

EQUITY REPORTING

A. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2007

1. Liberated Learning Consortium

In 2007 the University was invited to join the Liberated Learning Consortium. The Consortium is structured around a renewable Joint Study Agreement (JSA) between Saint Mary's University (SMU) and IBM Research. Consortium members participate at an overall decision-making level to identify yearly objectives, set priorities to develop Speech Recognition technology, understand impact, drive future applications, and obtain research/project funding. The Liberated Learning concept is based on two interrelated applications: using speech recognition technology to automatically transcribe spoken language and display it as readable text and; using speech recognition to produce accessible, multimedia transcripts. The Liberated Learning concept undergoes continuous development and refinement by members of the Liberated Learning Consortium, a group of international university and industry partners working to improve information accessibility through speech recognition technology.

2. Development of a Customer Relationship Management Project

The University has embarked on a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project. CRM is a multifaceted process that focuses on creating two-way relationships with customers so that organisations have an intimate knowledge of customer needs, wants, and behaviour. CRM is intended to help organisations understand customers so well that over time they are able to anticipate the needs of current and potential customers and actively intervene through a one-to-one relationship with each customer in order to create outcomes desired by both the customer and the organisation. This process is facilitated by a combination of direct contact and IT technologies that are embedded into a customer-centric strategy

3. University-wide retention project

The University commenced a whole of institution project on retention, setting terms of reference for an external consultant to investigate and comment on the current retention and progress statistics on a course basis and the University wide approaches that have been undertaken to date to deal with retention issues (many of which impact upon equity target group students) in the context of national best practice. The budget process identified significant funding to address retention issues and the retention project is continuing in 2008.

B. EQUITY GROUP FOCUS AND KEY STRATEGIES

All target equity groups received attention with a special emphasis on students of low socio economic status.

Strategies further developed or implemented University-wide in 2007 across all target groups included:

- Flexible and adaptable program delivery systems;
- Flexible course structures and enrolment modes;
- Reviewing and implementing appropriate initiatives to increase access for equity group students to higher degree programs; including support from *LearnLink* where students can have ready access to literacy and numeracy support;
- Information on disability services, study skills, student counselling and complaints processes and equity issues published in course related material, booklets and leaflets;

- Expansion of staff professional development programme on equity issues;
- Support for students who are academically “at risk”. This is largely aimed at students from identified equity target groups;
- Extension of the Learning Precinct to Palmerston campus;
- Training of all staff in equal opportunity issues including disability and mental health awareness.

Major issues faced by particular equity groups and key strategies and actions being implemented or planned for implementation to improve equity performance in 2007 are listed below:

Low socio economic status

This group of students continues to receive a special focus. Students in this group are frequently first time family members to attend a university and cannot gain knowledge from family about University processes and assistance in selection of programs of study. These students may, but not always, have a low level of literacy and numeracy and may also be disadvantaged by a lack of cultural capital. With the Welfare to Work reforms Charles Darwin University acknowledges that students returning to work after child rearing or those with a disability may also be classified as low-socio economic status and may also fall into other equity groups, in particular people with a disability, those from a remote and rural background and those from a non English speaking background.

Accordingly, this group has been targeted to ensure that a large segment of the Northern Territory population have the opportunity to attend university and receive additional support to assist them in studying and succeeding alongside mainstream students.

Key strategies and actions planned or in progress for this equity group include:

- Visits to Northern Territory Schools by careers advisor staff with specific sessions on educational pathways for those who may not successfully achieve an enrolment in Higher Education;
- Undertaking training/teaching in rural and remote communities (including the use of mobile classrooms). Currently the University conducts training at more than 100 locations across the Northern Territory;
- Provision of support through Support and Equity Services to deal with emotional, academic, financial and personal issues;
- Continuation of the Learning Support group to coordinate support to all students but especially students of low socio-economic status to ensure they cope at university. This includes staff in *LearnLink* who can provide assistance with study;
- Encouragement of secondary school students (including low socio-economic status students) on to campus for study. Prospective students are encouraged to attend and participate in study areas of their interest to get a feel for the environment, sit in on a lecture and to meet lecturers and current students;
- Bridging and Enabling programs including the Tertiary Enabling Program are offered to mature-age and early school leavers. Many of these students are from low socio economic backgrounds;
- Study Skills support offered to individual students, and groups sessions; the Study Skills website has recently undergone a significant upgrade to provide a wider service for students;
- Student Loans scheme;
- A program to assist students who have been identified as academically “at risk” provides support and referral to other support services where appropriate.

People from rural and isolated areas

A large part of the University’s catchment area encompasses rural and isolated locations, so that people from rural and isolated areas are a natural focus for the University. Again students in this group are frequently first time family members to

attend University and may be disadvantaged by a lack of cultural capital. As indicated above several of the students from rural and isolated areas are also of low socio economic status.

Key strategies and actions in progress or planned for this equity group include:

- Visits to Northern Territory Schools including those in remote locations by careers advisor staff;
- Undertaking training/teaching on site in rural and remote communities (including the use of mobile classrooms). Currently the University conducts training at more than 100 locations across the Northern Territory;
- Provision of support through Support and Equity Services to deal with emotional, academic and personal issues such as homesickness and settling into a more urban environment;
- Additional tutorial support for students who live on campus;
- Telephone counselling and support offered to students in remote locations;
- Learning Support group to coordinate support to all students including students from rural and remote areas to ensure they cope at university and access to staff in *LearnLink*. Through the University's External Support Services students can receive help and advice on using *Learnline*, the University's course management system;
- Bridging and Enabling Program including the Tertiary Enabling program are offered to mature age and early school leavers. Many of these students are from rural and remote areas, having left school at an early age or do not have access to high schools in the areas in which they live;
- Study skills support offered on line through same- same time tutorials specifically aimed towards rural and remote students
- The Office of Pro Vice Chancellor, Community and Access, enables more visits to rural and remote areas to ensure potential students are identified and supported before and during the transition to university;
- Close liaison with appropriate agencies and service providers in rural and remote areas to assist in identifying potential students.

People with a disability

The University has had a focus for some time on people with a disability and continues to give this equity group strong attention. The issues faced by people from this equity target group who attend university in the Northern Territory are not dissimilar from those in other jurisdictions.

Key strategies and actions in progress or planned for this equity group include:

- Significant progress has been made since the Disability Standards audit including the development and approval of a new process for students with a disability who are seeking special accommodation during their study. The process ensures that the academic journey of students with a disability is supported and their needs identified and addressed;
- Commencement of a planned approach to provide facilities for students with a disability so that they can work alongside mainstream students without being identified. This has necessitated a greater use of assistive technology. This transition has also received the assistance and support from the RDLO and recently appointed NDCO positions. Training programs are regularly offered to staff on all campuses informing them of the specific requirements relating to the disability standards and generally raising awareness of a staff of the need to ensure that students have easy access to academic adjustments. The training has proved useful in that staff feel more comfortable about contacting the Student Facilitator Disabilities on a range of questions. Attitudes are changing with staff seeing the value of a diverse student body;
- Assistive learning technologies software in lecture theatres continues with the use of *ViaScribe* and will be supported through CDU's membership of the Liberated Learning Consortium;

- The Disability support person located in Alice Springs has been increased to a full-time position to provide support to the increasing number of students studying in central Australia.

Students from a non-English speaking background

The Northern Territory is a very multi-cultural part of Australia, and the University operates in locations where people of many different ethnic backgrounds are domiciled. The University receives significant numbers of refugee students who require special support needs including trauma counselling. The major language groups assisted are Indian, Chinese and Arabic (Sudanese).

Key strategies and actions in progress or planned for this equity group include:

- Broad dissemination of information on the support available to NESB students;
- Expanded program for students to receive English language training;
- Continued promotion of awareness of the English as a second language interactive cultural awareness program to students and staff;
- Adoption of alternative and flexible assessment methods;
- Improved understanding of the influence that development of a student's first language has on that student's English language development and assistance to lecturers to recognise this when delivering programs of study;
- Acknowledgement by staff that the learning of a subject and the learning of language skills occur concurrently, again assisting lecturers to enhance their lecturing skills;
- Self support groups for study and revision established for NESB students;
- Additional literacy and numeracy tutorial support provided to NESB students;
- A program established to help NESB nursing students in the pre-hospital practicum program;
- Study Skills support and the provision of English language training made available through the Alice Springs Campus.

Women in non-traditional areas of study

The University has a strong representation of female students and the University continues to pay attention to attracting females to non-traditional study areas.

Key strategies and actions in progress or planned for this equity group include:

- Security escort provided to cars for female students studying at night;
- The appointment of a number of female staff in the Schools of Information Technology and Engineering and a female professor in the School of Accounting. These staff actively encourage female students into study in non-traditional areas;
- Scholarships offered to female postgraduate students and in particular those who have taken time out for child-bearing and child rearing.

C. EQUITY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN 2007

The Division of Support and Equity Services provides a strong profile for equity planning and management within the University. In 2006 a Senior Advisor with an academic background provided further enhancement of equity strategy development and support programs to students. Enhanced student support was also provided by a Student Support Officer at the Alice Springs campus.

The University's Joint Implementation Group, the membership of which includes union delegates, senior academic and administrative staff and the Director of Support and Equity Services, endorses equity plans and strategies. A primary goal of the University is to embed equity into mainstream university teaching practices and service provision. Accordingly, the University emphasises cultural inclusivity in teaching and curriculum development, flexibility in delivery systems and effective support services. Increasingly, information technology systems are used to improve the availability, quality and speed of programs and services to people in rural and isolated areas. Details of major strategies targeted at different equity groups are provided in section B above.

The University has rationalised its committee structure and has relatively few committees, but has a number of Advisory groups to deal with emerging issues. The Director of Support and Equity Services is a member of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee and as indicated above is a member of the Joint Implementation Group. The Director of Support and Equity Services is also a member of a project group dealing with recruitment, access and retention of staff and a group providing advice on staff development. In addition the Director attends monthly meetings of the University Management Team, an executive and senior management group chaired by the Vice Chancellor, which deals with a wide range of issues including those relating to strategic planning and institutional development and other matters which senior staff may wish to raise relating to their portfolios. The Director of Support and Equity Services, the Student Facilitator, Disabilities, and the National Disability Coordinator Officer meet every 8 weeks with the Assistant Director Finance and Assets Services to raise physical access issues and where appropriate discuss priorities for minor new works to address these issues.

D. PERFORMANCE OF EQUITY GROUPS IN 2006

Group	Relevant indicator	Key trend or shift	Explanation
LSES	Access and Participation	Indicator values trending upwards over period 2002-2006	University focus on this equity group and strategies employed producing positive outcomes. The University retains concerns that current reliance on postcode data to identify equity target group students, including LSES results in an underestimate of performance
NESB	Access and Participation	Indicator values trending upwards over period 2002-2006 and currently above state value	University focus and strategies employed producing positive outcomes
Disability	Access and participation	2006 values improved over 2005 and above national reference value	Strategies employed having an effect
Regional	Access and participation	Some decline in indicator values in 2006 compared with 2005 but values still above both state and national reference values	Strategies employed having an effect but will be monitored for maintenance of effectiveness
Remote	Access and participation	Values decreased a little in 2006 compared with 2005	Strategies in placed to be monitored and reviewed
LSES	Retention and Success	Indicator values improved in 2006 compared with 2005 and close (all ages) to or above (under 25) mainstream student values	The University's proposed enhanced focus on learning support should maintain or further improve retention and success indicators
NESB	Retention and Success	Indicator values in 2006 above the comparable values for mainstream students	Strategies employed having an effect

Disability	Retention and Success	Values decreased a little in 2006 compared with 2005 but still above State reference values	A whole of University project on retention and success in progress in 2008 with a view to identifying proximal causes and introducing remedial activity
Regional	Retention and Success	Indicator values in 2006 above the comparable values for mainstream students and ahead of National reference figures	Strategies employed having an effect
Remote	Retention and Success	Indicator values in 2006 below the comparable values for mainstream students but ahead of State reference values and close to National reference figures	Strategies employed having an effect

E. HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME (ESP) FUNDED INITIATIVES

Key initiative title	Brief Description (eg objective; target group)	Outcomes Briefly describe the achievements of the initiative and whether or not it is/was successful. If outcomes are unknown at this stage, indicate when the initiative will be evaluated
Intervention program for students who are deemed academically at risk	<p>Students who fail 50% or more of their enrolment are sent a letter by Student Services inviting students to contact Support and Equity Services to discuss issues impacting on their performance and where appropriate refer to other services available</p> <p>Targeted students fall into all defined equity groups with an emphasis on regional and remote</p>	<p>The outcome of the initial program has been limited. However, evaluating the program has raised a number of issues concerning students and has led to a number of initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving the quality of information sent to students concerning progression • a more student focused, streamlined and integrated approach to the 'show cause' process • a proposal to recast the University's progression rules • a proposal for a coordinated support and early intervention program for students whose progress is deemed unsatisfactory. <p>This program is under further development and ongoing</p> <p>The initiatives will be evaluated in 2009 against a variety of measures including the amount of students receiving 'show cause' notices and DEST/DEEWR access, participation, attrition, progress and retention rates</p>

Staff Induction Program	<p>The objective is to better inform teaching staff, through the working through of a number of case studies/scenarios, of some of the issues impacting on student success and how staff can respond in a student focused manner</p> <p>Targeted students fall into all defined equity groups</p>	<p>Staff attending the program reported that they felt 'empowered' to approach student issues of access and equity in a proactive and student centred style</p> <p>This program is under further development and ongoing</p> <p>The initiative will be evaluated in 2009 by measuring the number of student grievances lodged concerning issues of 'communication' and 'special consideration' against previous years</p>
Early drop-out Intervention program for students in programs with high numbers of target equity groups	<p>These students were contacted before census date to enquire how they were coping with study and advised of support services available to them</p> <p>Targeted students fall into all defined equity groups with an emphasis on regional and remote</p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence is that students are less inclined to drop-out and discontinue their studies if they received personal contact beforehand.</p> <p>Program in under further development and will be continued in 2008/9</p> <p>The initiatives will be evaluated in 2009 and measured against DEST/DEEWR access, participation, attrition, progress and retention rates</p>
'Having Trouble Balancing Your Load' campaign to raise awareness on balancing life and study load	<p>A major publicity campaign both on and off campus to raise student's awareness that they should contact Student Support if they believed that their study was in competition with work or family commitments</p> <p>Targeted students fall into all defined equity groups</p>	<p>This program is ongoing.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence is that students have asserted that have taken advantage of the fact that they can reduce their load without academic or financial penalty rather than dropping out of their program</p> <p>The initiatives will be evaluated in 2009 and measured against DEST/DEEWR access, participation, attrition, progress and retention rates</p>

F. DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Key initiative title	Brief Description (eg objective; target group)	Outcomes Briefly describe the achievements of the initiative and whether or not it is/was successful. If outcomes are unknown at this stage, indicate when the initiative will be evaluated
Braille embosser	Provides text, diagrams and pictures in Braille format for students who are blind	Students who are blind, or have low vision have an alternative option to access their learning materials. Students have welcomed this opportunity to make choices.
Assistive technology: upgrades to software for Read and Write Gold and Dragon Naturally speaking	Builds on current assistive technology resources, provides students with up-to-dae technology	Numbers of students requesting access to this software is increasing and feel comfortable in doing so.
Lap-top computers	Purchased to support the via-Scribe project	The pilot project is proving to be time-consuming and progress has been slow. A project leader commences working full-time on this in mid 2008
Wheelchair access	Minor New Works undertaken to improve wheelchair access to the	Wheelchair users have greater access to seating and participation in activities held

	outdoor auditorium	in the outdoor auditorium.
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The Disability funding has enabled the following initiatives to be introduced

- Continued to build on assistive technology resources for use by students with disabilities allowing them to become more independent learners;
- Intensive support provided to students with profound hearing disabilities through the use of scribes in lectures;
- Intensive support provided to students with low vision and blindness through the use of note taking equipment, providing materials in alternative formats and tutoring support
- A brochure was produced to promote the services provided to students with disabilities
- A new process for students with a disability based on the Disability Standards was developed and implemented. Included in this was the development of a Needs Assessment which is used to formulate an Action Plan to address the effects of the disability. The Action Plan is developed by both the Disability support person and the student.
- Highlights of the RDLO program included:
 - A Tertiary Taster for High School students with a disability currently studying in Years 10, 11 and 12 considering further education at a university and/or vocational training option. Thirty students from Darwin and Outer Darwin attended the program.
 - The development of ‘The Road Ahead’ a self-help planning guide to post-secondary education, employment and training for people with a disability and chronic medical conditions..
 - Disability Awareness week. The RDLO initiated many activities for this event including the launch of the program when Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu captured his audience with his beautiful singing voice and raised awareness that disability is not an impediment for success. A further significant achievement was the “Celebrating Ability and Achievement Dinner” when Vinny Lauwers – World Disabled Sports person of the year 2001” charmed and inspired his audience with an audio and visual presentation of his single handed round –the-world voyage
 - Facilitated discussion with key stakeholders to increase the provision of interpreter services for people who use Auslan as a first language.

G. COMMONWEALTH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS (CLS)

In 2007 Charles Darwin University undertook a new approach to informing our students about Commonwealth Scholarships. As shown in the tables below, this approach was particularly successful in increasing the number of Commonwealth Education Cost Scholarships (CECS) awarded, however Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (CAS) have proven difficult to allocate.

Factors contributing to this have been identified and are outlined below.

The number of CAS being awarded since 2005 has marginally increased each year. In Semester 1, 2008 we had 38 students receive a CAS payment. Whilst this is an increase of 5.5% from the same time last year – it still only represents 40% of our CAS allocation. CDU appreciates the consideration made by the Commonwealth to convert some of the 2008 ordinary CAS allocation to ordinary CECS (18 CAS to 36 CECS). This is represented in the table overleaf by an asterisk.

As previously reported CAS are difficult to allocate primarily due to the Remote Location eligibility criteria of this Scholarship. Only a small number of applicants at CDU meet the eligibility criteria, due largely to the fact that much of our natural catchment is already a remote area and many of those applying for these scholarships come from interstate, that is, non remote areas.

In Semester 2, 2007 and Semester 1, 2008 CDU students displayed greater need for CECS. The application numbers have shown a steady increase with the level of demand exceeding the number of scholarships available. Once again the high cancellation rate of scholarships allowed for students who applied and were part way through their course to be allocated CECS from previous years.

The primary reason for these cancellations is students withdrawing from courses prior to their completion, and not as part of the review process undertaken each semester. The cancellation rates are consistent with those across the University.

Since the introduction of Commonwealth Scholarships in 2004, 44 recipients have remained enrolled and completed their studies through CDU. Conversely, 53 students were no longer eligible due to poor academic performance and a further 33 discontinued their enrolment with CDU.

Currently CDU has 149 CECS and 38 CAS recipients out of an available pool of 206 CECS and 95 CAS.

The raising of awareness with regard to Commonwealth Scholarships is an ongoing priority of the Scholarships Officer. CDU anticipates the move to SATAC and centralising the application process will produce an increase in demand for Commonwealth Scholarships in 2009.

Available Scholarships	CECS	CAS	IAS	IE CECS	IE CAS	A/Degree CECS	A/Degree CAS
2005	39	24					
2006	37	25					
2007	41	26					
2008	89*	20*	20	30	10	4*	0*
Total	206	95	20	30	10	4	0
Current in Semester 1, 2008							
Current in Semester 1, 2008	CECS	CAS	IAS	IE CECS	IE CAS	A/Degree CECS	A/Degree CAS
2005	25	10					
2006	26	5					
2007	41	11					
2008	57	12	9	4	3	0	0
Total	149	38	9	4	3	1	0

2004	CECS	CAS	Total Unallocated CECS	Total Unallocated CAS
New CLS offered	18	9		
Awarded	18	9	0	0
Cancellations for 2004	5	4		

2005	CECS	CAS	Total Unallocated CECS	Total Unallocated CAS
Available from 2004	5	4		
New CLS offered	39	24		
Awarded	48	15	-4	13
Cancellations in 2005	19	13		

2006	CECS	CAS	Total Unallocated CECS	Total Unallocated CAS
Available from 2004 & 2005	19	13		
New CLS offered	37	25		
Awarded	35	16	21	22
Cancellations in 2006	44	16		

2007 Semester 1	CECS	CAS	Total Unallocated CECS	Total Unallocated CAS
Available from 2006	44	16		
New CLS offered	41	26		
Awarded	63	16	22	16

H. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ESP FUNDING IN 2008

Charles Darwin University currently offers the following activities and support programs which assist disadvantaged students in Higher Education.

1. Outreach Programs

- All Secondary Schools in the Territory receive regular visits from University personnel and opportunities are provided for students to visit the campuses to explore study and career options and support services;
- An annual program is offered to NT prospective students to attend and participate in study areas of their interest and choice. The opportunity to meet current students and lecturers is also provided;
- The University coordinates a significant component of the Youth Week Program which involves extensive liaison with community agencies and government departments;
- At information sessions students are provided with financial and study assistance options and information;
- The University has a close liaison with Centrelink who visit the campus at the start of each semester to facilitate transactions. In addition students are referred to Community agencies who offer financial counseling and workshops on managing on a student budget. There is also an identified contact Scholarship Officer;
- A process established in 2005 offers special entry to disadvantaged students;
- Bridging and enabling programs including the Tertiary Enabling Program are offered to mature-aged and early school leaving students. The majority of these students are from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- The University has appointed a Pro-Vice-Chancellor in Community and Access whose primary role is to foster and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing a tertiary education;
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may apply for exemption from VET course tuition fees which can provide a pathway to higher education;
- Links are fostered and maintained with many service providers who support disadvantaged and at risk people in the local community. These links include attendance at network meetings for Youth and Youth at Risk Networks, Interagency Networks, and Disability Support Networks. Involvement in NT and National, Human and Community Service reviews and consultancies, and involvement in cooperative and co-facilitated workshops and training for staff and students and community groups, ensures close relationships and information exchange, with agencies and workers who many students rely upon for support. This is in addition to University support services.

2. Support Services

- The University offers a range of support services to disadvantaged students including the following: Admission and enrolment assistance;
- Orientation programs;
- Assistance in finding accommodation;
- Study Skills programs offered in group tutorial sessions and one-on-one support;
- Career advice services;
- Student Emergency Loans Scheme;
- Disability support including assistive technology;
- Financial advice;
- ELICOS and literacy and numeracy programs;
- Student personal counseling;
- Appointment of a position in Alice Springs to provide disability and study skills.

3. Institutional Equity Programs

The University has established ten Charles Darwin University Equity Scholarships worth \$500 each to support students in their first year of study to purchase study materials. These scholarships will be offered each year. Students from low social economic backgrounds, students from rural and isolated areas, students from a non English Speaking Background and students with a disability may apply for these scholarships.

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