The University of Sydney is committed to increasing awareness of, and promoting positive values and attitudes towards, the diverse cultural, religious and linguistic needs of its staff and student body and the communities it serves. To this end, the University’s Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement links a range of initiatives and strategies to the major goals of the University’s Strategic Plan.

2006 initiatives and achievements

Diversity in learning and teaching

In 2006 the University of Sydney adopted a new learning and teaching plan for the years 2007 to 2010. Goal 3 of the five goals in this plan is to promote internationalisation, cultural diversity and equity, which includes objectives to:

- audit unit of study outlines for evidence of cultural diversity in curriculum and learning activities
- provide incentives for teachers to demonstrate a curriculum that values cultural diversity and inclusive teaching practices
- improve DEST Equity Indicators
- improve participation by Indigenous students in all courses
- develop and offer inclusive programs supporting equity and diversity principles
- develop guidelines for teaching about diversity, for diversity and through diversity, and
- integrate international, intercultural, equity and diversity perspectives in core staff professional development programs.

In 2006, a working party on cultural diversity in learning and teaching completed drafts of two key documents. The Plan for Cultural Diversity Awareness and Inclusiveness reflects the University’s strategic directions and is designed to be adapted within faculties for their particular learning, teaching and supervision contexts. The Guide for Reflective Practice is a resource for individual teachers.

The Institute for Teaching and Learning continues to support faculties and individuals in their efforts to enhance teaching and learning on our culturally diverse campuses. Faculty-based learning and teaching initiatives include the following:

- The Sydney Conservatorium of Music imported a specially commissioned Balinese gamelan to enhance the study of Indonesian music. The gamelan is used for classes in non-Western music traditions, to develop students’ understanding of how approaches to music differ between cultures.
- The Faculty of Law offered courses in 2006 with important cross-cultural elements, including Foundations of Law, International Law, Immigration Law and International Business and Law.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences conducted a student placement program known as Operation India, in which students work and provide services to communities overseas.
- The Faculty of Economics and Business developed a number of inclusive programs and practices to support students from diverse backgrounds, including online group work resources, peer-assisted study sessions, peer mentoring at all levels of study, and a clubs and societies support program to encourage students from different cultural backgrounds to work more closely together on extracurricular activities. The faculty was also successful in a Carrick grant application to investigate successful practices for embedding intercultural competence in students and staff.

The University’s Arts and Humanities, ranked fifth best in the world in 2006 by the Times Higher Education Supplement, provided a curriculum that encouraged students to view Australia and their own contributions to the world in a global context, focusing on international perspectives and cross-cultural communication.

In collaboration with colleagues in School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry and the School of Languages and Culture, and with public sector groups such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the Faculty of Arts established a new Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies. The program comprises a three year interdisciplinary core program which takes students through the various dimensions of global change, including issues such as the social and cultural impact of globalisation, human rights and the global public sphere, migration and refugees.
A new cross-disciplinary Master of Arts program in Human Rights – with contributions from the Faculties of Arts, Law, Science and Economics and Business – will be the first humanities-based program in human rights in Australia when it launches in 2008. The social, moral and political consequences of social and cultural diversity are a central part of the core units of this new program. The establishment of this new program has been led by Dr Danielle Celermajer from the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, in close cooperation with colleagues from SOPHI and other faculties.

Support to students from non-English speaking backgrounds

In June 2006, the University launched the WriteSite, an innovative online writing skills tool. The WriteSite is designed to improve students’ academic writing skills through a self-paced program which addresses common problem areas and provides accurate and consistent feedback, in conjunction with the support provided by teaching staff.

The Centre for English Teaching delivered a range of language bridging courses for international students. The Learning Centre offers inclusive services to develop students’ writing and research skills. The International Student Support Unit provides specialist counselling and welfare support to International students and their families.

The University supported its student representative bodies in a successful discrimination case against the NSW Minister for Transport, a first step towards making NSW student travel concessions available to international students.

Faculty-based initiatives for students from non-English speaking backgrounds included the following:

- The Faculty of Law continued to offer a bridging course for postgraduate and undergraduate students, the vast bulk of whom were international students, to introduce them to the Australian legal system. In conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Unit, the faculty also ran classes assisting students with writing skills. A large percentage of the students who attended these classes were international students.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences conducted a mandatory two-week study preparation program for all international students, which addressed learning and study skills, and social and cultural acclimatisation. The faculty’s Learning Centre also provided extensive ongoing support to students with language problems.

Research and critical reflection

The University’s scholarly activities continued to enrich knowledge in a broad range of areas related to cultural diversity. Grants were awarded to research projects such as “The Chinese Knowledge Diaspora and the International Knowledge Network: Australian and Canadian universities compared” and “Between Borders: Refugees, Empires, and Nations”.

Conferences hosted by the University included “New Racisms: New Anti-Racisms”, which examined new anti-racism strategies aimed at addressing the evolving nature of racism, and brought together people from community associations, advocacy groups and local councils, academics, policy-makers in government and human rights organisations.

Publications included Seeking Asylum Alone, a new report by the Faculty of Law’s Associate Professor Mary Crock, examining the experiences of unaccompanied child refugees in Australia, and Windchimes: Asia in Australian Poetry, a new book co-edited by Dr Noel Rowe and Vivian Smith of the Faculty of Arts aimed at engendering a sense that the imagination offers possibilities for cross-cultural understanding.

Engagement with the community

The University of Sydney continues to receive and encourage support from alumni and friends in meeting the cultural needs of its students and the diverse communities it serves. A number of gifts were received in 2006 for scholarship and research in such areas as Jewish Studies, Japanese Studies, Chinese Studies, Arabic and Islam Studies and the Refugee Language
Program. Gifts were also received by the Hoc Mai Australian Vietnam Medical Foundation and the Australian Lebanese Foundation.

In February, over 1000 Australian Lebanese school children and their parents attended a series of events hosted by the University and organised by the Australian Lebanese Foundation. These events aimed to improve understanding of Lebanese culture and heritage. The foundation also awarded three new scholarships to Australian Lebanese high school students.

A new exhibition, Lebanon: from Baalbek to Beirut, was opened by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir in the Nicholson Museum in October 2006. The exhibition portrays the rich cultural history of Lebanon through photographs by artist/photographer Rowan Conroy and artefacts from the Nicholson Museum’s collection together with loans from the Powerhouse Museum. The exhibition was strongly supported and promoted by members of the Lebanese community and was made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Australian Lebanese Foundation and Carroll & O’Dea Lawyers.

The Seymour Centre has become a hub for many performances with particular relevance to ethnic communities or which seek to broaden the general public’s experience of other cultures. Café Carnivale, for instance, held 41 world music concerts in the Seymour’s Sound Lounge in 2006, while performances in other theatres included Chinese opera and Vietnamese pop music. In total, 67 events held at the centre had an ethnic community focus, and the total non-English speaking audience is estimated at around 10,000.

The Centre for Continuing Education offers a large and diverse foreign languages program enrolling more than 6000 students annually. In addition to the perennially popular European and Asian languages, the program is attracting increasingly large numbers to classes in languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Indonesian, Portuguese, Russian, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese. As well as teaching linguistic skills, these classes play a valuable role in promoting cultural awareness between the many ethnic communities involved and, while most classes are undertaken because people are travelling or working overseas, a growing number of students are enrolling in classes because of personal links outside their own linguistic “community”.

Diversity and internationalisation: making connections

The University of Sydney encourages its scholars to study overseas, as well as attracting talented students from around the world. In 2006, there were 8687 international students studying at the University of Sydney. These students came from over 120 different countries with the largest numbers being from the People’s Republic of China, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, the United States, Indonesia, India, Canada, Thailand and Germany.

More than 550 international students participated in the Study Abroad Program, while 312 University of Sydney students and 312 international students participated in the Student Exchange Program for either one or two semesters. New Study Abroad and Student Exchange agreements were established with 29 international universities in Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Mexico, Norway, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The University was also extremely active on the international agreements front with over 150 Memoranda of Understanding either signed for the first time or renewed in 2006 – the largest number ever. The University conducted graduation ceremonies in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and China during the year.

The Office of University Relations extended opportunities for alumni to engage in the life of the University in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia through signature alumni events which attracted over 200 alumni in each city. The Office also piloted ambassadorial and recruitment programs which engaged key alumni volunteers in 2006.

Managing and promoting cultural diversity

During 2006, the Staff and Student Equal Opportunity Unit developed a cultural diversity resource page for University staff and students. It also...
introduced EOOnline, a web-based interactive equal opportunity professional development program for staff, managers and supervisors that covers topics such as preventing racial discrimination and fostering a culturally inclusive workplace.

The University appointed 21 new harassment and discrimination support officers, many of whom speak a community language other than English, to provide information and support for staff and students.

University staff from racial or ethno-religious minority groups and from non-English speaking backgrounds attended the 211 in-house training courses held in 2006 at a greater than average rate, demonstrating the additional support provided for employees from diverse backgrounds through non-targeted, inclusive staff development programs.

The working party on cultural diversity in learning and teaching drafted guidelines for teaching and support staff in reflective practices that support cultural diversity.

A new University chaplaincy website was developed to provide access to information about on-campus support for a diversity of religious beliefs and practices.

**Identified strategies for 2007**

The University will complete the review and updating of its Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement to align with its Strategic Plan 2006–2010. It will continue to:

- cultivate cultural diversity through curriculum development
- ensure a diverse and talented population of student peers
- provide an effective program of scholarships and financial assistance
- provide effective language and bridging support for international students
- lead in educational outreach to the broader community, and
- develop and train staff in core operations and services to best practice levels.