

Concurrent Session H
Tuesday 13 September
2:45pm – 3:35pm



Session 6
My Journey In2Uni, UOW University Preparation Program
(UPP): Engaging Underrepresented Students in Higher
Education

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Keirin McCormack (BA Communication (Social Inquiry) is a Higher Education Professional and IAP2 certified engagement practitioner with over ten years' experience building and delivering equity and engagement programs in higher education and member based organisations. Keirin has a passion for advocacy and building the aspirations and inclusion of all community members in the transformative potential of education. With an interest in rural and regional capacity building, industry engagement and social inclusion, Keirin has presented at conferences and workshops on cross sector partnerships and equity and diversity in the Higher Education Sector.

The University Preparation Program (UPP) at the University of Wollongong (UOW) is designed to raise the attainment of students from targeted equity backgrounds at the conclusion of Year 11 who have a projected ATAR below their desired university course and give these students an advantage in their HSC. UPP exists as a part of a broader program 'In2Uni' that engages students from equity backgrounds from Year 6 through to Year 12. The current program commenced in 2013, based on a model piloted from 2010. Since 2014 1048 students from 40 high schools have been part of the program in each of our regions including Batemans Bay, Bega, Shoalhaven, Southern Highlands and Wollongong Campuses. Of students who complete the program, 90% receive an offer to a bachelor degree.

UPP is a unique engagement which, underpinned by a peer learning model and utilises the Higher Education Funding Council for England Learner Progression Matrix, works deliberately to begin to transition students into the university environment by co-enrolling them in an institutionally approved enabling subject and giving them access to the higher education environment by utilising university resources, spaces, tools and current students. UPP involves a number of key elements designed to provide students with support to improve their HSC Marks. These elements include:

- Over two school terms, students will receive assistance with their HSC subjects through an on campus study centre, have access to UOW resources including the library, advice on study skills and mentoring to discuss their options after they finish high school.
- Students complete 30 hours of tutoring across the 20 weeks, with a minimum of 24 hours tutoring required for successful completion of the program. Tutoring is offered in blocks, on two days per week.
- Additional holiday activities are included: a mock exam day, mock interview day and online discussion boards monitored by mentors for ongoing study support
- On successful completion of the University Preparation Program, students will receive an admissions interview to the University of Wollongong to the faculty of their choice.

In2Uni Mentors, most often having previously attended the school who attend the In2Uni High Schools deliver the programs to the students to develop ongoing and rich relationships. They share their HSC journey and tips for approaching their senior studies. University students are targeted as mentors if they are doing well in the subject that they intend on tutoring at a university level or have achieved a Band 5 or above in that subject at school.

UPP involves close collaboration with the Department of Education and Communities and the Catholic Education Office as well as nearly every internal department of the University of Wollongong. At its heart though- its success is dependent on the partnership between UOW and the In2Uni schools in which we work and the teachers and students who engage with the program. A mutual partnership in the truest sense, programs and curriculum are developed in partnership with teachers and student feedback mechanisms inform the continuous improvement of the program.

This presentation will focus on the key challenges and opportunities inherent in implementing a partnered program across diverse geographical locations with 40 schools and the help of 110 mentors.

The presentation will also explore this context including navigating administrative requirements of different organisations, managing the interaction with school age students in an adult learning environment and meeting the expectations of those students. The presentation will share student feedback and key learnings in the words of our own students. It will also reflect on the administrative framework that supports the initiative including negotiated admissions, co-enrolment and the interaction with HSC Markers and teachers who are involved in the development of an online hub for students, delivering workshops to the students during the super study days and the training of our In2Uni Mentors.