Connecting equity policy, research and practice

The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) is a research and policy centre funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The Centre is based at Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia.

The NCSEHE provides national leadership in student equity in higher education, connecting research, policy and practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.

The diverse activities conducted by the Centre focus on strengthening Australia’s research quality, capability and capacity to build a robust evidence base; and informing evidence-based policy design and implementation, and institutional best practice.

An emphasis on the ‘student voice’ and evaluation and communication of best practice equity initiatives contextualises research and data analysis.

The Centre has established a strong national presence, engaging with key stakeholders, and maintaining sector-wide partnerships to enhance outcomes and delivery of research and recommendations. The reputation and influence of the Centre has contributed to student equity becoming firmly embedded into higher education policy.

NCSEHE PUBLICATIONS

NCSEHE publications are an effective means of collating, interpreting and disseminating student equity research, data and good practice, as well as summarising outcomes from Centre initiatives. Developed in specific formats to target key stakeholder groups, these resources have contributed to a national narrative on the importance of equitable access to tertiary education.

The NCSEHE continues to produce a suite of print and online publications which are made available on the NCSEHE website (www.ncsehe.edu.au) and distributed in hardcopy to targeted stakeholders.
EQUITY FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Australian Government Department of Education has funded an ongoing Equity Fellows Program, managed by the NCSEHE, under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

The Program supports Fellows to undertake strategic, high-impact, high-profile leadership projects targeted sector-wide at improving higher education access, participation and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As part of their projects, Fellows spend a period of time working in, and with, the Department of Education, facilitating mutually beneficial engagement between the Department and the sector.

Six Fellowships have already been funded and the program will continue into the 2019–20 period.

Final reports are available online and in hardcopy by request: www.ncsehe.edu.au/research/research-reports

RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

The NCSEHE conducts an annual competitive research program, building an evidence base to improve access and outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Centre invites proposals from high-quality researchers and equity practitioners to conduct policy-relevant research aimed at supporting and informing policy and practice on student equity in higher education. An Advisory Committee—including academics, senior managers and equity practitioners—assists with the selection process.

The Centre is committed to research translation in order to ensure the ongoing significance and impact of its research program. Further outcomes reported in relation to NCSEHE funded grant projects include: application in Government and university policy and practice; journal articles; conference and other presentations and seminars; citations including government reports and publications; subsequent external research; national media coverage; books; and webinars.

Additionally, all final reports are summarised and presented through the Informing Policy and Practice print and online publication series.

Between 2014 and 2017, 47 projects have been funded to a total of $1.2 million. The Program will continue in 2019.

Final reports are available online at www.ncsehe.edu.au/research/research-reports
NCSEHE RESEARCH FELLOWS

A/PROFESSOR MARIA RACITI
2018 RESEARCH FELLOW
Career construction, future work and the perceived risks of going to university for young people from low SES backgrounds
This Fellowship identified 10 types of risk people from low SES backgrounds perceived as being associated with the decision of whether to go to university. A/Prof. Raciti (University of the Sunshine Coast) identified the common responses of low SES high school students when facing this dilemma.

PROFESSOR SARAH O’SHEA
2019 RESEARCH FELLOW
‘Mind the Gap!’ Exploring the post-graduation outcomes and employment mobility of individuals who are first in their family to complete a university degree
This Fellowship is a joint endeavour between the NCSEHE and the Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research (CHEEDR) at La Trobe University, and is being led by Prof. Sarah O’Shea (the University of Wollongong).

NCSEHE RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

The NCSEHE conducts additional research and evidence-based projects both independently and in collaboration with other organisations. These are funded through external grants; for example, the National Priorities Pool (NPP) program or from Centre resources.

Major projects have included:
- Pathways to higher education: The efficacy of enabling and sub-bachelor pathways for disadvantaged students
- Widening regional and remote participation: Interrogating the impact of outreach programs across Queensland
- Economies of scale in supporting low SES and other disadvantaged students
- My Story — Student Voice online series
- Regional Study Hubs Network
- NCSEHE Data Program
- Building Legacy and Capacity/Student Equity 2030
- Social marketing strategy for low SES communities
- Equity Research and Innovation Panel: Panel membership and secretariat duties
- publication of HEPPP NPP projects to NCSEHE repository and web resource.
The NCSEHE regularly engages and informs national and international stakeholders through inclusive, high-profile events, facilitating professional networking to promote discussion, collaboration and information sharing. These include conferences, fora, webinars, workshops and professional development sessions. Collaboration with associate organisations maximises potential audience and impact, and positions Australian advances in student equity research, policy and practice within an international context.

High-profile NCSEHE fora and conferences have included:

- National Equity Fellows Forum (2017)
- Facilitating an Innovative Future Through Equity Forum (2016)
- Equity Scholarship Provision in Australian Universities: Insights and Directions (2015)

The Centre’s online resources are central in providing high-quality content in accessible formats to engage stakeholders and effectively disseminate information. Maintaining a networked presence across online platforms also contributes to active discussion on student equity and promotes professional collaboration and information-sharing.