aspiration from a younger age and included two days of workshops for Years 5–8 students from six local schools. Accompanied by 12 teachers, it was clear that the 215 participating students were starting to more actively consider where their studies might take them as they participated in the workshops.

Macquarie University’s FIRST LEGO League coordinators ran a series of robotics workshops, where students learnt the different engineering skills involved in building their robots and where a degree in engineering could take students and teachers. During an end-of-day wrap up, multiple students stated that it was their favourite workshop of the day.

A parent information evening was attended by 20 parents who were keen to discuss support options surrounding their child’s journey towards higher education, but who also reported on their children’s positive reactions to the workshops they had attended over the days.

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**METRO INTENSIVE: 11–12 AUGUST, 2015**

The first of the intensives was held in Greater Western Sydney and saw 800 Year 10 students and 25 local teachers take part in a selection of the 22 workshops on offer. The aim of this intensive was to provide hands-on and interactive workshops across a range of study areas. In turn, students from the 20 participating schools began to more closely consider their post-school options and start setting career goals.

The Widening Participation Unit facilitated six Macquarie University academics and staff to attend this intensive. This included Dr Rochelle Cox from the Department of Cognitive Science, postgraduate students from the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, and Tracey Sullivan and Elle Hrobat from The Big History Institute.

Students were excited to learn about hypnosis in the cognitive science, workshop and utilise critical thinking skills to discuss big ideas during the Big History session. Students also discovered the wonders of our solar system as they stepped inside Macquarie University’s portable planetarium.

Additionally, seven current Macquarie University students studying across our faculties interacted with Year 10 students throughout the day, sharing their own higher education journey and experiences.

**FAR NORTH COAST INTENSIVE: 2–4 SEPTEMBER, 2015**

The Far North Coast was selected for the first of three regional NSW intensives and included activities in Lismore, Kyogle and Grafton. We used multiple touch points to deliver a message of inclusion in higher education to 260 students, 32 local teachers and 30 parents from 13 schools within the region.

Over three days of activities, Bridges ran an accredited teacher professional development session, a parent and community information session, as well as two days of student workshops in Kyogle and Grafton respectively. The participant numbers across the three days of activity were testament to the need for more engagement in regional NSW.

The Macquarie representatives of the project group facilitated a series of Macquarie University workshops as part of the Bridges events, including a focus on introducing students to the concept of Big History in the lead up to the launch of The Big History Institute's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). A psychologist from Macquarie's Centre for Emotional Health also ran a short workshop based on the centre's acclaimed 'Study Without Stress' program which was well received by students, parents and teachers alike.

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A parent information evening was attended by 20 parents who were keen to discuss support options surrounding their child’s journey towards higher education, but who also reported on their children’s positive reactions to the workshops they had attended over the days.

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Evaluation of Bridges to Higher Education

KPMG FINAL EVALUATION REPORT, APRIL 2015

Bridges to Higher Education not only employed a rigorous internal evaluation methodology, but was also evaluated by leading external auditing firm KPMG. KPMG assessed Bridges according to our four objectives: improving students’ academic preparedness and outcomes; increasing students’ awareness, confidence and motivation toward higher education; building school and community capacity; and increasing capacity to access higher education.

KPMG found that over the three-year period to December 2014, Bridges substantially grew the number of schools, students, teachers and parents engaged. There was a total of 314 schools, 3,186 teachers, 9,185 parents and more than 73,000 students engaged in Bridges programs in 2014 – double the number of schools, 151 percent more teachers, and an increase from only 23,261 students in 2012. (KPMG, 2014) Evaluation of Bridges to Higher Education. Interim Report. KPMG Government Advisory Services.)

A final report was presented to the Federal Government on Friday 19 June where Senator Marise Payne accepted the report on behalf of the Prime Minister. Students, parents and teachers widely reported students’ improved academic preparedness, motivation and capacity towards entering higher education:

- 91% of students engaged in Bridges programs self-reported better study skills
- 92% of students felt better prepared for university
- 90% of students reported greater awareness of what university offers
- 90% of students reported knowing more about potential career paths
- 99% of participant teachers reported an improvement in students’ academic performance
- 94% of parents said they had better capacity to support their child with their higher education goals
- 97% of teachers reported that Bridges helped them expand their teaching practices
- 87% of teachers were better able to engage their students in learning
- 92% of teachers were better able to motivate their students


“Bridges has broken down the barriers between institutions and enhanced the capacity for shared effort.”

SOURCE: 2015 KPMG FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

(L–R): Alan Beckley (Acting Director of Widening Participation, UWS), Annette Cairnduff (Director Social Inclusion University of Sydney), Catherine O’Donnell (Associate Director Equity Pathways, ACU), Senator the Hon Marise Payne, Andrew Connolly (Equity and Diversity Manager UTS), Sonal Singh (Widening Participation Reporting and Evaluation Adviser, Macquarie University)
Further partnerships and collaboration

The Widening Participation Unit continued developing partnerships and collaboration across faculties and units of Macquarie University in 2014–15 to design and deliver HEPPP-funded programs and student support services. We believe the value of partnerships is in drawing on diverse expertise from across the University, developing innovative ways of promoting educational equity, and using resources most effectively for the greatest impact. Our partnership programs have focused on encouraging retention rates of students and enhancing equity students’ graduate opportunities through financial assistance, mentoring, professional development, internships and work experience.

**EQUITY SCHOLARSHIPS**

Our partnership with the Coursework Scholarship and Prizes Unit provides vital scholarships, allowing us to assist 20 students in 2014 and 20 students in 2015 from equity backgrounds with meeting the costs of living in Dunmore Lang College. Evaluation conducted has shown that scholarship holders are able to spend more time studying and engaging in extracurricular activities, which significantly contributes to their sense of belonging to Macquarie University.

**BRIDGING GRANTS**

In 2015, we built on our partnerships with the Coursework Scholarships and Prizes Unit to deliver a pilot start-up grant for 20 new Macquarie University students receiving Equity Scholarships. Undergraduate students are most likely to drop out of university in their first weeks and we recognised that previously students were unable to access scholarship funds until after the Census Date. We created the Bridging Grant in order to support students from low socio-economic backgrounds during what can be a difficult transition to university, especially for many who are moving great distances away from home and social support networks.

Our evaluation of the pilot program has shown that it was overwhelmingly useful in helping students prepare for their first semester. It assisted the 39 recipient students to cover wide-ranging costs for textbooks, relocation expenses, travel, accommodation and laptop computers before their scholarship payments were received. Scholarship recipients also reported the benefit of the extra personal support they receive during their transition to Macquarie University.

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EQUITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM

In 2015, we partnered with Macquarie University’s Career and Employment Service to launch the Equity Scholars program. Equity Scholarship recipients were invited to participate in a tailored program which engaged them in professional development workshops and one-on-one consultations with an expert careers adviser.

Our evaluation of the program via focus group and survey data has shown that participants felt significantly better-equipped with the skills needed to excel in their studies and enter the workforce. Feedback from the students was that they had gained confidence in themselves and their abilities as a result of the program. Crucially, they were able to identify skills and strengths they already had and those they needed to gain to transition smoothly through their university years. Students also displayed connectedness with each other and Macquarie University.

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SPECIAL BROADCASTING SERVICE (SBS) MEDIA MENTORSHIP AND SBS NATIONAL INDIGENOUS TELEVISION (NITV) INDIGENOUS MEDIA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The Widening Participation Unit continues to support this Macquarie University initiative in conjunction with the Ethnic Communities’ Council of NSW and SBS, involving a three-year industry-embedded mentoring program for media students from low socio-economic, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. In 2015, a parallel program with Indigenous media students through a partnership with NITV was introduced as part of the media mentorship opportunities.

This program is aimed at providing practical work experience, enhancing students’ engagement in their university studies and developing graduate capabilities by assisting students to form professional networks. The first year consists of targeted workshops, networking events and conceptual introduction to the program and partner institutions. The second year incorporates one-on-one mentoring by SBS and NITV staff, providing invaluable exposure to work in a major media organisation. These students also mentor students in their first year of the mentorship program, providing helpful insights and peer assistance. In their third year of the mentorship, students are offered work experience placements at SBS and NITV while continuing to mentor students in Year 1 and 2 of the program.

In total, the media mentorship program has engaged 26 students – 22 from CALD backgrounds and four from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. In 2015, we saw two students employed by SBS to complete short-term project roles, six students will complete or have completed a work placement at SBS and NITV, and the Catholic Education Office Sydney Media Unit and Search 4 Hurt Production House have also facilitated work placements for two students.

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MACQUARIE UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH INTERNSHIP (MURI)

Across 2014 and 2015, the Macquarie Undergraduate Research Internship (MURI) partnered 10 equity students in first, second and third year with research-active academic staff members to work as paid interns in a research environment in their specific field of study.

Academic mentors met students weekly to guide them through a study plan, which they used to stay on top of research tasks as well as their coursework studies. The program also facilitated the creation of new social connections for interns, who met weekly to share experiences and to collaboratively develop research skills.

Evaluation of the program showed that students felt their interactions with staff were strengthened through closer interpersonal communication. Participants reported a boost in their academic achievement and an increased motivation to pursue job opportunities in the higher education sector.

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Our research, your future

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Widening Participation Unit programs have a comprehensive evaluation framework to ensure we are continually improving, as well as meeting our responsibility towards financial reporting and accountability. Our evaluation guarantees that equity programs are both effective and evidence-based.
Out of the students we surveyed across 2013, 2014 and 2015:

- 98% reported greater awareness of what university offers
- 89% reported knowing more about potential career pathways
- 90% reported improved motivation to study at university
- 82% reported increased confidence in their academic abilities

The Widening Participation Unit also utilises evaluation data for the purpose of academic research output and engaging in a community of practice with leading Australian educational equity researchers. In 2014 and 2015, our Research and Evaluation team presented at numerous high-profile education conferences including the Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (UniSTARS), Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), and Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) conferences. As part of the 2015 EPHEA conference, members of the Widening Participation Unit led a special interest group with leading refugee education researchers and practitioners across Australia. In the same year, our team also presented at the Refugee Education Conference in Auckland.

In 2015, we have authored numerous publications including an article in International Studies in Widening Participation, which analysed the LEAP Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) Program over the past five years. Other publications include a book chapter that was accepted for Educating Refugee-Background Students: Critical Issues and Dynamic Contexts, to be published in 2016 by leading liberal arts institution, Middlebury College, in the United States. A chapter has also been accepted for an upcoming book titled “Bridges, Pathways and Transitions: International Innovations in Widening Participation” to be published by Elsevier in 2016.

Among the many highlights of the Widening Participation Unit’s year, a standout was having the LEAP-Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program announced as a finalist under Equity and Opportunity category for the 2015 Australian Financial Review (AFR) Higher Education Awards.

“The innovative LEAP – Macquarie Mentoring (Refugee Mentoring) program supports students from refugee backgrounds to access and succeed in Australian higher education, thus playing a pivotal role in the effective resettlement and social inclusion of this disadvantaged group in their new homeland, which in turn has a demonstrated economic impact.”

AFR, 2015
Publications and conferences

**JOURNAL ARTICLE**

**CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS**
Featon, C. and Singh, S. 2015 LEAP-Links: Breaking down barriers to higher education using online technologies” Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) Conference, 2015 Nov 9–12, Geelong, Australia
Watters, J. and Singh, S. 2015 ‘Beating the odds: Widening participation initiatives with students from rural and remote areas’ Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) Conference, 2015 Nov 9–12, Geelong, Australia
Evidence of impact

The Widening Participation Unit conducts ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess our progress in improving access, participation and success for equity students in higher education. We completed a multi-method, longitudinal study involving a mixture of surveys, focus groups and interviews to review the effectiveness of our programs in 2014–2015 using the following indicators:

Findings provided evidence of the continuing importance of widening participation efforts by Macquarie University, not only as a means of increasing access to higher education for greater numbers of students, but also as a means of fostering students’ academic and social growth such as:

- Raising aspirations of students who would otherwise not consider university as an option
- Improving academic preparedness for university
- Increasing students’ motivation and confidence towards higher education
- Building school and community capacity
Widening Participation achievements 2014–2015

- 45 projects
- 2300 teacher contacts
- 6780 student contacts
- 1300 parent contacts
- 98% students with greater awareness of university offerings
- 96% students better prepared for university
- 97% teachers with expanded teaching practices
- $6 return for every $1 invested
TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE UNIVERSITY
WIDENING PARTICIPATION UNIT HIGHLIGHTS 2014–2015

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**All domestic Undergraduate Students at Macquarie University: Equity Groups 2009–2014**

**Percentage of all Domestic Undergraduate Students at Macquarie University: Equity Groups 2009–2014**
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