

EQUITY UPDATE 2009

A. Key Achievements in 2008

Briefly identify 2-3 key equity achievements for 2008, including good practice examples that the institution would be willing to share with the sector.

A.1 Increased Outreach to under-represented and/or low SES schools

1. La Trobe has established a program called 'Schools Access La Trobe' (SALT) targeting under-represented and/or low SES schools in the five campus catchments. There are over 100 schools involved in this program and students at these schools are eligible to apply for a university place without meeting usual ENTER score requirements (not all La Trobe courses are included in this program). Instead students must provide a supporting statement from the Year 12 Co-ordinator regarding the student's academic potential to succeed at University. The student must also meet course eligibility requirements other than ENTER score ie have completed appropriate pre-requisite programs in Year 12. In 2008 the SALT program attracted 803 applications, which resulted in 185 enrolments.

Students in SALT Schools are also eligible to apply for a free place in La Trobe's VCE Summer School program which provides study preparation information for the VCE and is run in the summer break before students commence Year 12. This scheme continued in 2008 with the university funding participation in a VCE Summer School for 139 students from 53 SALT schools. The Summer School lectures were provided by Access Education, which is the largest provider of VCE preparation and exam revision programs in Victoria.

La Trobe staff visited 49 SALT schools in 2008, and provided information to students in Year 10, 11 and 12 regarding university entry. Some rural SALT schools also received bus subsidies to bring students onto campus for various activities eg Open Day and 'Experience La Trobe' days. Overall the above activities resulted in contact with 11,244 students from SALT or other Low SES schools in 2008.

2. The Albury Wodonga campus provided on-campus practical classes in Biology to 150 Year 12 students. This program allowed these students to meet their curriculum requirements in genetics. This program received a very positive response from participants. The In2Science program also provided two university student mentors to Year 9 and 10 biology classes at Wodonga Secondary College. The University's Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering also accepts work experience placements from Year 10 students at regional high schools.
3. On-campus VCE school workshops in computer science, computer engineering, electronic engineering were offered to regional students in 2008. Late in 2008 planning commenced to offer VCE Practical Workshops in Chemistry, Biology, Nanotechnology and Physics to urban and regional SALT school students enrolled in Science programs. These workshops will address the VCE school assessed coursework (SACS), and contribute to the students' final scores and consequent ENTER score.

A.2 Expanding Tertiary Pathways

The University increased its partnership arrangements with local TAFEs in order to provide tertiary pathways for students. There has been a considerable increase in the breadth of courses included in these partnership arrangements across the Victorian and southern NSW TAFE sectors. Specific examples include:

- Department of Environmental Management and Ecology (DEME) established TAFE articulation agreements with the Riverina Institute of TAFE and the Wodonga Institute of TAFE.
- Division of Nursing and Midwifery commenced planning for a rural health pilot pathway program involving collaboration between the Riverina Institute, La Trobe's Bachelor of Nursing program (Albury-Wodonga campus) and the Greater Southern Area Health Service.

Students in the first intake are expected to commence the University component of their studies in 2010.

A full list of current articulation arrangements is provided at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/study/tafe/tafe-diploma-pathways>.

A.3 Support Program for Students with a Refugee/Asylum Seeker Background

The University introduced a support program for students with a refugee/asylum seeker background. A lengthy consultation process occurred with relevant academic centres and administrative support areas, and the program was then approved by the University's Senior Management Committee.

The program involved the establishment of a 'Refugee Contact Officer' on each campus of La Trobe University. The role of Contact Officer was added to existing staff roles of Equality and Diversity staff on three campuses, and to Student Services staff roles on the remaining two campuses. The Refugee Contact Officers met with students at the commencement of each semester to ensure students were aware of all student support services available, and to provide other advice and referral as required.

Students also received additional financial support in the form of a \$100 gift voucher for text books or \$100 worth of transport tickets (metro students) or petrol card (rural students) to assist with travel to and from University. Ongoing financial assistance each semester is dependent on attending Academic Skills support services for any students who are deemed at risk of failure. These students are also eligible to apply for one of three residential scholarships which cover the cost of on-campus accommodation in a University residence. Two scholarships were offered at Bundoora campus (Melbourne) and one was offered at Bendigo campus.

Twenty-five students from a refugee background benefitted from additional supports across the university.

B. Equity Group Focus and Key Equity Strategies

What equity groups were targeted in 2008? What are the major issues faced by each equity group in your area?

While the University maintained a focus on all equity groups in 2008, the main target groups were students from low SES background, students from rural and isolated areas, students with disabilities and students from Non English speaking backgrounds.

B.1 Students from Low SES Background

La Trobe University continued to maintain access and participation levels for low SES students which were well above the state and national average. Retention and success ratios for this group were also slightly above the state and national averages.

Low SES	La Trobe 2008	State Average 2007*	National Average 2007*
Access (%)	18.1	12.9	15.9
Participation (%)	17.4	12.3	15.0
Retention	1.01	0.99	0.98
Success	0.98	0.97	0.97

* 2008 data not yet available

The major issues faced by this group continue to be:

- ENTER score limitations
- Being able to meet the financial costs associated with attending University.

ENTER Score Limitations

The 'Schools Access La Trobe' (SALT) initiative (discussed at A.1 above) was developed to address ENTER scores limitations often experienced by students attending under-represented schools (as determined by the Victorian 'On-track' survey program). The SALT pilot program commenced in 2007 and was refined in 2008. Another strand of the SALT program has been the introduction of VCE preparation workshops offered to students at SALT schools.

Low SES students are strongly represented at La Trobe University's regional campuses, and these students benefit from the Rural and Regional Student Access Scheme which allocates three additional ENTER points to regional or rural students when they apply to a regional campus of La Trobe University. Students from other disadvantaged backgrounds can also apply for a university place under the Special Entry and Access Scheme (SEAS), and receive some additional aggregate points based on the extent of previous educational disadvantage. The University also conducts preparation workshops for people over 21 years of age who are required to sit the special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) in order to apply for entry to La Trobe.

The Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering and the Faculty of Health Sciences also runs VCE preparation programs during School holiday periods, which target Year 11 and 12 students studying Science subjects. This Faculty also offers Bridging programs in Chemistry and Maths, which enable entry into Science programs at La Trobe.

Financial Barriers to Study

The ability to meet living expenses and other costs while studying continues to be a major barrier for students from low SES backgrounds

- The University provides a Student Loan Fund which supports students in financial need. Loans are available for textbooks, equipment, course fees, computers, software and other essential student needs. Students are also able to access advice regarding social security benefits directly from Centrelink Offices located on the Bundoora, Bendigo and Albury Wodonga campuses. These offices are open to students during semester on a part-time basis.
- At the Albury Wodonga and Bendigo campuses the Chaplains obtain food and financial donations from local organisations including churches, particularly to assist students from low SES backgrounds. This activity supported the work of the Student Counsellor, who was allocated a small discretionary loan fund, ensuring students from low SES backgrounds had a number of sources of support.
- The recycled computer scheme provided a free reconditioned computer to students who were experiencing financial hardship. Each computer was internet ready with relevant software suitable for tertiary level students. In 2008 the University provided 75 reconditioned computers to commencing or continuing undergraduate students whose application for an undergraduate Commonwealth Scholarship was deemed eligible, but was unsuccessful due to the limited number of scholarships available.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences provided Professional Placement Scholarships to Low SES students undertaking a professional placement in a location more than 100kms away from their usual place of residence. The scholarships were valued at \$100 for each full week of placement, and assisted students to meet additional accommodation, travel and living expenses.
- The Equality and Diversity Centre provided Travel Bursaries valued at \$500 to Honours students enrolled at regional campuses, who attended classes at the main metropolitan campus (Bundoora) as a requirement of their course. The bursary covered essential expenditure eg travel and accommodation.
- The Careers and Employment Service assist students to obtain casual employment. The Equality and Diversity Centre also employs students as notetakers and scribes for students with disabilities, thus contributing to the levels of on-campus employment available to students from a Low SES background. Residential Services provide on-campus casual employment opportunities to Low SES students.

- Planning and research commenced for a collaborative research project that will be located at the Shepparton Regional Campus. Discussions have been held with executives from The Smith Family, local Indigenous Elders, TAFE, School Principals Association, local council officials and many others, who are concerned about the number of interventions offered in the region, with no measurable outcomes in improved rates of school participation through the Middle Years (Years 5-9) to higher education. The project, titled, *An Investigation of Interventions and Programs offered to Engage Middle Year School Students in the Greater Shepparton Region* will audit the interventions and programs offered to Middle Years school students in the Greater Shepparton Region with the aim of establishing 'best practice' in school retention and transition to higher education.

B.2 Students from Regional Areas

La Trobe University has campuses at Bendigo, Wodonga, Mildura, and Shepparton. The University has a strong commitment to the provision of higher education in regional Victoria and the levels of access, participation, retention and success for regional students have remained above the sector averages for many years.

Regional	La Trobe 2008	State Average 2007*	National Average 2007*
Access (%)	34.0	18.1	19.1
Participation (%)	30.6	17.2	18.1
Retention r	1.04	1.00	0.97
Success r	1.04	1.02	0.99

* 2008 data not yet available

Keys issues in 2008 for this group of students were:

- The need to increase transition and student engagement programs
- The need to increase breadth of course options and delivery methods at regional campuses
- The need to increase Bridging programs

The need to increase transition and student engagement programs

The University appointed a 'Regional Student Engagement Officer' responsible for organising and delivering various activities across four regional campuses to increase the levels of student engagement on each campus. A new website provided a set of online resources and guides supporting the transition of new students.

New student engagement programs were implemented at Mildura and Shepparton campuses where the proportion of students from equity groups is close to 100%. A well co-ordinated program of events (academic orientation, social and sporting) was designed and delivered in order to facilitate friendship building, social inclusion and retention amongst first year students. These two campuses were targeted as they both showed lower retention for Low SES students than other La Trobe campuses. Shepparton campus also provided all first year students with an interactive CD resource "Transition 2008: resources for new students" which was locally developed and contained 'vox pop' segments from existing students and staff at Shepparton.

Other campuses continued to provide comprehensive orientation activities to familiarise students with the campus environment and introduce them to their course studies. Bendigo campus introduced an "Advantage Program" in 2008 which comprised a range of seminars on study skills and ran for a six week period during Semester 2. A mid year entry orientation program was also offered at Bendigo campus.

For some years Bendigo campus has also offered an accredited elective unit “Academic Skills for Tertiary Study”. In 2008 an analysis of student progress was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of this elective unit. The analysis showed that students who had studied this unit achieved a higher level of academic performance and a higher retention rate than students who had not undertaken the elective unit.

The University encourages regional students in their first year of study to consider on-campus accommodation. Residential Services provided orientation, transition and mentoring programs to assist regional students’ adjustment to University life.

Resident Academic Mentors met as a group on a weekly basis with first year students from the same discipline area to assist students’ understanding of tertiary level study. Residents Assistants met with students regularly to assist in their transition from living at home. Social activities were also arranged to promote interaction and friendship building amongst first year students.

The need to increase breadth of course options and delivery methods at regional campuses

The university continued to increase the range of course provision at regional campuses utilising a combination of direct lectures and video conferencing lectures, using ‘Lectopia’. The introduction of Lectopia meant students did not have to attend all lectures on campus and could view the lecture via the internet at a time convenient to the student. This facility also allows students to review lecture content whenever they need to.

The need to increase Bridging programs

At the Albury Wodonga campus an 18-week enabling program is offered to members of the community who are over 21 years old and have not completed Year 12. This program has been offered every year for the past 18 years and in 2008 a review of the program (2002–2007) found the program to be of great value for mature age students by providing experience in the realities of tertiary study.

The success of the Albury Wodonga program influenced the Mildura campus to offer a similar program, which commenced in 2008. The Mildura program entitled “Stepping Back into Education: Getting Prepared to go to University” was a short program of 16 hours duration, held over a four week period. There were 36 students who attended this program, and the evaluation of the program indicated that participants found it highly effective in raising their confidence in studying at university, and increased their likelihood of going on to enrol in a university program in the future.

B.3 Students from Non English Speaking Background

The La Trobe community contains a large number of staff and students from non-English speaking background. However many of these people have been in Australia for more than ten years and are therefore not categorised as NESB for data collection purposes. Student data for NESB students who have been in Australia for less than ten years is set out below.

NESB	La Trobe 2008	State Average 2007*	National Average 2007*
Access (%)	3.6	4.7	4.3
Participation (%)	2.8	4.0	3.8
Retention	0.99	0.99	1.03
Success	0.93	0.95	0.97

Keys issues in 2008 for this group of students were:

- The need to determine how to improve assistance for NESB students
- The need to increase cultural diversity awareness of university staff
- The need to increase support for students with a refugee background

Need to determine how to improve assistance for NESB students

This group of students is the only equity group at La Trobe University which falls below the state average for access, participation and success. In order to determine how best to assist this group of students, two research projects were undertaken during 2008, one at the Bundoora campus in northern Melbourne, and another at the Albury Wodonga regional campus. The projects sought to strengthen the University's response to NESB students through:

- Enhanced staff awareness of challenges for NESB students;
- The development of clear and comprehensive pathways to support NESB students; and
- Identification and development of targeted support activities.

The research projects found three key challenges for this group:

- lack of English proficiency;
- sense of isolation and disconnection from university life;
- lack of knowledge of university systems and poor relationships with administrative staff.

Recommendations were made regarding ways to address each of these problem areas in future years. These recommendations will be considered by the university in 2009.

The need to increase cultural diversity awareness of university staff

In conjunction with the Academic Development Unit and the Equality and Diversity Centre, the University developed the Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Toolkit (CDIP) which contains a range of information on how to make university teaching and administrative practices more appropriate for a wide range of culturally diverse groups. The Toolkit was launched by the Vice-Chancellor, and each month new staff attending the mandatory Equality and Diversity Awareness Program are introduced to the contents of the CDIP toolkit.

Additionally, cross cultural communication workshops were delivered by the Equality and Diversity Centre to staff and/or students.

B.4 Students with a Disability or Long Term Medical Condition

La Trobe University provides a comprehensive range of support to students with a disability. In 2008 support was provided for 710 students, including 75 students who required intensive support and 16 students who required additional equipment. La Trobe University is above the state and national average for all indicators for students with a disability.

Disability	La Trobe 2008	State Average 2007*	National Average 2007*
Access (%)	4.9	3.5	3.5
Participation (%)	5.8	3.6	4.1
Retention r	1.02	0.98	0.97
Success r	0.97	0.96	0.94

Key issues for this group in 2008 were:

- The need to raise staff awareness of disability matters
- The need to a comprehensive range of support services
- Upgrade of facilities to improve access for students with mobility problems

The need to raise staff awareness of disability matters

The University co-hosted a conference to provide information to people working with students with learning difficulties. The conference discussed learning difficulties and introduced participants to a range of assistive technology available to students with learning difficulties.

The university increased its provision of staff training workshops in 2008. The Counselling Service commenced training staff to respond more effectively to students with mental health issues. The Equality and Diversity Centre doubled the number of staff participating in training sessions in 2008 (compared with 2007) and these sessions include both an on-line and a workshop component which focuses on the needs of students with a disability.

The need to a comprehensive range of support services

In 2008 the disability support staff continued to provide intensive assistance to 75 students which included: sign language interpreters for deaf students; alternative format of course materials for students with a vision impairment; and tutorial, notetaker and scribe support for students with a range of disabilities.

Upgrade of facilities to improve access for students with mobility problems

Implementation of the Access Audit recommendations continued in 2008. Improvements included access paths and ramps, the installation of automatic doors, tactiles and accessible toilet facilities, and the creation of two accessible accommodation units.

Identify key strategies your institution plans to implement or is implementing to improve equity performance in 2009.

In 2009 the University is continuing to focus on increased transition and student engagement activities for first year students from all equity groups. Increased transition activities are part of a university-wide Student Engagement strategy that commenced in 2008.

In 2009 there has been an increased focus on outreach to under-represented and/or Low SES schools in campus catchments. Activities include broadening the subjects where additional VCE preparation workshops are provided; as well as providing some workshops for Year 9 and 10 students. These activities are conducted on campus and the university subsidises the transport costs to bus students between schools and campuses.

A representative of the Equality and Diversity Centre has been active in a state-wide network of staff working on student outreach across the university and TAFE sectors. This network has been conducting aspiration oriented activities with Year 9 and 10 students and has also been researching how best to assist careers teachers in under-represented Victorian schools (as identified in the On-track database).

C. Equity Planning and Management in 2008

Identify key equity management strategies at your institution. How does your governance structure support equity strategies?

This governance structure ensures that equity considerations are an integral part of the University's decision making framework, and that there are staff present at the operational level of Faculties and administrative centres who are aware of the equity agenda and the University's commitments in this regard. The University developed its *Strategic Plan 2008-2012* which maps a pathway for the next five years to enable the University to respond and benefit from the changing environment. One of the key priorities of the Strategic Plan is the commitment to promote equity in access to higher education. Importantly, the Strategic Plan acknowledges that 'responsibility for social justice, equal opportunity and cultural diversity' is a key institutional value.

Each major area of the University is required to develop operational plans against the principles and core priorities set out in the *Strategic Plan 2008-2012* and report to the University's Senior Management Committee. In relation to equity and access the Strategic Plan commits, amongst other things, to the following priorities:

- improve access, participation, retention and progression of students particularly those from the DEEWR designated equity groups;
- develop a coherent and structured approach to maximising student engagement and enrichment;
- consult with communities to identify regional needs and aspirations especially through Community/Regional Advisory Boards;
- create additional pathways for life-long learning in our communities through enabling programs, regional bonuses and enhanced relationships with local secondary and TAFE providers;
- use the University's research strengths to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of environmental, economic and social transformations occurring in regional Australia;
- increase funding for undergraduate and graduate scholarships in order to promote equity and access;
- appoint a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional) to lead the regional and engagement function.¹

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) is responsible for the oversight of matters relating to access and equity for students. There are a number of student support services that fall within the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) portfolio as follows:

¹ La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2008 - 2012, p.20

- Equality and Diversity Centre (previously known as the Equity and Access Unit)
- University Counselling Service
- Indigenous Education
- Student Services
- Careers and Employment
- Chaplaincy
- Childrens' Centre
- University Ombudsman

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) is a member of the University's Senior Management Committee and is an ex officio member of the University Council and Academic Board. The positions of Executive Director, (Equity and Student Services) and Executive Director (Student Services) were created to assist the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services);

The Equality and Diversity Centre is responsible for:

- research and analysis of student equity matters
- facilitating outreach programs to high schools
- day-to-day student equity and access assistance
- support for students with disabilities
- support for students with refugee background
- assisting with special entry programs and equity scholarship matters
- raising staff awareness regarding student equity matters.

The Manager, Equality and Diversity Centre is a member of a number of key committees within La Trobe University.

In 2008 the University undertook a comprehensive review of its Committee structure. As a result the Committee for Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing was established with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) nominated to Chair the Committee. This Committee replaced the University Equal Opportunity Committee. The Committee for Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor. There is a sub-committee of the Committee for Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing in each Faculty and a non-Faculty Committee. The Chairs of these Committees are also members of the Committee for Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing. Student representatives are members of the committee.

The University has established a Health Promoting University Steering Committee which reports to the Committee for Equality, Diversity and Wellbeing. The overall aim of the Steering Committee is to promote the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the communities with which the University is engaged. Student representatives are part of the Steering Committee.

D. Performance of Equity Groups in 2007

Do any of the published performance indicators show a major shift in 2007 relative to 2006 or previous years for your institution? How do you account for these trends.

The only major shift in performance indicators relates to the Access and Participation levels for students with a disability, which increased by more than one per cent between 2006 and 2007. This could be due to the very good reputation that the University has regarding the provision of support services to students with a disability.

Disability

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Access %	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.4	4.6	5.7
Participation %*	3.8	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.2	5.3

E. ESP Funded Initiatives

In 2008, what key initiatives did the institution undertake with ESP funds? For each key initiative, please provide the following:

La Trobe University invites academic and administrative areas each year to apply for grants of \$10,000 - \$15,000 to run pilot programs which further the outreach or student support objectives for students from equity groups. In 2008 the following programs were funded by the ESP allocation.

Key Initiative Title	Brief description	Outcomes
Project Officer (Research)	<p>Research and associated activities commenced in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Years schooling in the Greater Shepparton Region; • Survey of show-cause students in the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering to determine percentage of these students who are from equity groups; • Analysis of course choices by Low SES students; • Investigation into level of homelessness amongst the university's student population; • Alcohol and student behaviour. 	Literature reviews, grant applications, and project planning were undertaken in the last three months of 2008. All project work is continuing in 2009.
Transition and student engagement at regional campuses	Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton campuses all used ESP funds to provide comprehensive orientation and transition programs, which included both academic skill building sessions, and programs to facilitate friendships between students and a 'sense of belonging' at university.	Campus managers advised that the pilot programs were very successful at increasing student engagement. Managers will seek to include this activity in recurrent funding in future years.
Development of a Peer Mentoring Toolkit	Mentoring programs have become a popular way of assisting student's transition to university. The toolkit was developed to provide guidelines and information to mentors and mentees.	The toolkit was developed, launched and multiple copies produced and distributed around the university. One Faculty has already used the toolkit as part of a training program for 2 nd year students mentoring 1 st year students. Evaluation will occur in 2009.
An investigation of the needs of NESB students	Two research projects were undertaken – one at the large urban campus and one at a regional campus.	The projects identified a number of similar areas of difficulty experienced by these students, regardless of the campus setting. The recommendations from the research will be considered in 2009.

Key Initiative Title	Brief description	Outcomes
Computer Grant Scheme for Students.	Provision of a reconditioned desktop computer to students from Low SES background who were unsuccessful in gaining a Commonwealth Scholarship.	There were 75 reconditioned computers distributed in 2008.
Subsidised bus transport for students from under-represented schools to attend on-campus activities.	Eighteen rural high schools received subsidies to attend activities at one urban and two regional campuses.	Campus staff reported that bus subsidies were an effective way to encourage attendance at on-campus activities. Campus managers will seek to include this activity in recurrent funding in future years, so the pilot has been successful.
Bridging Program for Mature Age students at Mildura	This program sought to provide academic skill building sessions for mature aged prospective students.	The evaluation showed a very high degree of satisfaction with the program, and resulted in 33 enrolments ie 91% of participants enrolled in a university program in 2009.
VCE Summer School Bursaries for students from under-represented schools and/or low SES background	This program continued in 2008 and these bursaries covered the fees incurred by high school students attending VCE preparation classes delivered by Access Education. The classes aimed to consolidate study skills, analyse exam requirements and present problem solving strategies.	There were 117 students who received a HEESP funded VCE Summer School Bursary in January 2008. All students who received a Bursary have been placed in the database managed by the Future Students Centre. This Centre tracked the progression of students who received the scholarship. In 2009 there were 19 students (16%) who enrolled at La Trobe. Although this percentage is quite low, it is likely that some students are taking a gap year to work and save money before enrolling at university.

Key Initiative Title	Brief description	Outcomes
Prevention of sexual violence among university students	The development of a comprehensive training kit, based on the materials and promotion strategies developed in a previous project funded by VicHealth.	This project has gained strong momentum and student commitment. A number of student groups have expressed interest in using the program and its initial implementation period has been extended. Evaluation will occur in 2009.
Improving scientific writing skills of students from a non-English speaking background in First Year Biology.	The development of an integrated program of training, formative and summative assessment tasks which teach and build the skills of scientific writing throughout First Year.	The student perception of knowing what was expected, receiving helpful feedback, integration across units and usefulness of the resources all improved markedly. Students found the Communication Skills Manual particularly helpful.
Health and wellness in the context of sexuality and relationships	The program was for rural and NESB students living in on-campus accommodation, and aimed to assist their understanding of sexuality, and sexual health and safety. The program was designed on the premise that young adults in transition to an environment of personal freedom often lack the knowledge and skills to conduct themselves in an appropriate and safe manner.	The evaluation of the program indicated participants found the information on sexual matters and body image helpful, and that their communication skills and self image had improved. However the educational sessions only attracted a small number of participants, and all were women.
'e-Mentoring to inspire female secondary school students to proceed to study and careers in Information Technology & Engineering.'	Female university students and alumni working in Information Technology and Electronic Engineering, agreed to serve as mentors for female secondary school students in years 10, 11 & 12. The aim of the project was to encourage participation of women in fields of Information Technology or Electronic Engineering, utilising Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs and podcasting as familiar electronic communication between mentors and students.	This project was unsuccessful due to the extremely low level of interest from secondary schools approached by the Project Officer.

F. Higher Education Disability Support Program (DSP) Funded Initiatives

In 2008, what key initiatives did the institution undertake with DSP Performance funds? For each key initiative, please provide the following:

Key Initiative Title	Brief description	Outcomes
The Alternate Format Service (AFS)	One staff member (Accessible Resource Officer) is employed on a full-time basis to liaise with students and academic staff. Identify, prepare and reformat student academic materials for conversion into alternative formats such as Braille, audio and electronic formats for students with a print disability.	Students with learning disabilities and vision-impaired students receive their academic materials within a two to three week period instead of a 6 to 12 week turnaround time as was previously the case. By providing students with their materials sooner enables them to more readily engage with their peers in class discussions and tutorials.
The Alternate Format Conference hosted by La Trobe University	Attended by over 80 staff from 30 higher education institutions. The conference highlighted the need for systematic approaches to converting material and greater knowledge sharing across the sector.	The Alternate Format Service is recognised by Vision Australia as a leader in the field of alternate formats for students with a print disability. Representatives from other universities (including interstate) have visited the Alternate Format Service to learn more about how the service is conducted.
Online peer support for students experiencing mental health difficulties	This program for students experiencing mental health difficulties involved the development of an interactive online peer support program. This project recognises the growing literature highlighting the fact that one in four students in the age group 18 to 24 years will suffer some form of mental health illness during that period.	The benefits of this program include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a source of support for students who may be reluctant to seek other forms of support; • accessible day or night; • an efficient means for connecting students with similar concerns regardless of geographic distance; • aimed at students experiencing mental health difficulties or vulnerability to stress, but accessible by all students, thereby offering the benefits of prevention and early intervention for all students; • stand alone support with potential to increase awareness of and linkage to other relevant supports for students.

What examples demonstrate the importance or otherwise to institutions and students of the Additional Support for Students with Disabilities component, and where applicable, the National Disability Liaison Officer initiative.

The Additional Support for Students with Disabilities is an essential funding source. La Trobe University students continue to benefit greatly as it enables the provision of specialist equipment and software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, notetakers, scribes, tutors, and Auslan interpreters. .

The University has a number of Deaf students at its Bundoora and Bendigo campuses. However, there are a number of Deaf students enrolled at the University's Bendigo campus. There are many challenges faced by regional campuses in relation to service provision to students. In the case of Deaf students one such challenge is the lack of suitably qualified interpreters in the Bendigo region. There is currently only one qualified Auslan interpreter in the region therefore it is necessary to source interpreters from Melbourne which requires the payment of travel time and mileage costs. The University continues to seek other alternatives of providing access to education for this group of students.

Students with mental illness remain a key focus for the University as there are many students who do not disclose their illness because of the stigma which is attached to mental illness. The University continued its implementation of the third phase of the three-year project '*Meeting the needs of students with mental health issues through community capacity building to improve retention and success of students with mental health issues*'. The focus of this phase is the development of an interactive online peer support program for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

The University has also benefited from the National Disability Liaison Officer (NDLO) initiative. At Shepparton the NDLO worked with a campus representative to conduct focus groups in order to design two Professional Development Days for staff in the broader community (including the school sector) who work with people with disabilities. Those attending reported the program was a valuable addition to their professional development.

The University hosted the *Working with Students Who Experience Learning Difficulties Conference* at its Albury-Wodonga campus in June 2008. This conference was a joint collaboration between the regional NDLO and the Centre for Regional Education and the North-East Local Learning & Employment Network. This conference was well attended and a follow-up conference is planned for 2009.

G. Commonwealth Scholarships

Identify key issues or points for the institution concerning the CS Program in 2008. For example, was your institution able to allocate all its CS in 2008? In what ways, if any, have CS improved the participation of targeted equity groups and Indigenous students?

The key issue was again inadequate Commonwealth scholarships to meet demand (for non-Indigenous students). The University received 1,328 applications for equity-based scholarships in 2008, and had 521 scholarships available to disburse. The scholarship impact survey indicated that these scholarships were valuable in assisting retention.

A research project in 2008 sought to contact scholarship recipients who had withdrawn from study to determine the reasons for their withdrawal. Although there was a low response rate from students who had withdrawn, 40% of those who responded had gone on to complete a course at another university, indicating that the scholarship had still contributed in some way to completion of a university course.

The provision of Indigenous Access Scholarships has enabled students' transition to university to be smoother and less stressful as the students do not have to rely solely on the Abstudy Incidentals Allowance for purchase of books, materials etc. Financial assistance to relocate has been a critical factor in encouraging more regional students into the city where their study options are greater.

The Indigenous Access Scholarships have also enabled more student access to financial assistance for those students who may not be eligible for Abstudy due to parental income, even though the students may not be assisted financially by their parents.

Finally, the scholarships have reduced the need for students to undertake part-time work throughout their studies, allowing them time to focus more on their education instead of being faced with the dilemma of leaving university to work to pay the bills and make ends meet.

H. Eligibility Requirements for ESP Funding in 2009

I confirm that La Trobe University is undertaking activities which assist disadvantaged students, consistent with the aims of the Programme as outlined in paragraphs 1.45.1 (a)-(d) which is demonstrated under the headings on the following pages.

.....
Professor Paul Johnson
Vice-Chancellor

Outreach Programs

La Trobe University ran a number of outreach programs in 2008 to attract disadvantaged students. These programs were run by regional and metropolitan campuses, by Faculties and by support service areas of the University.

Outreach Programs directed primarily towards equity groups

A number of outreach activities have already been reported at Point A.1 above. Details of further outreach activities are described below.

Bendigo Campus

At the Bendigo campus 82% of students enrolled in 2008 came from regional or remote areas, and 25.5% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode.

- The Future Students Centre at La Trobe University conducted 28 school visits or special programs in the Bendigo region in 2008, attended by 4,154 students.
- Additionally, the popular outreach program "A Day in the Life" was offered 11 times at Bendigo during 2008, and attracted 570 secondary school students. This program aimed to give secondary students a taste of a day in the life of a rural university student.

Albury Wodonga Campus

At the Albury Wodonga campus 87% of students enrolled in 2008 came from regional or remote areas, and 27% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode.

- The Future Students Centre at La Trobe University conducted 24 school visits or special programs in the Albury Wodonga region in 2008, attended by 1,370 students.
- The Future Students Centre conducted 6 Albury Wodonga Campus tours, attended by 759 secondary school students in the region.

Shepparton Campus

At the Shepparton campus 93% of students enrolled in 2008 came from regional areas, and 56% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode.

- The annual Tertiary Information Service (TIS) event in Shepparton targeted approximately 800 Year 12 students from local and outlying schools.
- The annual Careers Day Out attracted around 1500 Year 10 students from 21 schools in the region. Students were advised about La Trobe courses, scholarships, accommodation, assistance, etc.
- Additionally, staff from Shepparton Campus visited local schools upon request. Staff advised these students of TAFE pathways and University special entry schemes which could assist them to reach their desired career goals.
- Staff also advised schools with refugee students of the Support Program for Students with a Refugee Background which is offered at La Trobe.

Mildura Campus

At the Mildura campus 93% of students enrolled in 2008 came from regional or remote areas, and 72% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode.

- Campus staff visited six schools in the Mildura catchment area to promote La Trobe programs and had a La Trobe University Stand at the Riverland Field Days event in South Australia.
- La Trobe staff attended the TAFE careers day and the St. Joseph's "What's Next" program for Year 12 students.
- The Northern Mallee LLEN organised an evening seminar titled "Beyond Year 12" at Swan Hill and Kerang, and La Trobe staff presented information at these seminars.

- Campus staff attended the nine Careers Association meetings held in 2008, and held one Mature Age information session as part of Open Day activities.

Outreach programs directed to all students including those in equity groups

The University holds numerous activities and events to inform students about the University's programs and encourage student enrolments. A list of these activities is set out below.

- Open days on all campuses on all Sundays in August.
- Bundoora campus: information evenings for Year 10 students and mature age students, Talk and Tour guided tours for all secondary students.
- Bundoora campus: Experience La Trobe workshops for Year 11 and 12 students.
- Access Education Programs for Year 11 & 12: VCE Revision and also VCE Preparation Classes
- Postgraduate Expo held at Bundoora campus
- TAFE articulation agreements are in place and the La Trobe University publication TAFE Pathways provides information regarding access to a broad range of University programs.
- Various publications of Future Students Centre and Careers Services available to prospective students, for example Newsletter for Prospective Students which contains information on support services. Other publications include: Postgraduate Study at La Trobe, Select La Trobe (Year 10), Parents Guide to La Trobe University and Non-School Leaver Mature Age Applicants Guide.
- School of Visual Arts and Design: Mid-year Portfolio Workshop for VCE students wishing to enrol in Visual Arts courses; active staff involvement in delivering course information sessions at local Secondary Colleges; open invitation for schools to visit the Visual Arts Centre, attend exhibitions & public lectures; articles in targeted regional newspapers to inspire/encourage school students to attend university.
- Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering: 'in2science' Peer Mentoring in Schools Program, in association with Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne, Monash University and William Buckland Foundation. Students from the Faculty attend High Schools/Secondary Colleges to work as mentors in science classes.
- Department of Chemistry's Year 11 and 12 programs offer VCE practical/instrumental components for local secondary students.
- Bendigo Science and Engineering Challenge brings secondary school students from across the region to the Bendigo Campus to engage in a number of challenging activities related to science, technology and engineering.
- Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering offer two twelve-week bridging programs available in each of Chemistry and Mathematics. They are based on the Victorian Year 12 curriculum and considered suitable preparation for entry into selected science courses at La Trobe University.
- Participation in Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) via VTAC. This Scheme includes a bonus points allocation for students applying from rural and regional areas, which slightly increases their ENTER score and facilitates entry into University programs.

Support Services

All students have access to student support services. These services provide a range of support through personal counselling, careers and employment related advice, learning assistance, financial guidance, accommodation assistance and chaplaincy. Some examples of the support provided in 2008 were:

Familiarisation/orientation programs

For Equity groups:

- Students with a disability are provided with a personalised orientation to the campus. The Bundoora and Bendigo campuses also provide a physical access map of the campus, to assist students with mobility impairment.

- Residential Services run orientation and transition programs for first year students. The programs have been successful in raising retention rates and improving academic performance.
- An on-line facility has been established to assist students from non-English speaking backgrounds and those who have experienced different educational systems. The webpage provides information on important adjustments student may need to make in their study habits and facilitates an improved understanding of the expectations of lecturers and the university system.

For all students:

- University-wide orientation program conducted annually in February.
- Mid-year orientation programs were undertaken by residential colleges and the International Programs Office.

Mentoring/Peer support programs

- A first year mentoring program commenced for the Faculty of Health Sciences
- All residential services provide extensive academic mentoring and peer support programs coordinated by expert staff.
- The School of Human Communication Sciences has established a mentoring program for 1st year speech pathology students.
- The School of Computer Science and Computer Engineering at Bendigo campus has a specially appointed first year coordinator who is charged with the responsibility of monitoring student attendance and performance in Information Technology programs, and providing advice and support in individual circumstances deemed to warrant this. In addition, a number of suitable 2nd and 3rd year IT students are recruited and trained to provide mentoring support to first-year students.

Assistance in finding accommodation

- Bundoora Campus Accommodation Services, Bendigo Campus Residential Services, and Campus administration on other campuses provided assistance with finding accommodation.
- Glenn College's acceptance policy gave preference to students from regional and remote communities.

Group tutoring assistance

- Study groups/tutoring in all residential services which included a high proportion of rural students as well as those in other equity groups.

Student counselling

- Counselling Services provided the following services to students, including a significant number of students from equity groups: individual and small group counselling, information and referral to community groups and services for students. They also ran group programs: orientation and adjustment, study and life-skills, training/educative, and therapeutic groups, and provided counselling at residential colleges.

Careers and Employment Services

- The online resource 'CareerHub' made careers resources (including job advertisements, career advice and advice on job seeking skills) available to all La Trobe students including those in rural and regional campuses. This enabled students from all regional campuses to access a well structured service.
- Career advice programs run for specific groups of students
- Graduate Recruitment and Work Experience Expos
- Individual appointments with Careers Consultants
- A resume review service and interview practice scheme

- The Student Employment Service maintained a database which matched students looking for employment with vacant positions.
- The Careers Service expanded its career mentoring program for final year students in 2008, with the program now offered on three regional campuses as well as the large metropolitan campus. The Vice Chancellor was a strong supporter of this scheme and participated as a mentor in 2008.

Student financial services

- The University made \$1.5m available to the Student Loan Fund which supported students in financial need.
- Loans were available to students for textbooks, equipment, course fees, computers and software and other essential needs in order to complete their studies.
- Students were able to access advice regarding social security benefits directly from a Centrelink Office located on the Bundoora, Bendigo and Albury Wodonga campuses.

Language programs

- Academic Skills staff provide regular seminars and discussion groups on topics related to developing an effective set of academic skills.
- The University provides a specialised Language and Academic Skills Unit for students whose first language is not English. The Unit ran workshops and provided individual study skills assistance.
- Each Faculty in the University has a Language and Academic Skills Unit from which any student can seek one-to-one assistance. These Units are designed to assist students to cope with the demands of tertiary studies including writing, reading, notetaking, oral presentations, time management, exam preparation and related language skills.
- The University offers two accredited units (ESL 1 and ESL 2) which develop the students' English language and learning skills. They are interdisciplinary, one semester subjects available in first or second semester. Each of these ESL units counts for 15 credit points towards an undergraduate degree.
- Bundoora, Bendigo and Albury/Wodonga campus employ an ESL consultant.
- Shepparton campus library: provision of 'textHELP' software for students who need to develop language skills.
- Shepparton Campus is a very small campus, so it provides a webcam facility for students to talk with Language and Academic Skills (ESL) Unit in Bundoora.

Chaplaincy Service

The Chaplaincy team at La Trobe seeks to help students and staff work through spiritual and pastoral issues within their own lives and the wider world. The Chaplains are available for individual consultation and for group discussions.

The Chaplains work within a multi-faith context and promote respect for other religions or expressions of faith. Confidential support, counsel and encouragement are offered to people of all backgrounds. Where desired, the chaplains will attempt to refer people to someone from an appropriate religious or faith background. On some regional campuses the Chaplaincy also administers food and financial donations from local organisations to assist students from Low SES backgrounds.

Institutional Equity Scholarships

List the institution's equity scholarships, which complement the Commonwealth Scholarships. Show the type of assistance available (including duration and annual financial value), target group(s) and number of students assisted.

La Trobe University has developed a number of equity scholarships which are administered by the Scholarships Office under the portfolio of Academic Services. The Scholarship Office coordinates the advertising, application and selection process. The Equity Scholarships Committee is responsible for ensuring that the selection process is fair and transparent including review and advice of unsuccessful applications.

The University offers a range of scholarships which target students from equity groups. In 2008 these scholarships had a total annual value of approximately \$924,500, and details are provided below.

Equity Scholarships at La Trobe University

Scholarship/Grant	Assistance		Target Group	No. in 2008*
	Annual Value	Duration		
<i>La Trobe Study Support</i>	\$3,000	3-4 years	<i>All equity groups</i>	79
<i>La Trobe Indigenous Student</i>	\$5,000	3-4 years	<i>Indigenous Australian</i>	10
<i>La Trobe Vice Chancellors Regional</i>	\$3,000	3-4 years	<i>Rural and Low SES</i>	20
<i>Honours Year Grant</i>	\$1,000-2,000	1 year	<i>All equity groups</i>	54
<i>Les Kilmartin</i>	\$500	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Dept. of Human Services</i>	\$6,800	3 years	<i>Rural students</i>	10
<i>Gwen Saunders Memorial</i>	\$500	1 year	<i>Rural and Low SES</i>	1
<i>R.E. McGarvie Memorial</i>	\$3,000	3-4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Lisa Malone</i>	\$2,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Evan Pattulock Memorial</i>	\$1,500	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Andrea Hore Business</i>	\$2,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Chisholm College Accommodation</i>	\$2,500	1 year	<i>Low SES students</i>	20
<i>Menzies College Regional</i>	\$1,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	8
<i>Residential Services</i>	\$600 - \$1,200	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	30
<i>Albury Wodonga Community Scholarship</i>	\$1,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	4
<i>Bendigo Anniversary Foundation</i>	\$1,500	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Bendigo Bank MBA scholarship</i>	\$18,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	2
<i>Bendigo Community Leadership award</i>	\$2,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Bendigo Davey Family Scholarship</i>	\$750	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Bendigo Residential scholarships</i>	\$1,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	50
<i>Bendigo United Friendly Societies</i>	\$6,500	3 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>City of Bendigo Civil Engineering</i>	\$6,250**	3 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>The Friends Scholarships</i>	\$2,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Computer Science and Engineering</i>	\$6,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Coliban Water Civil Engineering</i>	\$3,000	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	2
<i>Coomes Consulting Group</i>	\$11,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	3
<i>NorthEast Water</i>	\$10,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Deans Scholarship</i>	\$6,000	1 year	<i>Rural students</i>	10
<i>Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water</i>	\$10,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>VicRoads Civil Engineering</i>	\$6,500 **	2-3 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Goulburn Murray Water</i>	\$11,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>SJE Consulting Civil Engineering</i>	\$6,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Shire of Campaspe Civil Engineering</i>	\$11,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Murray Irrigation Civil Engineering</i>	\$10,000**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Colleambully Irrigation Civil Eng.</i>	\$10,500**	4 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Mijo Darveniza Engineering</i>	\$3,000	2 years	<i>Rural students</i>	1
<i>Health Science Lincoln Award</i>	\$1,000	1 year	<i>Low SES students</i>	1
<i>Sport & Tourism Youth Foundation</i>	\$1,000	1 year	<i>Low SES students</i>	1
<i>FRRR/Pratt Water Engineering Cadetship</i>	\$5,000 **	1 year	<i>Rural Students</i>	4
<i>City of Wangaratta Civil Engineering</i>	\$5,000 **	1 year	<i>Rural Students</i>	4

* commencing scholarships only, pipeline scholarships not included

** includes \$5,000 paid vacation work per year

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