

Engagement Strategy 2010-2013

Preamble

Engagement has been a defining aspect of the University of Western Sydney's mission since its inception. Engagement, with our region in particular, is a component of our founding Act. Since 2004, the University has made intentional and strategic investments of funds and staffing to increase its engagement capacity. This Engagement Strategic Plan 2010-2013 builds on the prior Engagement Strategic Plan 2007-2010. The University's commitment to strategic action and investment has enabled UWS to become recognised as a sector leader in the field of engagement and a model for other institutions to emulate.

In 2007, the UWS Executive appointed the University's first full-time Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Engagement) to create senior leadership for the agenda. That same year, the Executive approved the University's first strategic plan for engagement and used the plan to make significant investments in a few major areas which continue to frame this strategic plan for 2010-2013. Under the first strategic plan, the university expanded engaged learning opportunities for students by increasing the number of units with external community-based learning components (such as Learning through Community Service, Practicum III (School of Education), and community-engaged capstone units in every course of the Bachelor of Business Commerce, among others). Under the original plan, UWS also launched what is now the most extensive schools engagement program in Australia, engaging in partnership with more than half of the schools in Greater Western Sydney in 2009 and providing approximately 11,000 learning activity opportunities to the region's school students. In addition to this commitment to increasing educational attainment, other engagement initiatives focus on UWS' key engagement themes of cultural understanding and the improvement of social capital, environmental sustainability and economic development especially for small and medium enterprises.

By embedding engagement principles and practices as a method of conducting our teaching, learning and research work, UWS has made engagement core work of the University. University policies have been revised, including career promotion criteria, to ensure that staff members are recognised for engagement activities. Most importantly, the online system for Tracking and Improving Community Engagement (TICE) was launched in 2009 and is being populated with UWS engagement activity records. The system will soon be offered to other Australian Universities to improve data collection nationally.

The UWS Engagement Strategy 2010-2013 promotes an integrated view of engagement, one that leverages investment in a few key areas of community partnerships to develop a coherent and sustainable portfolio of engagement projects. The engagement strategy comprises initiatives and improvement actions to ensure that sustainable and robust engagement continues and expands across the University. The framework and initiatives align with the University's plans for improving teaching and research, as well as the UWS "Making The Difference" strategies.

Strategic initiatives and improvement actions

Focus engagement investments on UWS themes and strategies for research and learning to develop a coherent and intentional portfolio of engagement projects by:

- 1.1 Injecting resources into existing program models and partnerships of demonstrated strength
- 1.2 Designing and supporting a portfolio of communications strategies and venues to facilitate collaboration on strategic imperatives
- 1.3 Aligning internal strategic investment programs across research, learning and teaching, and engagement to increase synergy and impact

Fund major, multi-year engaged teaching and research initiatives that address the priority themes by:

- 2.1 Supporting initiatives emerging from College and School priorities where engagement could be integrated to strengthen research, learning and teaching outcomes
- 2.2 Increasing experiential learning opportunities across curricula and increasing undergraduate involvement in engaged research activities
- 2.3 Integrating engaged learning and research into postgraduate study
- 2.4 Facilitating partnership development and maintenance in support of University, College and School objectives
- 2.5 Expanding or replicating promising projects that emerge from those initial investments
- 2.6 Evaluating impacts and outcomes to assess sustainability, replicability and to increase public visibility of the University's engagement initiatives and partnerships
- 2.7 Increasing academic staff skills and interests through professional development and internal consultation and facilitation support

Strategic initiatives and improvement actions

Increase the organisational (human and infrastructure) capacity for engaged teaching and research by:

- 3.1 Providing academic staff development programs using proven strategies that align with the diverse interests and skill levels of staff
- 3.2 Having revised the UWS academic promotion policies in 2009, to ensure academic staff are recognised for their engaged research and teaching activities, the University must now continue to provide mentoring and facilitation assistance to help staff document and present their engagement activities in their promotion applications
- 3.3 Ensuring that the UWS Tracking and Improving Community Engagement (TICE) data collection system is used to document engagement activities, as a tool for sharing practices and building internal and external collaboration

Improve partnership relationships and community voice in the University's planning, implementation and evaluation of engagement activities by:

- 4.1 Continuing to encourage staff research on partnerships, community capacity, issues relating to community voice and the role and effectiveness of advisory panels, and related topics
- 4.2 Sustaining and nurturing current internal investments to facilitate community-university partnerships
- 4.3 Forming and sustaining reference groups or other advisory structures relevant to our major engagement themes in order to promote collaboration and information exchange
- 4.4 Developing a dynamic and interactive Website to foster university-community communications and make UWS engagement activities visible
- 4.5 Using the Website as a mechanism to facilitate the collection of impact data from the community (TICE II will be completed in 2010 to provide a feedback mechanism for community partners)
- 4.6 Collaborating with UWS marketing and public relations staff to ensure consistent branding and messages to external communities and to raise the visibility of the University's engagement partnerships and outcomes
- 4.7 Monitoring federal, state and regional data sources to remain alert to changes in community conditions and needs

Strategic initiatives and improvement actions

Ensure quality and continually seek to improve engagement programs by:

- 5.1 Ensuring that UWS staff are aware of the Tracking and Improving Community Engagement online system and use it effectively to capture descriptions and impacts or outcomes of community-university engagement activities and partnerships
- 5.2 Ensuring that engagement projects supported by UWS Strategic Initiatives Funds have embedded evaluation strategies to capture impacts and outcomes and inform improvement
- 5.3 Collaborating with UWS media relations staff to increase stories on engagement projects and outcomes
- 5.4 Encouraging academic staff to prepare publications and presentations on engaged research and teaching outcomes and practices; facilitating staff mentorship and the development of engaged research studies
- 5.5 Sustaining involvement in the Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) and other inter-institutional academic venues to facilitate benchmarking and exchange of good practices
- 5.6 Increasing opportunities to recognise engagement achievement by students, staff and community partners through awards and other recognition or incentives

University of Western Sydney
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith South DC NSW 1797 Australia
www.uws.edu.au