



NCSEHE

National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University



EQUITY FELLOWS PROGRAM

**Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of
Education and Training**

National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education



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1. Equity Fellows Program

The Equity Fellows Program was an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education and Training (DET) and managed by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) at Curtin University.

The Program supported six Fellows during 2016 and 2017 to undertake strategic, high-impact, high-profile leadership projects targeted, sector-wide, at improving the access, participation and success in higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As part of their Fellowships, Fellows spent a period of time working in, and with, the DET in Canberra, facilitating mutually beneficial engagement between the Department and the sector as a way of exchange and leadership opportunities. Bringing together higher education researchers with higher education policymakers and administrators was an innovative and creative feature of the Equity Fellowships, enabling both parties to learn from each other and to share different perspectives on student equity.

Two cohorts of three Fellows, in 2016 and 2017, have had direct influence and impact on equity in the higher education sector through:

- identification of equity issues in the Australian higher education system, and the development and facilitation of approaches to address these issues
- •sector-wide leadership in promoting, enhancing and developing good practice in improving access, participation and success in higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- •development of a collaborative arrangement for the ongoing exchange of knowledge between the sector and the DET to inform the delivery of government programs and policy concerned with equity in higher education.

Equity Fellowship projects have also:

- raised the profile in higher education institutions of efforts to widen participation among students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- established and built on national and international partnerships and collaboration in widening participation.

2016 FELLOWS



Erica Southgate



Cathy Stone



Nadine Zacharias

2017 FELLOWS



Matthew Brett



Louise Pollard



James A. Smith

The Equity Fellows Program was a National Priorities Pool project, funded until the end of 2017 by the DET under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program. Six Fellows each received A\$250,000 to complete their Fellowships full-time, equating to a total program cost of A\$1.5 million.

In addition to developing the clear aims and objectives cited above, the Equity Fellows Program guidelines set out the roles and responsibilities for the NCSEHE, as well as eligibility conditions and nomination process; selection criteria; use of funding and reporting; and accountability.

1.1. Measuring success

There are a wide range of drivers and shapers of equity in higher education. Some are broad economic and cultural trends, while others take shape through education policies and the response to them through educational institutional frameworks.

With so many variables shaping equity in higher education, with both positive and negative influences and outcomes, it is almost impossible to measure precisely the impact of a single program such as the Equity Fellows Program; ascribing cause to effect is problematic. However, an indication of the impact of the Program can be considered through two broad perspectives, both of which have their strengths and weaknesses: quantitative data (such as report downloads); and qualitative data (based on a more subjective assessment of impacts of Fellowships over different time horizons).

- The quantitative outcomes of the Fellowships can be separated into primary and secondary indicators:

Primary quantitative data points to positive outcomes for the Program through direct and measurable indicators. These can include: the number of hits on a web page seeking information on Fellowships and the number of reports downloaded. Other primary quantitative data of direct relevance includes the number of workshops; presentations; and speaking engagements, as well as participant numbers thereof; audience exposure figures and advertising equivalency value for mass media coverage; and number of journal articles, publications and citations.

The impact of secondary quantitative data is more difficult to assess. It comprises positive feedback in media reports and articles in institutional newsletters. These also play into the positive impacts of Fellowships on equity in higher education, though measuring their specific impact and influence is very difficult.

- The qualitative outcomes of the Fellowships relate to how the Fellowship reports influence and shape policy and practice changes over different timeframes:

In the short term ideas and recommendations are discussed in research, policy and practice circles and assessed for their applicability in numerous institutions and processes. Ideas in Fellowship reports can have an immediate impact on the importance of how stakeholders perceive equity.

In the medium term some of the ideas and recommendations are implemented by higher education institutions and the Department of Education and Training, making positive contributions to equity in higher education.

In the longer term there are cases where systemic change occurs within institutions as to how equity is perceived and equity processes are embedded within broader institutional processes, as equity becomes part of a wider educational and national economic and social narrative.

1.2. High level impacts of the Equity Fellows Program

The Equity Fellows Program has played a fundamental role in developing and delivering the NCSEHE's three primary objectives: strengthening the evidence base by informing research directions; collaborating with stakeholders to be at the centre of public policy dialogue; and promoting leadership and innovation in the equity sector.

The Program has played into these considerations on five levels:

1. Building leadership in the equity sector — The Fellows have been able to leverage the growth in information and expertise in the equity field to create significant projects capable of advancing equity. In doing so, their status as equity leaders is recognised and rewarded, and others seek to emulate their success across the equity field. An outcome is the emergence of a growing numbers of dedicated equity advocates networked across the education sector.
2. Building stronger relations with government — The growth in understanding between National Centre and the DET has increased partly thanks to the Equity Fellows Program. Fellows are seconded to the Department as a component of their Fellowship which gives both parties insights that can lead to practical outcomes.
3. Increasing collaboration — The Equity Fellows have used their extensive networks to develop collaboration and cooperation between all stakeholders and this results in more effective outcomes in policy and program development. Increasing collaboration and cooperation has also contributed to the coalescing of a national equity narrative in Australia.
4. Setting new and higher standards in research and evaluation — The Fellowships have placed an emphasis on transparency and accountability in educational institutions to create evidence-based processes that facilitate continuous improvement in equity outcomes. This is an important consideration that the NCSEHE has strongly pursued and which has been illustrated in most Fellowships, demonstrating the case for reforms in best practice in reporting, transparency and accountability.
5. Raising the profile of the importance of widening participation in higher education — The Fellowships have contributed to a national debate on the importance of equity in higher education and the role that education can play in increasing social mobility in society. Wide dissemination of the Fellows' projects has taken place through the publishing and promotion on the NCSEHE's website, social media, conference presentations and paper presentations supporting higher educational institutions and government efforts to widen participation among students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Together, these high-level outcomes of the Equity Fellows Program are considerable, though somewhat difficult to measure precisely. Their impact has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to shaping equity in higher education in Australia.

While some of the early impacts of the three 2016 Equity Fellows projects have been realised and the flow on effects continue, the three 2017 Equity Fellows projects are currently being finalised and their impacts will begin to flow from later in 2018 and beyond.

A common link between the five high-level outcomes is that they assist advocates of equity to capture the 'network effects' of cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders. This has encouraged innovation and the rapid adoption of new ideas, and this in turn has facilitated the coalescing of the once-fragmented concept of equity into a practical and cohesive theme in education and beyond, promoting the case that equity makes economic and strategic sense.

1.3. Direct impacts of the Equity Fellows Program

The 2016 and 2017 Equity Fellows have already made a measurable impact across the sector. Each Fellow has conducted numerous presentations, workshops and seminars; disseminated findings nationally and internationally through interviews, institutional visits and professional networking (Appendix 1 and 2); and their considerable contributions have been recognised through awards and appointments (Appendix 3). Since their publication, the 2016 final reports and associated resources have been accessed widely, recording a combined total of over 9,000 total downloads through the NCSEHE website as at December 2017 (Appendix 4). In order to optimise the impact of her project across diverse platforms and stakeholders, Cathy Stone also distributes print copies of her recommendations.

Other direct dissemination by the NCSEHE has included the print and online publication, *Informing Policy and Practice III*, released at the Students, Transitions, Achievements, Retention & Success (STARS) Conference in July 2017. With broad sector distribution, this publication featured the 10 commissioned research reports from the 2016 research grants funding round, as well as three projects from the inaugural NCSEHE Equity Fellows Program.

Primary high-profile exposure of the Fellowship projects was achieved through two Forums conducted by the NCSEHE in 2016 and 2017.

The [Facilitating An Innovation Future Through Equity Forum](#) at the National Press Club in Canberra on 28 November 2016 brought together some of Australia's most prominent researchers, policy analysts and equity practitioners with the goal of advancing equity in higher education. Twenty-six of Australia's 37 public universities were represented, along with executive members from Universities Australia, the Group of Eight, the Australian Technology Network of Universities, the Innovative Research Universities, the Regional Universities Network and Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA). Colleagues from the Grattan Institute, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the Australian Council for Educational Research and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training were also in attendance.

The Forum contributed to a reinvigorated public policy dialogue for equity in higher education incorporating presentations by the Centre's three inaugural Equity Fellows, demonstrating the achievements of these future equity leaders. Summaries of the work of the three Equity Fellows for 2016 appeared in the Forum's supplementary compendium, [Facilitating Student Equity in Australian Higher Education](#).

The 2017 [NCSEHE National Equity Fellows Forum](#) was held alongside the EPHEA 2017 Conference at Queensland University of Technology on 20 November.

The Forum showcased the three projects conducted by the 2017 Equity Fellows, who shared an overview of their respective projects, taking the discussion forward into a broader context.

A panel session followed the Fellows' individual presentations, engaging the brains trust of over 60 attendees in active discussion, sharing professional insights, experiences and ideas to work toward improving outcomes for disadvantaged students in Australian higher education.

Chaired by Robert Latta (Manager of the Quality and Access Branch in the Higher Education Group in the Department of Education and Training), this strategic directions section yielded constructive conversation around the intersection between the three pillars of the NCSEHE's activities: Research; Policy; and Practice. Each of the three Fellows led discussion on these points, and were joined by NCSEHE Director Professor Sue Trinidad who expanded on the activities of the Centre and offered evidence-informed input.

The Fellows each gave an introduction to the themes and critical questions associated with them, informed by their Fellowship projects:

1. Research – what questions should we be prioritising for student equity? (James Smith)
2. Policy – What is the relevance of student equity for tertiary education policy reform? (Matt Brett)
3. Practice – how can we ensure the value and impact of student equity practice? (Louise Pollard)

A [synthesis of group discussion](#) was published subsequent to the event, including overviews of the Fellows' individual projects, with the [full presentations](#) also made available online.

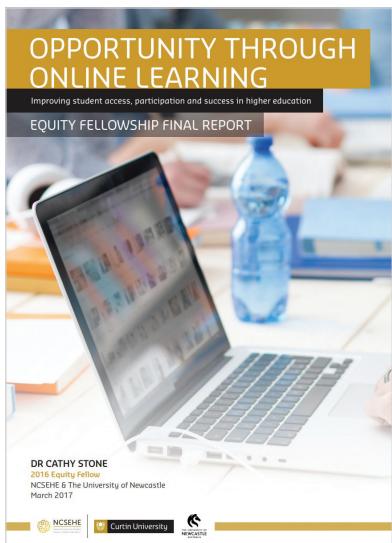
As part of the placements with the DET in Canberra, the Fellows presented their research through the HERI Bite Sized seminar series.

Bringing together higher education research practitioners with higher education policymakers and administrators is an innovative and creative feature of the Equity Fellowships, enabling us to learn from each other and to share our different perspectives on student equity.

2. Project Objectives & Outcomes

CATHY STONE

Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Higher Education



Background and methodology

Online learning has a critical place in widening access and participation in education for a diverse range of students, many of whom are from backgrounds which have been historically underrepresented at university. Students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds, students with disability, regional and remote students, Indigenous students and students who are first in their families to enter university are represented particularly strongly in online undergraduate programs.

Both retention and completion rates for online distance students are considerably lower than amongst those enrolled as on-campus students.

Interviews were conducted with 151 academic and professional staff members across 16 higher educational institutions comprising 14 Australian universities, the Open University Australia and the Open University UK.

The interviews investigated the practices and strategies being used within the online higher education context, including planning, teaching, support and education delivery, and the extent to which these practices are effectively supporting students to stay and succeed.

Findings and outputs

From the analysis of the interview data and other related published research, seven key findings emerged:

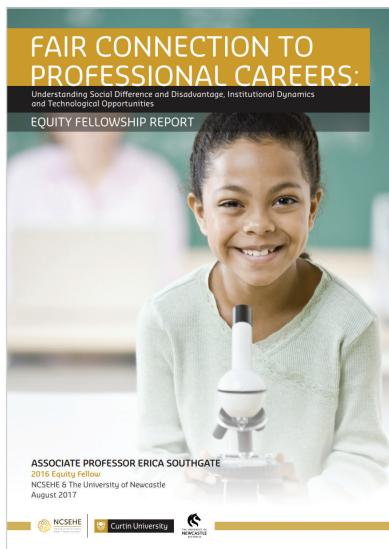
1. A strategic whole-of-institution approach is required — one that recognises online education as core business. This approach needs to include an institution-wide understanding of the nature and diversity of the online student cohort as well as the development and implementation of quality standards for online education, which undergo continuous quality improvement.
2. Early intervention with students to connect, prepare and engage is essential, particularly in terms of realistic expectations and encouraging and facilitating academic preparation.
3. ‘Teacher presence’ plays a vital role in building a sense of belonging to the learning community and in improving student retention. However, the time-consuming nature of developing and maintaining a strong sense of ‘teacher presence’ is not always recognised in existing workload models.
4. Content, curriculum and delivery need to be designed specifically for online learning. They need to be engaging, interactive, supportive and designed to strengthen the interaction among students.
5. Regular and structured contact between the institution and the student is important in providing connection and direction along the student journey. This includes proactively reaching out to students at particular points along their journey and is best achieved through the development of an institutional framework of interventions.
6. Learning analytics play an important role in informing appropriate and effective student interventions, including through predictive modelling and personalising the learning experience.
7. Collaboration across the institution is required to integrate and embed support, delivering it to students at point of need. When academic and professional staff cross traditional boundaries to work more closely together, a more holistic student experience can be delivered, including embedding support within curriculum.

Recommendations

Findings from the research conducted along with other international research findings have been used to inform the development of National Guidelines to provide sector leadership on evidence-based ways to improve the success and retention of students in online education. Through advising institutions on ways to improve outcomes for online students, the National Guidelines have the potential to make a significant impact in and beyond the Australian context by increasing opportunities for diverse cohorts of students to achieve their learning goals at any stage of life.

ERICA SOUTHGATE

Fair Connection to Professional Careers: Understanding Social Difference and Disadvantage, Institutional Dynamics and Technological Opportunities



Background and methodology

Young people from low SES, regional and remote and Indigenous backgrounds may have significant career aspirations but are less likely to gain access to university and are underrepresented in a range of high-status degrees such as medicine, law, architecture and engineering and associated professions.

The objective of the project was to explore the complexity surrounding access to high-status degrees and their associated professions for young people experiencing disadvantage, with special attention paid to the potential of new and emerging digital technologies as a means of creating authentic early connection to high-status careers. The application of these technologies could improve equity students' participation in high-status professions by motivating and enhancing disciplinary learning and creating authentic connections to higher education and the world of work.

Research comprised three inter-related components: analysis of data from existing data sets from projects including the Aspirations Longitudinal Study of school students in Australia and a study of First-in-Family university students enrolled in medicine; a national scoping of barriers and enablers to high-status professions through interviewing experts in the field; and the development of a road map (or primer) to existing and emerging digital technologies and their potential application for K-12 education and career exploration.

Findings and outputs

Higher education participation data indicates that people from equity groups are underrepresented, often significantly so, in the university degrees associated with high-status professions and this was particularly the case in elite universities.

High school students experiencing disadvantage who had career aspirations to high-status professions had very limited capacity to undertake 'taster' work experience that would allow them to explore these careers. In the main, working class students got 'working class work experience', which hampered their ability to authentically explore careers and develop a deep academically-embedded understanding of what was required to gain a place a university in high-status degrees.

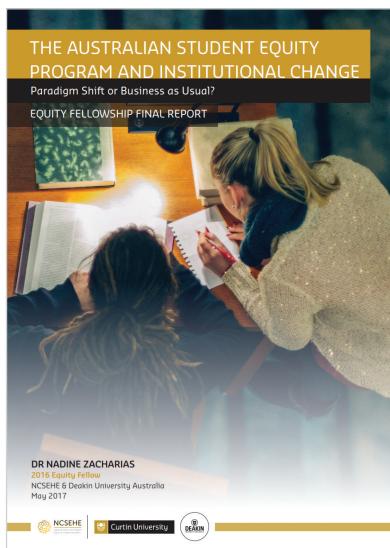
In response to the research findings, the *Immersed in the Future* report was developed to provide an accessible primer on using new and emerging digital technologies such as virtual and augmented reality for career exploration. The report is a call to action for teachers, university educators, policymakers, and students of all ages to actively participate in developing ideas and applications for using new and emerging technologies to create deeper disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning and more authentic connection to post-school education and the world of work.

Recommendations

- Continued research should be pursued into the factors that inhibit students experiencing disadvantage from reaching their academic potential, including access to an academic curriculum, inspiring quality career education, and a broad range of authentic 'taster' work experience placements.
- A more transparent and sustained tracking of participation rates by broad and specific fields of education, including high-status degrees, would ensure that the issue of proportional representation of students from equity groups stays on the agenda for universities and the professions.
- There is a need to more fully understand and respond to the experiences of students from equity groups who secure a place in a high-status university degree, including their post-graduation aspirations and pathways.
- It is time to commit to innovation in education and career exploration using new and emerging digital technologies such as virtual and augmented reality. This should be done with low-income school communities and university students from equity groups so that authentic technological applications are developed to motivate and enhance disciplinary learning and understand its links to the world of work.

NADINE ZACHARIAS

The Australian Student Equity Program and Institutional Change: Paradigm Shift or Business as Usual?



Background and methodology

The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) has provided an opportunity for universities to develop equity programs which respond to their institutional profile and strategic priorities. To date there has been no national investigation of the design and implementation of institutional HEPPP programs in different universities and how this contributed to student outcomes at institutional and sector levels.

The Fellowship sought to understand how the HEPPP had been implemented by universities and whether the sector had acted on the Government's aspiration.

The project took a collaborative approach, developing questions in consultation with an advisory group. It used a qualitative methodology including the analysis of HEPPP annual progress reports between 2010 and 2015, three institutional case studies and an engagement strategy with the DET and key stakeholders across the sector.

Findings and outputs

The Fellowship produced a set of diagnostic tools, an interpretive model and an Equity Initiatives Map to enable analyses of HEPPP program design and implementation in the context of institutional equity strategy and performance. Three case studies demonstrated the application of the tools to identify universities' strategic approaches to HEPPP implementation and the success factors, outcomes, and challenges associated with these.

The report concluded that HEPPP has demonstrated success in promoting equity across the higher education sector but institutional level outcomes for low SES students remain uneven with some universities contributing disproportionately to the national increase in low SES participation.

The Equity Initiatives Map is a powerful tool to produce a national picture of HEPPP expenditure and effort, enabling lifecycle analysis and consistent terminology across institutions and programs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policymakers included:

- The DET should request universities to complete the Equity Initiatives Map with their annual progress report.
- The HEPPP reporting process should invite program-level analysis and reflections over time by asking universities to provide an overarching narrative of its program's intent, structure, achievements and challenges.
- The DET should develop an evaluation framework for HEPPP to enable the sector to systematically evaluate the influence of HEPPP funded initiatives on broadly defined student outcomes across the four main phases of the student lifecycle.

Recommendations for the sector included:

- Universities should use the Equity Initiatives Map as a diagnostic tool to review their HEPPP programs and optimally align expenditure and effort with institutional priorities and needs.

Recommendations for research included:

- Future research could include the analysis of the individual dimension of program implementation to more fully reflect the influence of individual equity practitioners, leaders and champions of the success of individual HEPPP or other equity programs.



Background and methodology

The Commonwealth Government currently invests around A\$300 million annually in direct equity support. In addition, equity students, like non-equity students, also benefit from billions of dollars in other forms of public support, including student base funding, deferred income-contingent student loans and student income assistance. The research sought to investigate at a system level how student equity goals are described, set and advanced, and who is accountable for them. It aimed to identify weaknesses in accountability for equity performance in Australian higher education and was motivated by an assumption that equity goals are more readily achieved if aligned with effective accountability practices.

The report was based on four sets of investigations: theoretical perspectives on equity and accountability; analysis of secondary data from policy and institutional reference points such as legislation, regulation, higher education statistics, strategic plans and annual reports; interviews with leaders from across the sector; and surveys of managers from across the sector.

Findings and outputs

The report identified a number of issues and challenges for accountability in equity in higher education:

- There is insufficient conceptual clarity as to what student equity means.
- There is a progressive dilution of emphasis on equity issues from policy goals to delivery.
- There are differing opinions as to which equity groups should be the focus of policy and institutional attention.
- Equity is shaped by many institutions and different timeframe considerations outside of higher education.
- Public investment in financing student equity is not well understood.
- Student equity should have a more prominent role in higher education regulatory practices..

The report produced 13 findings, which informed proposed strategic priorities:

- Student equity goals need to be clarified and, where possible, common standards and definitions applied system-wide.
- Student goals need to be updated within a process that allows for evolution in the composition of equity groups as well as objectives for them.
- Student equity needs to be embedded in institutional system design and applied in a systemic way across higher education.
- Base funding and equity program incentives should also reward institutions based on equity representation, quality teaching, and graduate outcomes.
- Accountability for equity needs to be commensurate with the level of public investment and level of strategic prioritisation of student equity goals.
- Student equity needs to be understood and managed as a system- level issue that involves all levels of government, all institutions and students.
- Accountability needs to be embedded across the higher education sector and within higher education policy, not just be seen as a role for a tertiary education regulator.
- The report produced a checklist for assessing accountability for equity in higher education.

Recommendations

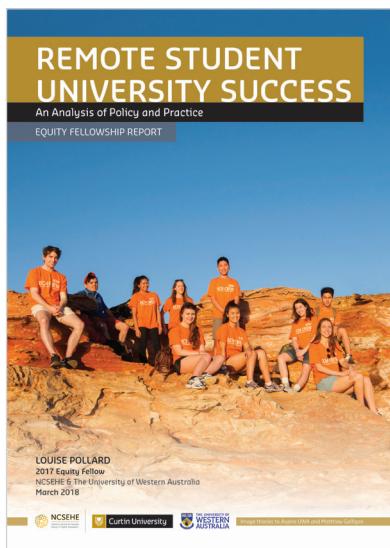
Recommendations were process-driven in that, through a clustering and refinement process, findings were condensed into four strategic priorities that can guide policymakers to inform a proposed equity policy and accountability framework:

- refining equity goals
- improving information management
- embedding student equity goals across the higher education system
- analysing, reporting and communicating outcomes.

The operational framework for equity and accountability can serve as a process to identify, assist, and lead progressive changes to enhance transparency and accountability in equity in higher education.

LOUISE POLLARD

Remote Student University Success: An Analysis of Policy and Practice



Background and methodology

A child born in remote Australia is only one one-third as likely to go to university as a child born in a major city; of those who attend a university, the completion rates are lower for remote students (60.33 per cent) than regional (69.37 per cent) and metropolitan (74.87 per cent).

The Fellowship explored ways in which universities and public policy could support remote students' access, participation and success. A mixed methods approach was taken. National data sets were analysed to identify the unique characteristics of the remote cohort; case studies on three universities identified ways that government and universities could better support remote students; interviews were conducted with 14 remote students and 13 staff members; institutional strategies were examined; and findings from a tour of Canadian universities were incorporated.

Findings and outputs

Identifying the unique characteristics of the remote student cohort is critical for providing more nuanced support: 45.3 per cent of remote students studied online compared to 31.29 per cent of regional and 16.75 per cent of metropolitan. In addition, Indigenous students made up 9.59 per cent of remote students, yet this has been concealed when regional and remote are classified together when the figure was only 3.55 per cent. Remote students were more likely to belong to two or more equity groups, compounding their risk of non-completion.

Two sub-groups were identified: students who relocate (generally school leavers who study full-time and on campus); and students who study online (mainly part-time students of mature age who continue to live in remote locations). These profiles challenge some commonly held assumptions and the consequent focus and priorities for support.

Enhancing remote students' university success was a second focus of findings. This stemmed from the characteristics cited above and led to the recommendation of a student-centred approach to support. Current initiatives, while good, are often ad hoc and need to be based on whole-of-institution supports. Other important issues that contribute to student success include: reliable internet access; the introduction of a unique student identifier to tailor individual support; and enhancing students' sense of belonging.

Six principles to enhance student success were developed.

Recommendations

Numerous (summarised) recommendations were made for practice, policy and research, including:

Practice:

- A better understanding of the remote student cohort.
- Responsive design of learning and teaching strategies and student experience programs.
- Enhanced experience of Indigenous knowledge and culture across the student experience.
- Continued engagement with remote students who defer an offer or take a break.

Policy:

- A Universal Student Indicator to allow better data linkage and analysis.
- DET policy and programs recognising remote students as a distinct equity group.
- A flexible approach to funding for remote students to recognise group diversity.
- A refined HEPPP funding model to prioritise outreach in remote areas and recognise the real cost of delivery.

Research:

- Longitudinal and cohort studies to track the success of remote students over extended periods of time.
- Research on the cumulative impact of remoteness with other equity groups and student characteristics such as part-time, online and mature age.
- Further research into the remote student experiences, given high first-year attrition rates.

JAMES SMITH

Strengthening Evaluation within Indigenous Higher Education Contexts in Australia



Background and methodology

While there have been notable investments and significant national reforms in Indigenous higher education over the past few years, a comprehensive and monitoring and evaluation framework has yet to be achieved.

The *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (2012) provided a clear mandate. Also, prior to its abolition in 2015, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council recommended development of a performance framework.

Similarly, in a broader context, concern has been raised about the lack of quality evaluation evidence generated through Australian Government funded Indigenous affairs programs. The Productivity Commission, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Australian National Audit Office have all acknowledged the importance of strengthening evaluation in Indigenous program and policy across Australia, including that related to higher education.

The Fellowship report brings these two conversations together, to strengthen evaluation in Indigenous higher education. The report is based on interviews with 38 people and one group interview with two participant groups — Indigenous scholars in higher education institutions and government policymakers with a role in equity and or Indigenous higher education program and policy development.

The study asked questions about the current challenges and opportunities associated with undertaking evaluation in higher education; the enablers and barriers associated with using evaluation in policy and programs; and ways to strengthen evaluation.

Findings and outputs

Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: conceptualising ‘evaluation’ as a broad term; a greater appreciation of qualitative evidence; and greater accountability.

Research identified 14 key enablers and drivers of evaluation in Indigenous higher education: Indigenous leadership; funding and resources; strategy development; policy development; implementation and reform; transformation, change and quality improvement; addressing white privilege and power; improving student outcomes; valuing Indigenous knowledges; promoting cultural competence; towards a political endeavour; towards cultural standards and accreditation; improving curricula; and recognising sovereign rights.

Research analysis demonstrated that the key enablers were related to one of three domains of control — Indigenous, government and university. The report proposes that moving towards a greater synergy between these domains of control.

The project developed a conceptual model of potential performance parameters to strengthen Indigenous higher education monitoring and evaluation in Australia. The model has four spheres, each relating to the other: students; families and communities; schools and organisations; and universities. The model can be used in multiple ways by practitioners, policymakers and researchers to monitor and evaluate performance in equity issues.

Recommendations

A shortened account of the Fellowship’s 17 recommendations includes:

1. A National Indigenous Higher Education Performance and Evaluation Strategy should be developed.
2. A suite of Indigenous higher education targets, developed with a National Indigenous Higher Education Performance and Evaluation Strategy, should be developed in the closing The Gap initiative.
3. The NCSEHE and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) should co-host a national summit about evaluation in Indigenous higher education to discuss the scope and nature of evaluation priorities and map areas for action.
4. A glossary of terms associated with evaluation should be developed in higher education.

5. Stories and narratives should be explicitly incorporated into reporting and evaluation processes examining the impact and outcome of Indigenous higher education.
6. The Australian Government should explicitly incorporate qualitative reporting and evaluation processes into all higher education program funding agreements.
7. Investment in the development of innovative qualitative evaluation strategies aligned with Indigenous methodologies and methods should be developed.
8. Accountability within Indigenous higher education should be viewed as a shared responsibility between universities and the government and should involve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders.
9. There should be a better and more visible harmonisation of communication and reporting processes associated with Australian Government policies and programs that support Indigenous higher education students and staff.
10. Clearly defined performance measures relating to the adoption of whole-of-university approaches to Indigenous higher education should be embedded into all senior university executive contracts and reviewed regularly.
11. The Australian Government, NATSIHEC and TEQSA should work collaboratively to expand the scope of Indigenous focused higher education accreditation standards to increase university accountability.
12. The Australian Government and philanthropic organisations should mandate a minimum of 10 per cent of all program funding in Indigenous higher education is invested into evaluation.
13. The Government should make a dual and parallel investment in Indigenous capacity building focused on: evaluation knowledge and skill development; and Indigenous leadership and governance.
14. The NATSIHEC, Australian Government, Universities Australia and other stakeholders work collaboratively and strategically to invest in the 13 enablers and drivers identified in the report, with preference given to those associated with Indigenous control.
15. The Australian Government should ensure there are dedicated and appropriately resourced Indigenous education policy units in government departments, separate to those associated with equity funding.
16. The conceptual model should be used as a baseline for developing strategies and actions associated with the development of the National Indigenous Higher Education Performance and Evaluation Strategy (NIHEPES).
17. A meta-analysis of Australian research studies and evaluation reports should be conducted examining Indigenous student and staff perspectives about pathways, transitions, participation, success and achievement in higher education.

Appendix 1: Presentations

29 June 2016–2 July 2016

2016 STARS (Students Transitions Achievement Retention & Success) Conference

- Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Undergraduate Studies.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *Student Equity: Special Interest Group.*
- Erica Southgate and Shamus P. Smith: *Gamifying Adult Literacy Learning with Apps: Reflections on the 'State-of-the-Art' to the 'State-of-the-Actual'.*

4–7 July 2016

Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) 2016 Conference, Fremantle

- Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Undergraduate Studies.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *An Act of Reason, Not 'Faith': Effective Scholarships for Equity Students.*

14 July 2016

The 2016 Asia Pacific Higher Education Summit, Melbourne

Cathy Stone: Keynote — *Opportunity Through Online Learning.*

28 July 2016

HERI Seminar, Department of Education and Training, Canberra

Nadine Zacharias: *Moving Beyond 'Acts of Faith': Effective Scholarships for Equity Students.*

August 2016

Department of Education and Training Research Seminar Series, Canberra

Cathy Stone.

17 August 2016

Student Equity Workshop, Brisbane

Nadine Zacharias.

31 August 2016

Student Equity Workshop, Perth

Nadine Zacharias.

September 2016

Presentation to Academic Staff at the University of New England, Armidale; Southern Cross University, Lismore; and The University of Tasmania, Launceston

Cathy Stone.

8 September 2016

University of Southern Queensland Social Justice Symposium, Toowoomba

Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Equity, Success and Retention in Online Higher Education.*

15 September 2016

Student Equity Workshop, Sydney

Nadine Zacharias.

6 October 2016

Student Equity Workshop, Melbourne

Nadine Zacharias.

7 October 2016

Monash University Scholarships Seminar

Nadine Zacharias: *Moving Beyond 'Acts of Faith': Effective Scholarships for Equity Students.*

24–25 November 2016

University of Wollongong National Forum on First-in-Family Learners

Cathy Stone: *Online Learning.*

2–3 December 2016

AARE Symposium, Melbourne

Cathy Stone: *Online Learning.*

5–7 December 2016

Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association Inc. (ANZSSA) Conference, Auckland

Cathy Stone: *Online Learning.*

27 Nov–1 December 2016

AARE Conference, Melbourne

- Erica Southgate: *Transforming Student Equity Research into Policy and Practice: Featured Symposium.*
- Erica Southgate: *Travels in Extreme Social Mobility: Prestige, Professional Identity and the Price of the Ticket for First-in-Family Medical Students.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *NCSEHE Fellowship: High-Level Findings.*

28 November 2016

NCSEHE National Research Forum

Facilitating an Innovative Future Through Equity

- Nadine Zacharias.
- Cathy Stone.
- Erica Southgate.

29 November 2016

NCSHE Research Seminar, University of Melbourne

Nadine Zacharias: *Moving Beyond 'Acts of Faith': Effective Scholarships for Equity Students.*

2 December 2016

National Forum: Conversations about Retaining and Engaging Learners in Higher Education, University of Wollongong

Erica Southgate: *Getting to be a Doctor: The Capacity to Aspire to Medical School for Students from First-in-Family and Low Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds.*

4–5 December 2016

Youth, Health and Practical Justice: An Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Technology Sydney

Erica Southgate and P. Aggleton: *Peer Education for Young Peoples' Health and Wellbeing: From Rhetoric to Reality.*

18 January 2017

Case Study Universities: report back on findings

Nadine Zacharias: *Deliver at Scale.*

25 January 2017

Case Study Universities: report back on findings

Nadine Zacharias: *Principles and Partnerships.*

10 February 2017

Case Study Universities: report back on findings

Nadine Zacharias: *Targeted and Personalised.*

16 February 2017

NCSEHE Presentation

Cathy Stone: *Improving Participation, Success and Retention in Online Higher Education.*

24 February 2017

Regional Student Participation and Migration

Regional Office Planning Day, La Trobe University

Matt Brett.

2 March 2017

Universities Australia Conference 2017

Nadine Zacharias: *The Australian Student Equity Program and Institutional Change: Paradigm Shift or Business as Usual?*

9 March 2017

University of New South Wales Connections Seminar

Cathy Stone: *Improving Participation, Success and Retention in Online Higher Education.*

6–10 March 2017

HERI Bite Sized Seminar, Australian Government of Education and Training

James Smith: *Key Learnings from Whole of Community Engagement Initiative.*

18–22 March 2017

2017 IEEE VR Los Angeles

Erica Southgate: international invited presenter — *Asking Ethical Questions in Research Using Immersive Virtual and Augmented Reality Technologies with Children and Youth.*

4 April 2017

Staff seminar at the OU, Milton Keynes, UK

Cathy Stone.

7 April 2017

2017 Universities Association for Lifelong Learning UK Conference, York

Cathy Stone.

20 April 2017

HERI Bite-Sized Seminar, Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Matt Brett: *Equity Performance: What Counts? What Matters?*

21 April 2017

National Forum for 'A Comparative Evaluation of the Efficacy of the Equity Strategies Employed by Australian Universities': 2015 National Priorities Pool Project

Nadine Zacharias: panel discussant.

4 May 2017

Learning Breakfast Seminar, Teaching Innovation Unit, UniSA, Adelaide

Cathy Stone.

5 May 2017

Seminar for the South Australian branch of HERDSA, UniSA, Adelaide

Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Higher Education.*

11 May 2017

The Higher Education Reform Package Idea of the University Reading Group, La Trobe University

Matt Brett.

16 May 2017

Regional Student Participation and Migration Widening Participation Forum, La Trobe University

Matt Brett.

24 May 2017

NCSEHE Presentation

Cathy Stone and Sarah O'Shea: *A Conversation About Translating Equity Practice Into Research.*

25 May 2017

Networks Enhancing the Scholarship of Teaching (NEST) Workshop, Murdoch University

Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Higher Education.*

30 May 2017

YouTube interview with Mike Bryant, Centre for University Teaching and Learning, Murdoch University

Cathy Stone: *Dr Cathy Stone Conversation.*

11-14 June 2017

CACUSS Conference, Ottawa, Canada

Louise Pollard: *How Students from Rural Australia are Supported to Access and Succeed at University.*

15 June 2017

Seminar, Wollongong Academy of Tertiary Teaching & Learning Excellence, University of Wollongong

Cathy Stone: *Improving Participation, Success and Retention in Online Higher Education.*

22 June 2017

Regional Student Participation and Migration Schools Partnership Program Planning Day, La Trobe University

Matt Brett.

27 June 2017

Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND) Inherent Requirements Symposium

Matt Brett: *From Masseurs to Mass Participation — Reasonable Adjustments and Inherent Requirements in Historical Context.*

28 June 2017

HERDSA Conference, Sydney

- Nadine Zacharias: *Leveraging Transformational Curriculum Change for Widening Participation: An Australian Success Story.*
- Nadine Zacharias, Mary Dracup and Robyn Everist: *Embedding Inclusive Curriculum: Working from the Ground Up.*

2 July 2017-5 July 2017

2017 Students Transitions Achievement Retention & Success (STARS) Conference

Louise Pollard: *The Invisible Cohort? Investigating Strategies for Remote Students' Success.*

16 July 2017

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) Caucus

James Smith.

19 July 2017

2016 Equity Fellowship Dissemination Workshop, University of Technology, Sydney

Nadine Zacharias.

26 July 2017

Education for Remote & Regional Australia, University of Western Australia Social Impact Festival 2017

Matt Brett: *Analysis of Factors Influencing Regional Student Participation and Internal Migration.*

24-28 July 2017

World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE), Toronto

James Smith.

15 August 2017

Student Accommodation Development World

2017, Melbourne

Matt Brett and Buly Cardak: *Regional Student Migration — Implications for Student Accommodation.*

29-31 August 2017

Australasian Simulation Congress 2017, Sydney

Erica Southgate: industry panellist on *Serious Games.*

5 September 2017

Australasian Evaluation Society 2017 International Evaluation Conference, Canberra

James Smith: *What Do We Know About Evaluation in Indigenous Higher Education Contexts in Australia?*

11 September 2017

Presentation for Victorian branch of HERDSA, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne

Cathy Stone.

14 September 2017

Presentation for RMIT University, Melbourne

Cathy Stone.

26 September 2017

ACEN/HERDSA Rekindled Mini Conference, Monash University, Melbourne

Nadine Zacharias, Mary Dracup, Robyn Everist: *Embedding Inclusive Curriculum: Working from the Ground Up.*

27-29 September 2017

The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) National Conference, Canberra

- Louise Pollard: *The Invisible Cohort? Investigating Strategies for Remote Students' Success.*
- James Smith and Michael Bullet: *Maintaining Connection to Family, Culture and Community: Implications for High School Completion and Respective Aspirations to Pursue Higher Education in Remote Indigenous Contexts in Australia.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *Careers Advice for Rural Students.*

6 October 2017

Presentation for ACT branch of HERDSA, Australian National University

Cathy Stone.

11 October 2017

Presentation to Australian Computer Society's e-Learning Special Interest Group, Canberra

Cathy Stone.

13 October 2017

2016 Equity Fellowship Insights and Recommendations to the Sector, Universities Australia, DVC Academic meeting

Nadine Zacharias and Sue Trinidad.

16 October 2017

Equity Fellowship Symposium, The University of Western Australia

Louise Pollard: *The Clever Country: The Importance of Investing in Regional and Remote Students.*

26 October 2017

Presentation at UTAS, Hobart, for HERDSA and UTAS online learning Community of Practice

Cathy Stone.

20 November 2017

NCSEHE National Equity Fellows Forum 2017, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane

- James Smith.
- Louise Pollard.
- Matt Brett.

20-23 November 2017

EPHEA Conference 2017, Brisbane

- Cathy Stone: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *Workshop: Student Equity Policy, Practice and Research: Where to Next?*
- Nadine Zacharias: *The Complex Relationships between Institutional HEPPP Programs and Student Outcomes.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *Building Legacy and Capacity Workshop Series.*
- Louise Pollard: *Learning from the Canadian Context: Equity Practitioners' Findings and Inspirations from a Canadian Study Tour.*

26-30 November 2017

2017 AARE Conference

- James Smith: *Featured Symposium: Strategies for Strengthening Indigenous Higher Education.*
- Sue Trinidad, Nadine Zacharias, Matt Brett, Louise Pollard and James Smith: *Higher Education Policy and Practice: Translating Student Equity Research.*

29 November 2017

HERI Seminar, Australian Government Department of Education and Training

Sue Trinidad, Matt Brett, Louise Pollard and James Smith: *The Equity Fellowships: Translating Equity Research into Policy and Practice.*

6 December 2017

Australian and New Zealand Student Services

Association Inc. (ANZSSA) Conference, Auckland

Cathy Stone and Ed Campbell: *Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education.*

6-8 December 2017

The Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) Conference, Wales, UK

- Nadine Zacharias and Graeme Atherton: *Building Capacity and Partnerships for Evaluations of Widening Participation Activities.*
- Nadine Zacharias: *Institutional Responses to the Australian Student Equity Program: The Importance of Strategic Intent.*

Appendix 2: Publications

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- Bennett, Anna. K., Erica Southgate, and Mahsood Shah. 2016. "Global Perspectives on Widening Participation: Approaches and Concepts." In *Widening Higher Education Participation: A Global Perspective*, edited by Anna. K. Bennett, Erica Southgate, and Mahsood Shah. Amsterdam: Elsevier Chandos.
- Brett, Matt, and Andrew Harvey. 2017. "Advancing Equity in the Australian Higher Education System." In *Visions for Australian Tertiary Education*, edited by Richard James, Sarah French, and Paula Kelly. Melbourne: Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne. http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2263137/MCSHE-Visions-for-Aust-Ter-Ed-web2.pdf.
- Brosnan, Caragh, Erica Southgate, Sue Outram, Heidi Lempp, Sarah Wright, Troy Saxby, Gillian Harris, Anna Bennett, and Brian, J. Kelly. 2016. "Experiences of Medical Students who are First in Family to Attend University." *Medical Education* 50 (8): 842-851. doi: [10.1111/medu.12995](https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12995).
- Cardak, Buly, Matt Brett, Paul Barry, Richard McAllister, Mark Bowden, John Bahtsevanoglou, and Joseph Vecci. 2017. *Regional Student Participation and Migration: Analysis of Factors Influencing Regional Student Participation and Internal Migration in Australian Higher Education*. Perth: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/regional-student-participation-and-migration-analysis-of-factors-influencing-regional-student-participation-and-internal-migration-in-australian-higher-education/>.
- Duvivier, Robbert, Caragh Brosnan, Erica Southgate et al. 2017. *Getting into Medicine: Tips for Future Applicants*. <http://medschoolapplication.com/>.
- Frawley, Jack, James A. Smith, Andrew Gunstone, Ekaterina Pechenkina, Wendy Ludwig, and Allison Stewart. 2017. "Indigenous VET to Higher Education Pathways and Transitions: A Literature Review." *International Studies in Widening Participation* 4 (1): 34-54. http://nova.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/45/pdf_20.
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- Grimes, Susan, Jill Scevak, Erica Southgate, and Rachel Buchanan. 2017. "Non-Disclosing Students with Disabilities or Learning Challenges: Characteristics and Size of a Hidden Population." *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 44 (4): 425-441. doi: [10.1007/s13384-017-0242-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-017-0242-y).
- Langridge, Richard, Shamus P. Smith, and Erica Southgate. 2017. "Participatory Design and Culture: An Annotated Bibliography." *DICE Report Series*. Number 3. Newcastle: DICE Research. http://dice.newcastle.edu.au/DRS_4_2017.pdf.
- National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. 2016. *Facilitating Student Equity in Australian Higher Education*. Perth: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/facilitating-student-equity-in-australian-higher-education/>.
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- Education." In *Indigenous Pathways, Transitions and Participation in Higher Education: From Policy to Practice*, edited by Jack Frawley, Steve Larkin, and James A. Smith. Singapore: Springer.
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Appendix 3: Awards/Appointments

Erica Southgate

- Finalist for the 2016 Australian and New Zealand Internet Awards in the 'Innovation' category.
- Finalist for the 11th annual International Writers' Award for *New Philosopher Journal*.
- Appointed member of editorial board for international journal *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*.
- ASCILITE 2017 Innovation Award.

James Smith

- Nominated for the 2017 CDU Vice-Chancellor's Award for Exceptional Performance in Research — both individual and team categories. Outcomes yet to be announced.
- Application for Adjunct Professorial status with University of Saskatchewan in-train as a direct result of his international visit in July.
- Consulting Editor for the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*.
- Invited by Universities Australia to join the Indigenous Strategy Reporting Working Party.

Cathy Stone

- Finalist in the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) awards in the international category.

Nadine Zacharias

- Member of the panel reviewing Curtin University's Equity, Ethics and Social Justice Unit.

Appendix 4: Report Downloads

2016 Fellows' Report Downloads from ncsehe.edu.au As of 31 December 2017

| | Total | Dec | Nov | Oct | Sept | Aug | Jul | Jun | May | Apr | Mar |
|--|--|-------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dr Cathy Stone — Opportunity Through Online Learning: Improving Student Access, Participation and Success in Online Higher Education | Full report | 2,967 | 130 | 198 | 321 | 215 | 249 | 203 | 298 | 389 | 574 |
| National Guidelines | National Guidelines | 3,299 | 231 | 272 | 263 | 334 | 323 | 260 | 295 | 389 | 519 |
| Dr Nadine Zacharias — The Australian Student Equity Program and Institutional Change: Paradigm Shift or Business as Usual? | Full report | 863 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 32 | 69 | 101 | 541 | | |
| | Equity Initiatives Map | 257 | 19 | 23 | 21 | 13 | 26 | 59 | 96 | | |
| Dr Erica Southgate — Fair Connection to Professional Careers: Understanding Social Difference and Disadvantage, Institutional Dynamics and Technological Opportunities | Full report | 1,029 | 125 | 68 | 184 | 652 | | | | | |
| | <i>Immersed in the Future</i> DICE Report | 642 | 42 | 68 | 90 | 442 | | | | | |