

EQUITY UPDATE 2007

A. Key Achievements in 2006

1. Meeting the Needs of Students with Mental Health Issues – Phase One

This research project represented the first stage of a two stage program to assist students with mental health issues. The project emphasis was to strengthen the capacity of the University community to respond effectively to the identified needs of students with mental health issues.

The first stage was investigatory in nature and was completed in 2006. Key outcomes of Phase One were:

- A literature review covering a range of relevant areas to inform the later phases of the project.
- Consultations with students, student leaders to assess the needs of students with mental health issues, barriers that inhibited their academic and social participation, and the factors that positively facilitated this participation. Findings were clustered around a number of themes including: interactions between mental health issues and studies; effects of mental health problems on social participation; sense of belonging at university; social networks; experiences of disclosing mental illness; and experiences of interacting with staff.
- Consultations with academic and general service staff investigating their attitudes and experiences in relation to students with mental health issues. Findings provided insight into staff interactions with these students; barriers for staff in supporting these students, and suggestions on methods staff have found useful to support students with mental health issues.
- The development of recommendations for strategies to support students with mental health issues, both in terms of new initiatives and strategies that were linked to existing policies, plans and systems for accountability within the university.
- A comprehensive project report on Stage One will be available to the University community by mid 2007.

2. Scholarships for VCE Preparatory Program

This pilot program encouraged Year 12 students to attend mid year and end of year exam preparation lectures. In 2006 there were 2,715 students who attended these lectures, and all costs were funded by the University as a scholarship program.

The high schools targeted for the program were either in low SES postcode areas, or schools which had a university entrance rate of less than 50% of their Year 12 cohort. The preparatory lectures were provided by Access Education, which is the largest provider of VCE preparation and exam revision programs in Victoria. This program was offered at one metropolitan and two regional campuses of La Trobe University.

Feedback from students was very positive, and the program was expanded in January 2007 to include a VCE Summer School to prepare commencing Year 12 students for their final year of study.

3. Recycled Computer Scheme

The Equity Computer Scheme was introduced in 2006. This scheme provided a free reconditioned computer to students who were experiencing financial hardship, to assist them with their studies. Each computer was internet ready with relevant software suitable for tertiary level students. La Trobe University provided 75 reconditioned computers to commencing or continuing undergraduate students whose application for an undergraduate equity scholarship was deemed eligible, but was unsuccessful due to the limited number of scholarships available.

An evaluation of the 2006 scheme indicated that the majority of respondents found the computer scheme very useful, helping to decrease stress levels associated with study, and assisting with web-based research for assessment tasks. The computer scheme also facilitated email communications between students and the University.

B. Equity Group Focus and Key Equity Strategies

Equity Group Focus in 2006

While the University maintained a focus on all equity groups in 2006, the main target groups were students from low SES background, students with a disability, and students from rural and isolated areas.

Students from Low SES Background

An analysis of access and participation trends for low SES students over the past five years reveals that La Trobe University is above the Victorian and national averages for this group. However, access and participation levels remain below the level of people with a low SES background in the broader population.

The major issues faced by this group were:

- Obtaining adequate VCE marks to apply for a University place;
- Adjusting to life as a University student; and
- Being able to meet the financial costs associated with attending University.

The VCE exam preparation lectures targeting this equity group (discussed at Point A above) were a key strategy to improve access levels.

The University also ran an outreach program called "A Day in the Life" which brought many low SES students to the University to experience a day in the life of a University student. In 2006 there were 678 regional students who attended this program in Bendigo, and 230 regional students who attended a similar program at the Albury Wodonga campus. The Office of Prospective Students also targeted 13 schools in low SES post code areas in the Bundoora catchment for school visits, campus tours and careers expos.

The recycled computer scheme (also discussed at Point A above) was a strategy to improve success levels of students from Low SES Background.

The University's Counselling Services provided a comprehensive outreach program to residential colleges on campus. Many residents were from rural/

isolated areas and low SES background. The University Residences also provided orientation, transition and mentoring programs to assist students' adjustment to University life.

The University's Language and Academic Skills units provided a wide range of programs to assist students' adjustment to University life. Programs included skill building in writing, reading, note-taking, oral presentations, time management, language skills, and exam preparation.

The University provides \$1.5 million via 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 a Centrelink Office located on the Bundoora Campus.

The Faculty of Health Sciences provided Professional Placement Scholarships to Low SES students undertaking a professional placement in a location more than 50kms away from their usual place of residence. The scholarships were valued at \$200 for each full week of placement, and assisted students to meet additional accommodation, travel and living expenses. Sixty students benefited from this scheme in 2006.

At Bendigo Campus a Residential bursary was provided to 32 regional students in financial need, and small loans were made available for students who had demonstrated financial hardship.

In 2006 the Equity and Access Unit continued to employ 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.

Students with a Disability

The levels of access and participation for students with a disability have remained above the sector averages over the past five years.

In 2006 a key target area was retention and success for students with mental health issues. Counselling Services commenced staff training in how to effectively respond to the needs of these students (see Section A above).

Another key target group was students with a print disability. The Alternative Format Service was introduced in 2006 to assist in meeting the needs of this group. A detailed description of this project is provided in Section F below.

Students from Rural & Isolated Areas

La Trobe University has a state-wide network of campuses based at Bundoora (metropolitan), Melbourne, Bendigo, Wodonga, Mildura, Shepparton, and Beechworth. The University has had a strong commitment to the provision of higher education in regional Victoria and southern New South Wales for many years. The levels of access, participation, retention and success for rural students at the University have remained above the sector averages for the past five years.

Keys issues in 2006 for this group of students were:

- a review to assess the University's effectiveness in promoting tertiary education opportunities to regional communities;
- deficiencies in e-learning technologies; and
- the impact of the drought.

In 2006 the University undertook a major review of the regional campuses, and concluded that it should continue to have a vibrant presence in these communities. The review noted that the regional campuses provided an educational opportunity for many rural, low SES and mature age students, and that more than 50% of graduates from these campuses were employed in the regions.

The review recommended an increased emphasis on blended approaches to learning technologies which will combine face-to-face and technology supported learning.

In 2006 the University also announced an increase in support for students from drought-affected communities. This included \$400,000 in scholarships for first year students enrolling in agricultural science programs.

In 2006 the University also conducted a qualitative investigation into factors effecting access and participation of rural students in the Bendigo campus catchment area. The study also included rural students from Low SES background, and those with a disability. The study found a number of inter-related factors which manifest as barriers to participation in higher education. These included financial barriers, concerns about accommodation and transport, and a lack of exposure to significant others who had experienced university study and subsequent occupational benefits. This research will inform the University's outreach programs to rural and isolated students in 2007.

Equity Group Focus in 2007

Early in 2007 a Student Equity Outreach Officer was appointed to assist the University in developing a co-ordinated Outreach Program and a well structured Transition Program on all campuses of the University. A Reference Group of Faculty and regional campus staff has been established to assist the Outreach Officer in this work.

Equity groups identified for targeting in 2007 are: students from low SES backgrounds and students from non-English speaking background.

Students from Low SES Background

In 2007 the University will introduce a new key strategy in the form of an access program called 'Schools Access La Trobe (SALT). This program will enable selected schools to recommend Year 12 students for admission to La Trobe University on the basis of criteria other than ENTER score. The selected schools will include those in a low SES postcode area, and those schools whose Year 12 cohort continuing to University has averaged less than 50% over the preceding 2 years.

Another new initiative in 2007 is the outreach project entitled *'On-site Consultancy, Counselling and Seniors/Residential Assistants Support to Glenn, Menzies and Chisholm Colleges'*. This project aims to develop a model of 'good practice' of support within the College communities to facilitate a positive environment which fosters the growth and well-being of student residents.

Students with a Disability

In 2007 retention and success for students with mental health issues will continue to be a key target area. The second stage of the initiative *'Meeting the Needs of Students with Mental Health Issues'* will continue and seek to implement key recommendations from Phase One.

In 2007 the project will further enhance the capacity of the University community to respond to the needs of students with mental health issues. This will involve the development of three modules. The first module aims to increase awareness of student support services among students with mental health issues and assist these students to overcome external and personal barriers to accessing services and supports. The second module aims to support staff to appropriately assist these students by developing a 'good practice' system within a particular faculty or schools. The third module focuses on the development of an innovative peer mentor program aimed at reducing social isolation, supporting students in their transition into university life, and increasing academic and social participation.

Students from a Non English Speaking Background

The levels of access, participation and success for this group of students remained below their representation levels in the broader community. However, after a steady decline in retention levels between 2001 – 2005, the retention levels in 2006 improved considerably and NESB students at La Trobe University were just as likely as other students to continue in their studies.

The key issues for this group are not clear, and further investigation will occur in 2007 to determine what barriers to enrolment and success at La Trobe University exist for these students.

In 2007 a project entitled *'Migrating to Uni: Developing a Support Network for NESB Students at Bundoora Campus'* commenced to address the needs of the existing NESB student population at La Trobe University.

The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the University community to respond to the needs of NESB students through:

- enhanced staff awareness of the challenges faced by NESB students;
- the development of clear and comprehensive pathways to support NESB students; and
- the identification and development of targeted support activities (i.e. orientation programs and mentoring) for future implementation.

The project will be developed in consultation with community stakeholders including students, academic and general staff.

C. Equity Planning and Management in 2006

The La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2006-2010 contains a commitment to the participation of students from under-represented groups, and acknowledges the value of a diverse student population. Management strategies which support this commitment include:

- The position of Pro Vice Chancellor (Equity and Student Services), who is responsible for the oversight of matters relating to access and equity for students. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) is a member of the University's Senior Management Group and is an ex officio member of the University Council and Academic Board.
- The Equity and Access Unit – responsible for research, planning and day-to-day student equity and access assistance.
- The Learning and Teaching Plan, which includes a commitment to a focus on lifelong learning, and increasing flexibility in programs and delivery.
- A extensive committee system: University Equal Opportunity Committee (and its sub-committees); Faculty of Health Sciences Learning and Teaching Committee; the Selection and Enrolment Committee; and the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering Equal Opportunity Committee; the Equity, Access and Personal Welfare Committee; and the Disability Advisory Committee. Detailed descriptions of these committees were submitted in the 2005 Equity report to DEST.

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. Faculty Planning documents include equity strategies and outcomes, and Faculty Deans annually present equity strategies to Council.

The University has also begun to develop a database of research projects relating to student equity and access undertaken by La Trobe University staff. This database will further enhance the effective management of student equity research matters at the University.

D. Performance of Equity Groups in 2005

Group	Relevant Indicator	Key trend or shift	Explanation
Low SES Background	Access	1.3% increase	The introduction of a large number of scholarships in 2005, and increased outreach activities to schools in low SES postcode areas. Scholarship details are set out below.
Isolated Areas	Retention	0.08 decrease	The drought has significantly affected the financial status of families in isolated areas ¹ .

¹ Campus Review (2007) *Drought Threatens an Entire Generation of Students*, 30/4/07, p.3

No other equity group indicators shifted more than 1% in access and participation levels between 2004 and 2005. No other ratios shifted more than 0.04 between 2004 and 2005.

La Trobe University Study Support Scholarship (LSSS)

The La Trobe University Study Support Scholarship was introduced in 2005. The LSSS was available to students who commenced their first undergraduate degree at any of the Victorian campuses of La Trobe University. The general eligibility criteria were the same as the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships. The LSSS are valued at \$3,000 per year, for the normal duration of an undergraduate course in which a student first enrolls, including Honours if applicable. There were 90 LSSSs awarded in 2005 with a total cost of \$270,000 with a pipeline effect of around \$810,000 for a three year degree (excluding Honours) and \$1.08m for a four-year degree.

A review of the allocation of Commonwealth Learning Scholarships and the La Trobe Study Support Scholarships showed that the scholarships awarded in 2005 were distributed evenly across the campuses. At least 63% of students who applied from each of the regional campuses received a CLS or a LSSS, compared to 58% at the metropolitan Bundoora campus. The distribution of scholarships therefore proceeded equitably and reached areas of need.

In 2005 there were 29% of rural and isolated students who were also students from a Low SES background. Additional scholarships offered in 2005 which targeted rural students were:

- New \$6000 Scholarships for rural and regional students to study in Computer Science and Computer Engineering courses
- New \$1000 Scholarships for rural and regional students at Menzies residential college.
- A number of regional scholarships with industry partners.

E. Higher Education Equity Support Program Funded Initiatives

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
VCE Preparation Scholarships	The project aimed to assist students from Low SES background, and from under-represented schools, to prepare for their VCE. Access Education was contracted to deliver the preparatory lectures to students in both metropolitan and regional locations.	A large number of students (2,715) attended these lectures in 2006 and feedback has been very positive. All students who received a VCE scholarship have been placed in the database managed by the Office of Prospective Students. This Office will track the progression of students who received the scholarship and the conversion rate of these students into enrolments will be compared against the Victorian state data for university entry by low SES students.
Academic Student Mentor for Undergraduate Nursing and Midwifery Scheme	The project aimed to offer a Student Academic Mentor that nursing and midwifery students could access if they required information, advocacy, support and/or referral on issues relating to personal circumstances or course/career related issues.	The program has been well received by staff and students. The Student Academic Mentor has had 140 contacts with students for a range of study, career and personal issues since the program began in March 2006. The Faculty is keen to introduce a similar Scheme across as many of its undergraduate courses as possible.
WebCT resource development for secondary school science students	The goal of this project was to develop and promote a scientific resource that allowed secondary school science students, particularly rural students, to access and share scientific information that was frequently updated, informative, reliable and freely accessible.	WebCT sites have been set up for students and staff involved in both Years 11 and 12 Biology. Much of the core material has been generated and is ready to go into the program. During the mid-year University break arrangements will be made to introduce the program to a group of interested science teachers for further discussions and improvements.

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
Adapting the York Adult Assessment for Australian Use	This project seeks to adapt a U.K. dyslexia resting instrument for use in Australia. It aims to identify students with dyslexia in a simplified and cost effective form. This assessment can then be used to recommend appropriate accommodations for each student.	Ethics approval has been received for this project. Students have been identified and interviewing has commenced.
Migrating to Uni – Developing a support network for NESB students at Bundoora campus	This project seeks to strengthen the capacity of the University community to respond to the needs of NESB students. Information will be gathered to enhance staff awareness of the challenges faced by these students; and target support activities will be identified and developed.	Approval for research aspects of this project has been sent to the Ethics Committee. Students have been identified and letters prepared seeking their co-operation to participate in the project. Implementation of the project will commence as soon as Ethics Committee approval has been gained.

F. Higher Education Disability Support Program Funded Initiatives
(a) Additional Support for Students with Disabilities (ASSD)

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
WYNN software	This is a literacy software tool for students with a learning disability. Copies of the software have been provided for student use on three campuses.	An analysis of data on the performance of students with disabilities indicates an improvement across participation, retention and success measures for students with a disability in 2006. This indicates that the intensive supports provided have been helpful in assisting the retention and success of these students.
On-going support for Hearing impaired and visually impaired students	The support offered to students with a disability included: a Braille machine which is located in the library, specialist software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking, notetakers, scribes, real-time captioning, video-relay interpreting and Auslan interpreters.	

The University currently finds the provision of the Additional Support for Students with Disabilities to be invaluable in covering the costs of employing notetakers, scribes and interpreters. As the number of Deaf students increased at the Bendigo campus, the cost of supporting these students was high as interpreters were required to travel from Melbourne. (There was only one suitably qualified Auslan interpreter in the region.)

However, the University is also committed to sourcing learning technologies which can enhance student opportunities and provide flexibility and learner choice. In future years there will be an increasing emphasis on blended approaches which will combine face-to-face and technology supported learning. This should have the effect of reducing the amount of special educational support services required by students who are Deaf and students who have disabilities.

The University supports the RDLO initiative. A Disability Liaison Officer from the Bundoora campus has continued to be one of two higher education representatives on the Disability Co-ordinators Office (DCO) Advisory Committee. The Disability Co-ordinators Office is supported by RDLO funding and seeks to improve the transitions for people with a disability between schools, post compulsory education and training, and employment via the establishment and coordination of projects, referral, liaising with stakeholders. In 2006 the DCO initiated the following projects:

- the "Aspirations" CD - collection of tertiary transition experiences from people with Asperser's Syndrome;
- a Mental Health conference; and
- the development of low cost/ no cost adaptive technology guide for people with disabilities.

Higher Education Disability Support Program Funded Initiatives (cont.)

(c) Performance based disability support funding

Key initiative title	Brief description	Outcomes
The Alternate Format Service (AFS) of the Online Teaching Support Team (OTST)	This initiative converts learning materials to alternate formats for students with a print disability. The AFS was formed as part of a collaborative effort between the Equity and Access Unit (EAU) and OTST with a view to improving student support.	<p>With the aid of EAU funding in 2006 the AFS was able to dramatically increase its output capacity while continuing to develop and improve its processes and the range of alternate formats available to students.</p> <p>Vision Australia has expressed a keen interest in the accomplishments of the AFS, specifically with regard to DAISY and synthetic speech, leading to discussions regarding collaborative developments to implement cutting edge delivery technologies to further improve student equity.</p>
Meeting the Needs of Students with Mental Health Issues	The overall aim of the project was to improve the opportunities for participation, retention and success for students with mental health issues.	<p>This phase of an extensive project included the following integrated activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A literature review covering a range of relevant areas to inform the later phases of the project. 2. Consultations with students, student leaders and staff to assess the needs of students with mental health issues, barriers that inhibit their academic and social participation, and the factors that positively facilitate this participation. 3. The development of recommendations for strategies to support students with mental health issues, both in terms of new initiatives and strategies that are linked to existing policies, plans and systems for accountability within the university.

G. Commonwealth Learning Scholarships

There was a 50% increase in the number of applications for scholarships in 2006 compared with 2005. In 2006 the University received 922 new applications for Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships, and awarded 162 new scholarships. The University also received 643 new applications for Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships, and awarded 119 new scholarships.

The key issue with scholarships was that the number of applications continued to be greater than scholarships available. The reconditioned computer scheme attempted to partially address this inadequacy by allocating computers to students who were unsuccessful in gaining a scholarship.

H. Eligibility Requirements for ESP Funding in 2008

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 of the higher Education Equity Support Programme and 1.85.1 of the Performance-based Disability Support funding and that the University meets all the criteria set out at paragraph 1.45.1 (a)-(d) which is demonstrated under the following headings.

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Professor Paul Johnson
Vice-Chancellor

Outreach Programs

La Trobe University ran a number of outreach programs in 2006 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

Bendigo Campus

At the Bendigo campus 84% of students enrolled in 2006 came from rural or isolated areas, and 24% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode. The Office of Prospective Students at La Trobe University conducted 33 school visits or special programs in the Bendigo region in 2006, attended by 2,976 students.

Additionally, the popular outreach program "A Day in the Life" was offered 13 times at Bendigo during 2006, and attracted 678 secondary school students. This program aimed to give secondary students a taste of a day in the life of a university student.

The Office of Prospective Students attended 30 Careers Network Group meetings with School Careers Officers in the Bendigo region in 2006. Nine Careers Expos were also attended, where information was provided to 755 students.

The Office of Prospective Students also held a Mature Age Information Session at the Bendigo campus which was attended by 180 people. It also conducted 16 Bendigo Campus tours, attended by 755 secondary school students in the region.

The Bendigo Campus Directorate and Faculties worked closely with the Bendigo Region Institute of TAFE (BRIT) to improve articulation and workforce planning. Collaboration also occurred between the Bendigo Campus and local/regional schools.

Albury Wodonga Campus

At the Albury Wodonga campus 81% of students enrolled in 2006 came from rural or isolated areas, and 24% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode. The Office of Prospective Students at La Trobe University conducted 32 school visits or special programs in the Albury Wodonga region in 2006, attended by 1,919 students.

The Office of Prospective Students attended 13 Careers Network Group meetings with School Careers Officers in the Albury Wodonga region in 2006. Ten Careers Expos were also attended, where information was provided to 6,200 students.

The Office of Prospective Students also conducted eight Albury Wodonga Campus tours, attended by 490 secondary school students in the region.

Additionally, the outreach program "Experience La Trobe" was offered twice at Albury Wodonga campus during 2006, and attracted 230 secondary school students.

Albury Wodonga campus also continued to run its University Bridging Program in 2006. This is an 18 week enabling program aimed at mature age students who have not completed Year 12.

In 2006 the Albury Wodonga campus hosted its first genetics classes for secondary students. This initiative sought to develop the aspirations and motivations of regional students and encourage enrolment in University Science programs. It was attended by 57 students from the Wodonga Senior Secondary College and the classes were delivered by staff from La Trobe University's Department of Environmental Management and Ecology. Previously students had to travel to Melbourne University for this program, so local delivery has been appreciated, particularly by students from Low SES background.

Shepparton Campus

At the Shepparton campus 89% of students enrolled in 2006 came from rural areas, and 65% 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. Students were advised about La Trobe courses, scholarships, accommodation, assistance, etc. The Pro Vice Chancellor at Shepparton campus also visited all the local secondary schools and began discussions with the Principals about possible collaborations and outreach programs.

The annual Careers Day Out event targeted approximately 1500 Year 10 students from 20 schools in the region. Interested students were advised of courses available at all campuses of La Trobe as well as scholarships, accommodation, etc. Additionally, staff from Shepparton Campus visit local schools upon request, to discuss La Trobe University's programs and support services.

The initiative *Timetabling for Access* continued in 2006. The timetable of the Shepparton Campus was "blocked" in such a way that each subject's lectures & tutorials were offered within a certain period of time within one day. This assisted

students who came long distances, and/or, students who were working part-time. In addition, the School of Business offered some subjects in the evening, on a rotation basis.

Mildura Campus

At the Mildura campus 92% of students enrolled in 2006 came from rural areas, and 33% of students came from areas with a Low SES postcode. Campus staff visited four high schools in the Mildura catchment area to promote La Trobe programs and hosted campus visits by a further two secondary schools. One campus visit was also held to promote university programs to the local Indigenous students studying in Years 10-12. Campus staff attended 12 Careers Association meetings in 2006, and hosted *Careers in Health* workshops. One Mature Age information session was conducted 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 are 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*
- *Postgraduate Expo* held at Bundoora campus
- TAFE articulation agreements are in place for some Faculty programs, and the La Trobe University publication *TAFE Pathways* provides information regarding access to a broad range of University programs.
- Various publications of Office for Prospective Students and Careers 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 and William Buckland Foundation. Students from the Faculty attend High Schools to work as mentors in science classes.
- School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences: School Holiday Workshops for students from Years 10-12: *Explore the World of Electronic Engineering* and *ICT goes Back to the Future*.
- Department of Computer Science and Computer Engineering *VCE School Workshops*.
- Department of Chemistry's Year 11 and 12 programs for local schools.

- *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.
- Faculty of Health Science hosted two one-day visits by rural students in 2006. This program allowed rural students to attend the Bundoora campus and discover more about the various health related programs on offer.
- University-wide participation in VTAC conducted Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS). 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 at La Trobe University have access to support services at all campuses. These student support services provide a range of support through personal counselling, careers counselling and employment related advice, learning assistance, guidance on financial counselling, accommodation assistance, and chaplaincy. Some examples of the support provided in 2006 were:

Familiarisation/orientation programs

For Equity groups:

- The Shepparton Orientation program for new students included sessions on Transition to University and Succeeding at University, which were very well attended.
- The Mildura Orientation activities for new students included a Transition to University program.
- Students with a disability are provided with a personalised orientation to the campus. The Bendigo Campus has developed a physical access map of the campus, to assist students with mobility impairment. Bundoora Campus developed an improved physical access map in 2006.
- Following a 3 year study on the needs of rural and isolated students, 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.
- School of Nursing and Midwifery established a Student Academic Mentor (SAM) program in 2006 to assist disadvantaged first year students in their transition to university studies.

- School of Human Communication Sciences monitors NESB students' and regularly refers these students to the Language and Academic Skills Unit. The Unit has developed specific study materials to assist these students.
- The School of Computer Science and computer Engineering has a *Women in Engineering Network* group to support female students and assist in retention rates. Planning is also underway for a special information evening for senior high school students to encourage them to take up information technology and engineering courses. There will be an emphasis on attracting female students to these courses.

For all students:

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

Mentoring/Peer support programs

- Health Sciences: 'Buddy' mentoring programs for commencing students.
- All residential services provide extensive academic mentoring and peer support programs coordinated by expert staff.
- The School of Computer Science and Computer Engineering is currently developing a mentor program for students who are entering first year.
- The School of Psychological Sciences has developed a transition program using the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) model for all first year tutorial classes.
- The School of Biological Sciences has commenced a pilot mentoring program which runs for the first seven weeks of Semester One, and involves 3rd year and Honours year students mentoring first year students.
- The School of Human Communication Sciences has established a mentoring program for 1st year speech pathology 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 rural and isolated communities.

Group tutoring assistance

- Faculty Academic Skills staff provide regular seminars and discussion groups on topics related to developing an effective set of academic skills.
- 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.

Career advice 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 Union's Student Employment Services maintained a database which matched students looking for employment with vacant positions.
- The Bendigo Student Association provided a student employment service in conjunction with local businesses.

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 campus. At the regional campuses an effective network of contacts in Centrelink has been established which can assist students to manage their Centrelink options.

Language programs

- The University provides a Language and Academic Skills Unit (ESL) specifically 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.
- Bendigo campus runs weekly *Pronunciation and Australian Slang* workshops for NESB students
- Albury/Wodonga campus employs an ESL consultant.
- Shepparton campus library: provision of 'textHELP' software for students who needed to develop language skills.

- Shepparton Campus: provision of webcam for students to talk with Language and Academic Skills (ESL) Unit in Bundoora.
- Language/cultural discussion groups coordinated by expert staff were conducted in all residential services.

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 four chaplains are Christian chaplains who work within a context of 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. The Chaplaincy also administers food and financial donations from local organisations to assist students from Low SES backgrounds.

Institutional Equity Scholarships

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. The Committee also reviews the assessment procedures for an application when requested by an unsuccessful applicant.

The University offers a range of scholarships which target students from equity groups. These scholarships have a total annual value of approximately \$345,000, and details are set out in Appendix A.

A survey is currently being conducted to gather further information on the impact of Commonwealth Learning Scholarships and Equity Scholarships allocated to disadvantaged students in 2006. The University is also undertaking a review of its institutional scholarships in 2007.

University Contact Officers

	Name & Title	Phone	Email
ESP Contact Officer	Mrs Stephanie Chard Manager, Equity & Access Unit	03 9479 3456	s.chard@latrobe.edu.au
DSP Contact Officer	Mrs Stephanie Chard Manager, Equity & Access Unit	03 9479 3456	s.chard@latrobe.edu.au
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Equity Scholarships at La Trobe University

Scholarship	Assistance		Target Group	No. in 2006*
	Annual Value	Duration		
La Trobe Study Support	\$3,000	3-4 years	All equity groups	90
La Trobe Indigenous Student	\$5,000	3-4 years	Indigenous Australian	10
La Trobe Vice Chancellors Regional	\$3,000	3-4 years	Rural and Low SES	20
Honours Year Grant	\$1,000-2,000	1 year	All equity groups	40
Les Kilmartin	\$500	1 year	Rural students	1
Dept. of Human Services	\$6,800	3 years	Rural students	10
Gwen Saunders Memorial	\$500	1 year	Rural and Low SES	1
R.E. McGarvie Memorial	\$3,000	3-4 years	Rural students	1
Lisa Malone	\$2,000	1 year	Rural students	1
Evan Pattulock Memorial	\$1,500	1 year	Rural students	1
Andrea Hore Business	\$2,000	1 year	Rural students	1
Chisholm College Accommodation	\$2,500	1 year	Low SES students	20
Chisholm College Accommodation	\$5,000	1 year	Indigenous Australian	1
Menzies College Regional	\$1,000	1 year	Rural students	8
Residential Services	\$600 - \$1,200	1 year	Rural students	32
Riverlink	\$2,000	1 year	Rural students	1
Bendigo Anniversary Foundation	\$1,500	1 year	Rural students	1
Bendigo United Friendly Societies	\$6,500	3 years	Rural students	1
City of Bendigo Civil Engineering	\$6,250**	3 years	Rural students	1
Coliban Water Civil Engineering	\$3,000	4 years	Rural students	2
Coomes Consulting Group	\$11,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
NorthEast Water	\$10,000**	4 years	Rural students	1

* commencing scholarships only, pipeline scholarships not included

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

Equity Scholarships (cont.)

Scholarship	Assistance		Target Group	No. in 2006*
	Annual Value	Duration		
Deans Scholarship	\$6,000	1 year	Rural students	10
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water	\$10,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
VicRoads Civil Engineering	\$6,500 **	2-3 years	Rural students	1
Goulburn Murray Water	\$11,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
SJE Consulting Civil Engineering	\$6,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
Shire of Campaspe Civil Engineering	\$11,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
Murray Irrigation Civil Engineering	\$10,000**	4 years	Rural students	1
Colleambully Irrigation Civil Eng.	\$10,500**	4 years	Rural students	1
Mijo Darveniza Engineering	\$3,000	2 years	Rural students	1
Health Science Lincoln Award	\$1,000	1 year	Low SES students	1
Sport & Tourism Youth Foundation	\$1,000	1 year	Low SES students	1

* commencing scholarships only, pipeline scholarships not included

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