Overcoming Barriers to Indigenous Employment

Participant or Person?

A Holistic Approach

Presenters:
Jenny O'Neill - Coordinator, Indigenous Student and Graduate Employment and NICP
Alya Gordon - Law Cadet, National Indigenous Cadetship Project
Edward Synot - Griffith Graduate
Education Opportunities for Indigenous Students

Griffith University: 5 campuses in SE Queensland: 3 in Brisbane, 1 in Logan and 1 on Gold Coast, including Queensland Conservatorium of Music and Queensland College of Art. Also Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership.

Degree Programs include:

- Arts
- Education
- Business
- Law
- Criminology
- Languages
- Politics and Policy
- Science
- Medicine
- Pharmacy
- Nursing, Social Work
- Psychology
- Physiotherapy
- Hotel, Leisure, Sport
- Engineering
- Architecture
- Aviation
- Information Technology
- Environmental, Urban Planning
- Visual and Creative Arts
- Journalism, Marketing, PR

Careers and Employment Service
How do we make it easier for prospective Indigenous students to come to uni?

- Alternate Entry Program: GUMURRII Student Support Units. www.griffith.edu.au/gumurrii
- Scholarships: Indigenous, Equity, Sport and others. www.griffith.edu.au/scholarships

How do we assist enrolled students once they are enrolled?

Suite of programs aimed at retaining and supporting students:

- Academic support: GUMURRII learning Assistance Officers, ITAS tutoring
- Personal Support: Student Services: www.griffith.edu.au/studentservices
- Careers Service: career guidance, jobsearch skills, degree related work experience and **Indigenous cadetships, graduate employment**

www.griffith.edu.au/careers  Careers and Employment Service
National Indigenous Cadetship Project (NICP)

An initiative of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Implemented at Griffith in 2003. Continuous contracts to 2009 Coordinator Role to manage project.

What is the National Indigenous Cadetship Project?

- Aimed at improving the educational and professional employment prospects of Indigenous Australians
- Seeks to place Indigenous tertiary students with degree related employers for the duration of their degrees
- DEEWR provides financial support for studies
- Sponsoring employer provides a minimum of 60 days paid employment per year
- Cadetships provide valuable undergraduate work experience for students
- NICP offers employers the opportunity to ‘grow their own’ graduates
- Cadetships contribute to increasing the number of degree qualified Indigenous employees and improve job and prospects

Further information: www.nicp.deewr.gov.au
The Success of NICP Cadetships and Indigenous Graduate Employment Programs at Griffith

- Placed more cadets than any other Qld University in 2003 pilot project
- Placed more cadets than any university in Australia in following years
- Increased no. of Griffith cadets by 80%, from 31 in June 2003 to 160 by the end of 2008
- 89% cadetship retention rate

Indigenous Graduate Employment Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Griffith Indigenous Grads</th>
<th>University average</th>
<th>National average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why have our Cadetship and Employment programs been successful?

Because we have tailored generic employment programs to meet the needs of individuals.

Emma, law student
“Just because you come to uni, it doesn’t mean the rest of your life goes away”
(Student from remote Queensland, 2004)

Individual students bring to university a range of issues that can be barriers to success in education and employment and which often reflect the disadvantage typically experienced by the Indigenous Australian Population. These issues include:

- Health issues
- Mental Health issues
- Financial disadvantage
- Family issues
- Relocation for study
- Emotional challenges
- Lack of confidence

It is necessary to take a holistic approach to addressing the needs of individual students if academic success and good employment outcomes are to be achieved.
Case study: Student wants to apply for a cadetship but they have not prepared a resume and have no experience of the job application process. They know they will need to provide an academic transcript as part of the application process but while they had achieved good academic results in previous years, they failed all their subjects last semester. They are sure these fails on their academic transcript will prevent them from gaining a cadetship. Even if they made it to an interview, they have no money to buy interview clothes.

Solution: Holistic Approach calling on services for students within Student Services and GUMURRII student Support Services.

1. We discuss reasons for poor academic achievement last semester (traumatic experience). Refer student to personal counsellor colleague. Student receives trauma counselling and counsellor applies for fails to be removed from transcript.

2. Organise extra tuition for student to ensure academic success in current studies.

3. Coach student in resume, application & interview skills & provide intensive job search assistance

4. Organise interest-free student loan from Welfare Officer, to buy interview clothes.

Outcome: student is now a cadet and succeeding in their studies.
Support Services available to Griffith’s Indigenous students.

**Student Services:**
**Careers and Employment Service:** NICP (access to database of 1000’s of employers), Careers Counselling, Careers Seminars, Industry Mentoring Program, Job Application Assistance, Careers Website.

**Welfare Office:** Loans, financial advice, tax help, JP service, student advocacy, tenancy.

**Health Service:** Free medical centre, psychiatrist, emergency triage, health education programs.

**Counselling Service:** personal counselling and referral

**Equity Service:** Disability Service, Discrimination issues, reconciliation policies, programs for disadvantaged students

**Mentoring Programs:** peer mentoring

**Chaplaincy:** non denominational, multi-faith services

**GUMURRII Student Support Units:** tutoring, personal assistance, special orientation programs, social events, sports.
Griffith Cadets and Graduates in the workplace

Psychology Cadets, Mental Health Unit, with management, Princess Alexandra Hospital

Pharmacy Cadet, Department of Primary Industries, Queensland.

B., Arts in Politics Cadet, Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Partnerships
Graduate, Department of Natural Resources and Water

Careers and Employment Service
Griffith cadets and cadetship partners, Gadens Lawyers Brisbane
Our cadetship graduates are now occupying positions in which they have a real chance of influencing Australian society. We have graduates teaching in remote Aboriginal communities, employed as judge's associates, undertaking community health and welfare roles, engaged in policy making positions within the Australian Government and working for major Australian corporations. Some graduates are now acting as mentors for Griffith students, inspiring new students to aspire and achieve their potential.

*I can't speak highly enough about the opportunities that have stemmed from my cadetship. I have no doubt that the experience I have had because of it is definitely why I got such a great graduate program offer.* (Graduate)

*The cadetship has increased my chances of employment within the organisation in which I was placed and I have learnt many new skills that I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to gain without it.* – Thanks for all you did for me with the application and placement. As you can see it really paid off. I love my new job!
Employer Feedback on the Cadetship Project

*Thank you and Griffith University for being so proactive in providing us with the opportunity to sponsor high quality students. This is a real win-win situation and I look forward to many more sponsorships in the future.* (Public Service employer)

*The Facilitator understands the need to provide customer service and support to employers in the placement of cadets. It does not surprise me that Griffith Places the largest number of cadets in the program.* (Employer)
Griffith University expresses its appreciation to DEEWR for the Departments’ continued funding of our Indigenous Employment Projects.