

Media release

More students to succeed at university, thanks to \$30 million Government grant

The University of Western Sydney has welcomed a multi-million boost from the Federal Government to significantly expand its flagship UWSCollege model of higher education and to establish a new tertiary education facility in Lithgow – the first in the region.

The \$29.8 million funding from the Commonwealth means UWS will become a national leader for improving access to university study for thousands more students – a key Government initiative – particularly those from across Greater Western Sydney and regional areas.

The expansion of UWSCollege will see it significantly increase its enrolments to 5500 students within the next decade, with brand new facilities at Lithgow and the University's Penrith and Bankstown campuses, as well as enhanced facilities at the main UWSCollege site at Blacktown.

In addition to the \$29.8 million in funding received under the Federal Government's Structural Adjustment Fund, the University is investing \$15 million of its own to support this important initiative.

UWSCollege was established by UWS in 2006 to provide a supportive pathway to university and improve access to higher education for students who may not have had the same academic preparation to gain a place in a university course.

Students have the benefit of small class sizes, additional study support, academic skills development and flexible courses. The results speak for themselves, with UWSCollege experiencing high levels of satisfaction, retention and progression rates, and academic achievement amongst its students.

The University's own data reveals students who transition to the second year of a UWS degree following a year of study in UWSCollege do as well, if not better, than those who enrolled directly into UWS.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Janice Reid says UWS is playing a significant role in helping the nation achieve its goal of 40 percent of 25 to 34 year olds having a bachelor degree by 2025.

"UWSCollege has been tremendously successful in providing opportunities and supportive pathways to university for students from Greater Western Sydney. UWS believes that the best predictor of success at university is success at university," says Professor Reid.

"By expanding UWSCollege to even more locations, we are fulfilling our mission to improve the educational outcomes for the people of Greater Western Sydney and beyond, where the higher education participation rate is 3.2 per cent, compared with 5.3 per cent for the rest of Sydney."

The UWSCollege campus at Lithgow will be the first higher education facility for 20,000 residents in the Local Government Area, which has one of New South Wales' lowest participation rates in higher education.

CEO of UWSCollege, Dr Kerry Hudson, says the valuable support of Lithgow City Council will provide much-needed infrastructure for the Lithgow UWSCollege campus.

The UWSCollege will utilise the Lithgow City Council-owned Hoskins Building which for many years was used for the Lithgow library and by many community groups for learning and cultural purposes. The building is centrally-located and will undergo a \$9.8 million refurbishment to become a 5000 square metre 21st century centre for higher learning.

The Lithgow campus will include flat floor teaching spaces, tiered lecture theatre/auditorium, labs, library and resource centre, IT kiosk, student services and recreational spaces.

“When the facility opens in 2014 it will cater for 100 students with the potential to grow to 300 in time,” says Dr Hudson.

“First year and associate degree programs in business, construction management and engineering will be among the key courses on offer. Short courses for managers and non-school leaver students will also provide pathways to postgraduate awards.”

The new UWSCollege facility at the Werrington South site of the Penrith campus is expected to have over 1000 students enrolled. Meanwhile, a new purpose-built facility at Bankstown will be home to 500 students.

The significantly expanded facilities at the UWSCollege headquarters on the Nirimba (Blacktown) campus of UWS will also accommodate up to 1000 additional students.

“This funding will provide more students with access to UWSCollege and result in significantly more students from Greater Western Sydney and beyond receiving and completing a higher education,” says Dr Hudson.

As part of the funding UWS will also partner with Charles Sturt University, the University of New England, the University of Sydney, and local TAFE institutes to establish a Collaborative Learning Network, which will give students even greater choice in where, how and when to study.

Along with the expansion of UWSCollege, this will include expanding TAFE pathways and combining TAFE and university course offerings, opening up the choice for UWS students to study units by distance with UNE, and a collaborative approach to study offerings with the University of Sydney.

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