The University of Sydney offers the richest and most comprehensive experience of student life of any university in Australia, and is committed to providing the highest quality student experience as a key element in successful learning outcomes. The University continued to build on existing strengths in 2006 and to set further goals for enhancement of the student experience.

Student life
The University of Sydney’s students excel not only in their academic life but also in their extracurricular activities.

In 2006 three Sydney Arts/Law students won all of the Rhodes Scholarships available to students in New South Wales. In October, it was announced that Kate Brennan had won the 2007 New South Wales Rhodes Scholarship, while Angela Cummine and Eric Knight heard in December that they had taken out the two Australia-at-Large Rhodes Scholarships. Ms Brennan will pursue development studies at Oxford, while Ms Cummine will study international relations and Mr Knight environmental change management. The Rhodes Scholarships are awarded on the basis of both academic excellence and all-round achievement.

Sydney University Sport has produced more Australian representatives and won more major competitions than any other club. In 2006:

- basketball player Belinda Snell and 400m relay runner Clinton Hill both won gold medals at the 2006 Commonwealth Games, while another four athletes took silver medals
- Sydney University Rugby Club retained the Tooheys New Cup, winning the premier Sydney grade championship
- Sydney University’s Men’s VIII rowing team won the Oxford and Cambridge Cup for the third year in a row, and
- the Australian Women’s Water Polo team, featuring Sydney University Lions Fiona Hammond and Tanielle Gofers, won the World Championship.

Our students
In 2006 the University again attracted more first preferences for undergraduate entry than any other university in New South Wales. Forty-seven per cent of school leavers with UAIs over 98 received offers from the University of Sydney. Sydney Uni Live, the University’s open day, attracted 15,000 prospective students and their parents.

Student ambassadors were once again at the centre of the University’s recruitment program. They conducted campus tours, made school visits, spoke at major events and answered enquiries from prospective students as part of the “email a student” program.

University tours were expanded to include after-school tours for school students and their parents, and many prospective students took this opportunity to tour the campus and find out more about admission, accommodation and entry scores. Ten students also became the University’s first bloggers, writing weekly online diary entries about their lives as University of Sydney students. Topics ranged from the light-hearted (“The beauty of the post-it note”) to the more serious (“Transition from school to university”) and thousands of prospective students visited the blog website every month.

The University provided scholarship support at record levels in 2006, with substantial entry and ongoing awards offered across a diverse range of criteria. These included outstanding academic achievement, all-rounder achievement across a range of school and community activities, and sporting excellence. The University continued to expand its Access Scholarship program for talented students experiencing ongoing financial and/or other hardship and continued to administer the federally funded Commonwealth Learning Scholarships equity program.

In total, the University provided $3.1 million in scholarship support to undergraduate students, including offering over 350 new scholarships. Many faculties also provided scholarship support for their students. Commonwealth Learning Scholarship support amounted to $2.1 million, with over 300 new scholarships awarded in 2006. The University also provided more than $310,000 in support to external scholarship programs, such as Smith Family Learning for Life and Sydney Uni Sports Scholarships, and awarded over 1000 prizes to students in recognition of their academic achievement.
In 2006 the University provided almost $1.712 million in financial assistance to more than 1600 students, comprising $721,610 in interest-free loans and $990,300 in bursaries. This represents an increase of $500,000 since 2004. The increased level of assistance has been made possible by the provision from 2005 of two new bursaries, the University of Sydney First Year Bursary for commencing students and the University of Sydney Bursary for Continuing Students. Additionally, new bursaries continue to be funded by donations and bequests.

During the year, the University also responded to the challenge of compliance with the federal government’s Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) legislation with the development of generous funding and support agreements with its student organisations. These agreements will assist the organisations to continue to make their important contribution to the student experience.

**Services for students**

Surveys indicated high levels of student satisfaction with the services they were provided by the University, and students reported they would recommend these services to their peers.

A major technological development in 2006 was the introduction of a new student card. This new card incorporates a digitised photo and allows students access to the library and other University facilities. In due course the card will become a ‘smart card’, lasting the student for the life of his or her degree and incorporating T-card functionality for use as an electronic swipe card on Sydney’s public transport system.

The student portal and email were used extensively to alert students to support and financial assistance at key times of the year. International students and students with disabilities benefited from electronic newsletters tailored to their needs, and the Services for Students website and publications have been reviewed and enhanced to make all information pertaining to student support services more accessible.

Within Student Services, an Equity Support Services group was formed to provide more focus on the effective support of students. This group brings together Disability Services, Financial Assistance Office, Casual Employment Service, Accommodation Service and Child Care Information. The Counselling Service continued to provide workshops and programs focused on improving retention and success of students from diverse equity groups, including activities for rural students and mature-age entry students.

The University’s Careers Centre continued to expand the range and diversity of careers education options for students. The Centre increased the number of faculty-specific workshops by 35 per cent. Student demand for individual services continued at a high rate, and 24-hour CV checking and one-to-one careers counselling continued to be very popular.

Students also benefited from an increase of over 20 per cent in employer activity on campus, accompanied by a 12 per cent increase in online job vacancies.

In 2006 the Careers Centre provided individual services to more than 725 international students (approximately 30 per cent of all students using individual/in-house services). The Centre also conducted four careers education workshops specifically for international students.

**Governance**

In 2006, new policies and processes for identifying and supporting students at risk were finalised and piloted, and they will be fully implemented by all faculties in 2007. This new system will provide an integrated system of identification, counselling and support for students experiencing difficulties which may lead to their exclusion from a course of study.

The University of Sydney (Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006 was approved by Senate, providing a streamlined system for student appeals. The Academic Board will be reviewing its appeals processes in early 2007 to mesh with the new Rule.
365 DAYS BY SARAH-JANE

I can’t believe it’s all nearly over. I don’t want to pack my things and leave. I hadn’t realised before now, how much I love it here.

A whole year of university over. Wow. It still feels like yesterday that I finished the HSC and was off to college all excited with butterflies in my stomach about meeting so many new people. I still remember O-week at college, (well parts of it anyway...). I had so much fun. I remember being introduced to so many people, that I just couldn't remember anyone's name, even after the 50th time they had told me. It was completely hectic, and the party week was over before I knew it. I was then off to my first lecture.

It feels like a whirlwind. There were so many things I wanted to do while I was at college in the city, yet somehow never found the time to do them as I usually went home to visit my family on the weekends.

As I write this I’m contemplating what I should do while I’m still here, even though I still have a humuuge exam to study for. But I can’t help it. Yesterday I went shopping after an exam and blew all my money. And you know what? It feels good.

So, in the spirit of things, I’m going to continue to do the things that I technically shouldn’t be doing during exams. Tonight I have decided to go out with all my friends for the last Wednesday college night. (For those of you not at college, Wednesday is the big party night.)

On a positive note, I have made friends from all over the state, and overseas. So I have been invited to go to Port Macquarie, Scone, Newcastle, and even over to Singapore and Vanuatu. I have never had so many places to go in the holidays...ever.

So for all of you new freshers next year, I can’t wait to see you all and see your faces. I will be a sophomore (wow...still can’t believe a year has gone??). I feel like I’m back in high school, climbing up the ranks into another year. I promise you will have sooooo much fun, and college is an awesome experience. I really want to go overseas especially to America or Canada and live over there on exchange for a while. I have been complaining about how long my degree is and that I will be here forever (5 years), but now I think about it, I am kind of glad. Only 4 years to go...

– Posted to the Sydney Life blog for prospective students
http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/sydneylife

Vice-Chancellor’s Awards for Support of the Student Experience

The Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Support of the Student Experience recognises outstanding achievement in this area. The Vice-Chancellor awards individual members and/or groups (including student groups) of the University community providing specific services, initiatives or projects that target and enhance the identified needs of students. The 2006 winners were:

- Ms Roxanne Healy: The University of Sydney Group of the Australian Physiotherapy Association has become a model for linking student groups into their future professional association, with a program that extends the curriculum and provides a social/networking focus for students on a remote campus. As chairperson of the group, Ms Healy led the change to integrate closely with the professional body. This program will be of great value in establishing the careers of graduates.

- Dr Nerida Jarkey: In collaboration with colleagues Dr Jarkey developed the Arts Network Mentoring Program, which incorporates personal interaction, information sessions, small-group mentoring and digital support services for Arts students. The Program has received high qualitative evaluations from students and measurable positive outcomes in terms of improved retention and progress rates.

- Ms Deborah Kirby-Parsons and Mr Curtis Flood: Ms Kirby-Parsons and Mr Flood developed the Koori Centre web presence to make visible the work of the Koori Centre in improving the accessibility of the University to Indigenous students. The website provides a coherent, single-entry point to the virtual University for Indigenous students, is easy to navigate, and provides an important step for the University in its ambition to recruit and retain Indigenous students.

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