



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, Skills and Employment (DESE) and based at Curtin University.

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. The work of the NCSEHE informs 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.

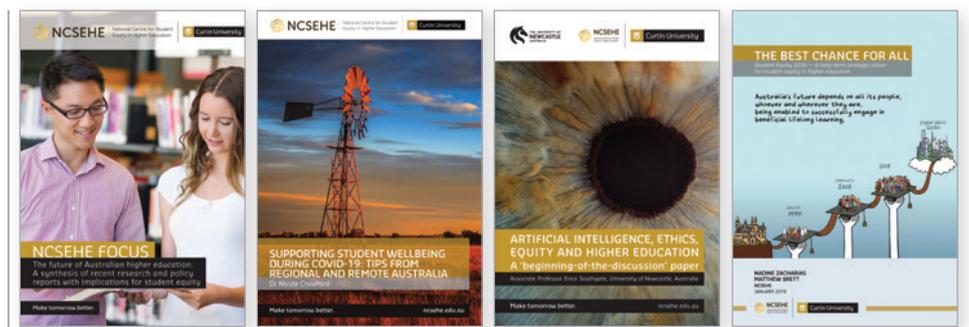
NCSEHE PUBLICATIONS

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.



Case study publications



Issues-based publications



Research-based publications



EQUITY FELLOWS PROGRAM

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

The Program has supported individual researchers and practitioners to undertake strategic, year-long projects. Findings and recommendations are disseminated sector-wide to improve higher education access, participation, and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Twelve Fellowships have been funded across three cohorts, conducted between 2016 and 2020, yielding valuable insights, recommendations, and resources for the sector.

As part of their projects, the Fellows spent time working in, and with, the DESE. This has facilitated mutually beneficial engagement, and dissemination of research findings to inform policy development.

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



RESEARCH GRANTS

A key objective of the NCSEHE is to build the evidence base around student equity in higher education through research informing policy and practice.

One of the ways this has been achieved is through the **NCSEHE Student Equity in Higher Education Research Grants Program** which has funded 79 projects since 2014, with a total research expenditure of A\$3,020,512.

The NCSEHE identifies key research priorities each year; this came to the fore in the 2020 funding round, with many of the projects focusing on the impacts of COVID-19.

All final reports are available on the NCSEHE website and are summarised and presented through the *Informing Policy and Practice* print and online publication series.

During 2019, the NCSEHE also commissioned four large-scale **Competitive Grants** to improve access to information about higher education study options, pathways, and careers for disadvantaged students and those who influence them.

The Competitive Grants Program focused on low socioeconomic status (SES), regional and remote, and Indigenous students. Funding was provided by the DESE under the National Priorities Pool (NPP) component of the HEPPP.

The four projects were completed in 2021 and are pending publication in 2022.

All NCSEHE-funded research is accessible online: www.ncsehe.edu.au/research/research-reports





NCSEHE RESEARCH FELLOWS



PROFESSOR MARIA RACITI

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 that people from low SES backgrounds perceived as being associated with the decision of whether to go to university. Prof. Raciti (USC) identified common responses of low SES high school

students when facing this dilemma, and produced a *University participation decision-making model*.



PROFESSOR SARAH O'SHEA

'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 was a joint endeavour between the NCSEHE and the Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research (CHEEDR) at La Trobe

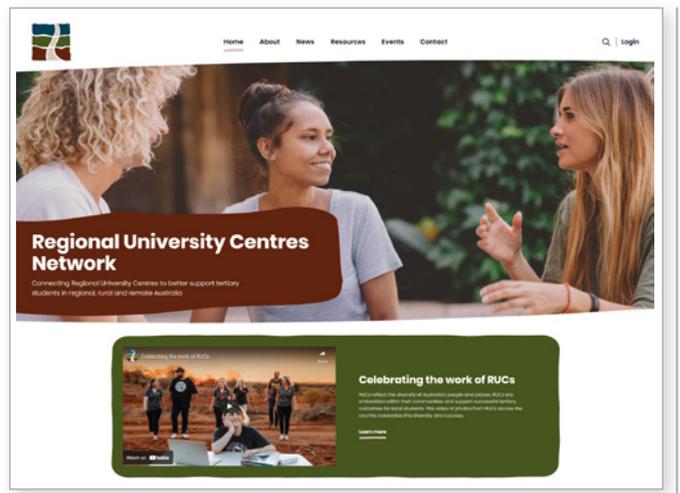
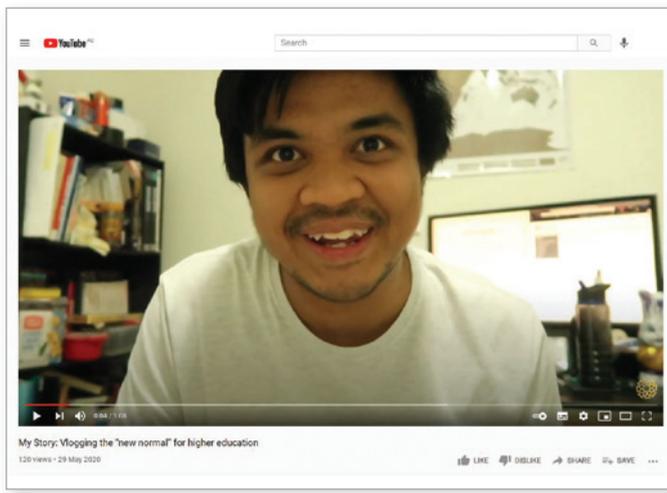
University. The research was led by Prof. Sarah O'Shea and supported by the University of Wollongong.

NCSEHE SPECIAL 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 NPP Program or from Centre resources.

Recent projects have included:

- establishment of the Regional University Centres (RUC) Network, including production of a dedicated website, members' portal, and bespoke resources
- NCSEHE Data Program, annual Briefing Note, and interactive Student Equity Data Webpage
- *National Career Development Learning Hub for students with disability* project
- *Parental expectations of children's higher education participation in Australia* research
- Country University Centres research and collaboration
- DESE-commissioned paper: *Embedding the Disability Standards for Education 2005 into higher education institution policies and practices across the student life cycle*
- *My Story — Student Voice* series, including written features, student vlogs, conference panels, and a case study publication
- publication of HEPPP NPP projects to a custom-built NCSEHE repository and web resource.





EVENTS

The NCSEHE regularly conducts 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:

- World Access to Higher Education Day (2018; 2020; 2021)
- National Equity Fellows Fora (2015; 2017; 2018)
- Student Equity Snapshots Forum (2020)
- National Careers Week seminar — *Careers and student equity: Key influencers and careers advice for students* (2021)



ONLINE RESOURCES

The NCSEHE'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.

To keep up to date on NCSEHE activities, register for our eNews: <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/news-events/newsletters/>

Year	Participation (All Students) Events
2013	197,219
2014	171,024
2015	153,840
2016	126,203
2017	123,554
2018	120,053
2019	120,039

Equity Group	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Growth
Low SES	197,219	171,024	153,840	126,203	123,554	120,053	120,039	15.07%
Disability	27,032	40,679	44,856	47,870	51,773	55,565	58,739	44.40%
Indigenous	15,019	10,559	11,845	12,878	13,895	14,314	14,862	36.14%
WPIITA	176,810	124,150	125,890	120,210	117,659	115,739	115,177	9.20%
Regional	140,010	148,014	149,001	150,441	151,002	151,838	150,453	3.00%
Remote	5,842	5,848	5,911	6,036	6,167	6,076	6,107	4.43%
Non-English Speaking Background	22,567	25,129	26,961	27,150	27,195	25,713	24,438	-2.50%
Australia	679,222	708,278	727,786	743,630	759,151	754,652	765,594	8.40%

NCSEHE website, eNews and student equity data webpage