Talk About Uni: making a difference?

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Outline

- The problem: university and low-SES/rural student participation
- Early intervention and ‘aspiration raising’
- “Talk About Uni”
- Challenges
- Questions
Background

• 1990:
  – *A Fair Chance for All* announces an equity framework aimed at “changing the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole”

• 2008:
  – women, people experiencing disability and NESB participation improves... Indigenous Australian, rural and low-SES participation flat lines ...
### Talk About Uni: making a difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access Rate</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Population Reference Point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total low SES</strong></td>
<td>15.86</td>
<td>15.54</td>
<td>15.36</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>15.56</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES and urban</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>9.02</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low SES and regional</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>5.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low SES and remote</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.61</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total medium SES</strong></td>
<td>45.62</td>
<td>45.22</td>
<td>45.24</td>
<td>45.07</td>
<td>45.86</td>
<td>46.12</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total high SES</strong></td>
<td>37.33</td>
<td>37.31</td>
<td>38.05</td>
<td>38.53</td>
<td>37.92</td>
<td>37.46</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...all the running you can do, to stay in the same place

- 18 years of outreach programs
- Committed focus on access and equity
- Increased Higher Education participation across the board
- Most universities still below the notional 25%
- Particularly so for Go8 universities (UoM 8.3% in 2006 cf state 14.2% and national 15.6%)
What does this have to do with First-Year Uni?

- diversity vs monoculturalism
- cohort should mirror broader community composition
- access programs of limited value unless students already considering uni
Celebrating the First Year Experience?
Not if you can’t get in…

• UK and US research:
  - that early intervention aimed at ‘raising aspirations’ is essential in attracting low-SES and rural students
  - that family and community support are fundamental to this process

• Corroborated by Australian research
  - e.g. *Australian Young People: their stories, families and post-school plans*, joint ACER and The Smith Family report
One possible response: Talk About Uni

- Developed with an eye to international and national research
- Built on sound knowledge of, and relationships with, the secondary sector
- Aimed at raising the aspirations of years 9 and 10 students
- Committed to exploring new and diverse outreach methods
Talk About Uni: debunking the myths

How?

- Hard copy resources
- Online resources
- Personalised contact
- Ongoing development
- Feedback and Evaluation

http://talkaboutuni.unimelb.edu.au
Hard copy resources:
  sent to approx 300 underrepresented schools

- Case studies of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Information booklets for parents and students (and teachers)
  - *The Uni Book, Parents’ Uni Book, Uni and You*
- Classroom activities
  - with teachers notes and student activity sheets
  - with offers of on-campus or school visits
- Follow-up mailout
  - bookmarks, postcards, reminder letter

http://talkaboutuni.unimelb.edu.au/
Online resources

• Developed in a number of phases

• Development ongoing

• Promo to schools (retargetting original cohort)

• Consultation began in early 2008-since rethought and revamped
  - Teachers, students and families
  - Relevant community groups

http://talkaboutuni.unimelb.edu.au/
Welcome to Talk About Uni!

This website is all about uni. Here you'll find true stories about getting to uni told by real people:

- People for whom the decision to go to uni wasn't a given.
- People who had to overcome obstacles to get to uni.
- People who went to uni and changed their lives.

But this website is also a resource: it's for students, parents and carers, and it's also an aid for teachers. It aims to help high school students, and those close to them, take part in a conversation about possible and desirable futures.

So... let's talk about uni!

Students

Parents

Teachers

Brandon

What can uni give you?

Two words: Freedom and choice.

More from Brandon
Challenges:

公务员 Reaching young people through schools

- ‘crowded curriculum’
- preconceptions may dominate
- potential can go unrecognised

公务员 Reaching families and communities

- parents and carers vital
- young people rely on range of advice and inspiration – not just teachers/schools
Responding to challenges: Building relationships

• Schools:
  - Enlist teachers as partners in aspiration raising
  - Establish relationships with schools
  - Provide assistance to teachers at both a local and global level (beginning with pilot schools)

• Communities:
  - Develop links with students and families via community and youth groups
  - Promote in libraries, youth centres and via online communities

Consultation .... Consultation .... Consultation

http://talkaboutuni.unimelb.edu.au/
Responding to challenges:
Into the future …

- Mentoring
- Online interaction – podcasts?
- Building relationships with specific schools and teachers - re-visiting ‘the well’
- Multi-badging, linking to other equity/educational sites
- Parents and families - workshops and activities
- Further collaboration and developing relationship with the Centre for Indigenous Education (CIE)

Collaboration …. Collaboration …. Collaboration
Into the future …
Is it ‘making a difference’?

♫ A great resource, but how do we make it continue to work and grow?

♫ Working backwards to increase participation by:
- identifying challenges and barriers
- identifying positive approaches
- broadening our networks and consultation processes

♫ Evaluation
Questions?

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/www.services.unimelb.edu.au/edp/