

Inspiring the next generation of Indigenous higher education

A CATALYST FOR POTENTIAL

The University of Queensland's (UQ) InspireU Program has continued to positively impact the futures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students and their communities by providing a means to experience university life and show how higher education could be a viable path. This program serves as a beacon of hope, igniting aspirations among Indigenous youth and challenging preconceived notions about academic pursuits.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Through week-long camps, the Program brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from years 9 through 12 to UQ's St Lucia campus for a range of activities led by UQ academics and industry and community partners. The camps are delivered at no cost to the students, including accommodation, meals, and transport.

Developed in 2013, the InspireU Program was created by the UQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit (ATSISU) Outreach and Engagement Team and the UQ Faculty of Engineering to help raise aspirations, demystify misconceptions, and break down barriers that may prevent Indigenous high school students from pursuing higher education.

EXPANDING HORIZONS: FROM ENGINEERING TO DIVERSE DISCIPLINES

After its early success with the first Engineering camp in 2013, InspireU expanded to include other disciplines, such as Health Sciences, Business, Economics, Law, and Education. This expansion reflects a commitment to inclusivity and recognising the diverse interests and talents of Indigenous youth. By offering exposure to a broad range of fields, the program opens doors to myriad opportunities previously unseen or inaccessible.

ATSISU Outreach and Engagement Team Leader, Robyn Donnelly said the Program is designed to adequately inform high school students so that they not only know what to expect from subject selections, application processes, scholarships, and other systems but also what is possible from a university education.

"Education is key to making a difference, not only to the student, but to families and communities," Ms Donnelly explained.

CULTIVATING SUCCESS: ENABLING ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ENDEAVOURS

Ms Donnelly explained that the impact this program has is enormous, seeing InspireU students transition from high school to university and go on to valuable careers.

One such Graduate is Dr Ella Ceolin, who participated in the InspireU Health Science Camp in 2014. According to Dr Ceolin, attending the camp is what inspired her to complete a Bachelor of Science and a Doctor of Medicine at UQ. Dr Ceolin is now pursuing her passion for health equity and working with Indigenous peoples to strive for better health outcomes as a Junior Doctor, in Central Queensland.

Dr Ceolin said, "I'm also passionate about education and advocating for young Indigenous people to consider tertiary study."

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ROBYN DONNELLY



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
AT INSPIREU CAMPS

Another UQ Graduate who attended the very first InspireU Engineering camp in 2013, is David Corporal who graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (Mechanical) from UQ. David aspires to be the first Indigenous astronaut in space. He is currently a Research Engineer at the Boeing Research and Technology Australia Centre, contributing to testing a novel antimicrobial surface coating designed to fight the spread of bacteria and viruses on Earth and in orbit.

Mr Corporal said, "Education is one of the greatest gifts that you can give someone."

These success stories serve as beacons of hope, illustrating the transformative power of education and perseverance. The achievements of InspireU alumni like Dr. Ella Ceolin and David Corporal inspire current participants and reaffirm the Program's mission to unlock the full potential of Indigenous youth.

BUILDING BRIDGES: FOSTERING COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

Alongside a better understanding of higher education, the Program also provides students the opportunity to establish relationships and community. Through social activities and showing the many support mechanisms in place, the ATSIU Outreach and Engagement Team demonstrate to Indigenous high school students that they, too, belong at university, should they choose that path.

As Bachelor of Exercise and Nutrition Science graduate, and participant in the InspireU Health Science Camp in 2019, Angus Loft said, "I still regularly see and work with a couple of people from my time at camp. It's nostalgic to think back on our experiences, and amazing to have formed long term friendships."

This sense of community strengthens resilience and fosters a supportive network, essential for navigating the challenges of higher education.

ADVANCING FUTURES: EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS PROGRESS

For over a decade, the Program has continued to successfully bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students from across the state to experience this effective transition program, increasing student enrolment, retention, and advancement.

To date, InspireU has hosted 753 students, with a large majority of those going on to higher education. The STEM Camp in January 2023 had the biggest camp attendance yet, with 51 students, most of which are now planning to attend university, primarily UQ. The Programs growth underscores the increasing enthusiasm and determination among Indigenous youth to pursue higher education and explore fields traditionally underrepresented by Indigenous peoples.

EMPOWERING FUTURES THROUGH EDUCATION

The ATSIU Outreach and Engagement Team looks to continue their work, increasing awareness of university in the broader Queensland community and lifting the participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

As Ms Donnelly said, "We hope to continue to change lives and make a difference."

As InspireU continues to break down barriers and pave the way for Indigenous students, it is evident that the Program's influence will continue to shape the future of Indigenous higher education for years to come.

Through its success thus far, InspireU stands as a testament to the transformative power of education and mentorship, serving as a catalyst for change and empowerment within Indigenous communities. As InspireU looks towards the future, its commitment to expanding access and fostering inclusivity remains unwavering, ensuring that every Indigenous student has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
AT INSPIREU CAMPS**

