



The University of Sydney  
partnering with our community

## Welcome to our first newsletter for parents involved in the University of Sydney's Compass program.

**The University of Sydney is very pleased to be working with four secondary and 12 primary schools on our new program Compass – find your way to higher education.**

Compass aims to encourage primary and secondary school children to stay in school and think about higher education as an option. The program focuses on years 3, 4 and 5 in primary school and years 8, 9 and 10 in secondary school.

Compass is a partnership between the University of Sydney and the NSW Department of Education and Training, and is funded by the University and the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Primary and high school students involved in Compass will enjoy a range of exciting and educational activities and projects in their schools and at the University of Sydney, where they will meet and interact with our staff and students. In addition, the program offers teachers involved in Compass lots of opportunities for professional development.

As a parent or carer of a school student you have enormous influence on the decisions your child will make about their education and career. Your perceptions and experiences of education and work have a real impact on your child from an early age.

Maybe you feel that higher education is too expensive or impractical. You might feel like you need more information about the pathways into higher education. Perhaps you simply find the whole area too intimidating and confusing.

The Compass program wants to help you through this maze of pathways and choices. Through this newsletter and your schools, we will be inviting you to be part of:

- tours of the University's campus
- 'experience days' at the University
- information sessions on topics such as career planning
- projects at your child's school.

Each term we will send you a newsletter like this, which will give some examples of the activities students from your child's school are doing with the University, and tell you about upcoming opportunities for you or your child.

If you are interested in learning more about the Compass program you can visit our website ([www.usyd.edu.au/compass](http://www.usyd.edu.au/compass)), email us at [admin.compass@usyd.edu.au](mailto:admin.compass@usyd.edu.au) or phone us on **02 8627 8515**.



### Our partner schools

#### 2009 Compass schools:

- Kogarah High School
- Athelstone Public School
- Bexley Public School
- Kogarah Public School

- Marrickville High School
- Marrickville Public School
- Marrickville West Public School
- Wilkins Public School

#### Additional schools in 2010:

- Condell Park High School
- Condell Park Public School
- Wattawa Heights Public School
- Yagoona Public School
- Picnic Point High School
- Panania Public School
- Picnic Point Public School
- Revesby South Public School



## Launch

The Compass program was officially launched at the University of Sydney by the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard MP (pictured above) and the University's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Michael Spence, on 10 June 2009.

Despite the cold snap and gale force winds, 175 primary and high school students from Compass schools, and a number of their teachers and parents, braved the weather to attend.

The students took over the Quadrangle and participated in fun learning activities. These included a seminar on making the perfect chocolate bar, extracting DNA from strawberries, filling a tooth, identifying animal skulls, testing model paper planes, and dressing up as ancient emperors complete with togas and head dresses.

In launching the program, Julia Gillard emphasised the importance of ensuring demography does not define an individual's destiny. Dr Michael Spence said it was clear that many people face real obstacles to accessing higher education, adding the University of Sydney is committed to helping them overcome those barriers.

Carol Fong, a year 12 student from Marrickville High School, spoke about the barriers she and her classmates encounter in accessing higher education and how she looked forward to the new opportunities that the Compass program could offer students like herself in the future.

## Shakespeare boring? No!

Back in July, the Social Inclusion Unit received an email from Curtis Dickson, a University of Sydney student who had been inspired by a presentation where he learned about the University's Compass program. Curtis explained that he was a member of the Sydney University Dramatic Society (SUDS) and he felt that an upcoming SUDS production might appeal to high school students studying Shakespeare.

As a result, SUDS put on a special matinee performance for students involved in the Compass program, delighting 90 Year 9 students and staff from Marrickville and Kogarah high schools with the feats of just three actors delivering 37 Shakespeare plays condensed into two hilarious acts.

Students witnessed the dark and brooding *Othello* told through rap, the psychology of *Hamlet* explored through manic audience participation, *Romeo and Juliet* performed by two men who didn't want to kiss each other and the tragedy of *Macbeth* performed in "perrrfect Scawtresh ach-sents"! The verdict from students and teachers was unanimous – Curtis and his SUDS comrades

delivered on their promise to present Shakespeare in a way that is both fun and accessible for audiences.

Therese Kean, English teacher at Kogarah High School said "the afternoon was wonderful. The students loved being on campus and thoroughly enjoyed the play. My colleague and I couldn't stop laughing." As for Curtis and his fellow actors, they "felt it was such a rewarding experience and unlike anything we'd ever done before."

## Marrickville mummies

Marrickville West Public School pointed Compass in the right direction in May when 80 students visited the University of Sydney's Nicholson Museum.

The year 1 and 2 students had a lot of fun exploring Ancient Egypt by dressing their classmates up as mummies, and learning all the gory details of brain extraction! They also became archaeologists as they handled and examined artefacts and explored the museum's collection.

In addition to all the fun in the museum, the campus made a very big visual impression on the students as they were amazed by all the old heritage buildings where thousands of students and researchers have developed their ideas over the years.

The children were talking about their visit for days afterwards and the teachers have taken the opportunity to continue the experience with further activities in their classrooms. Their teachers also enjoyed the experience and wish they had visited the museum sooner.



Did you know the Nicholson Museum is open to the public and free of charge?

## Kogarah and Althelstane introduction days

In September, year 3 and 4 students and staff from Kogarah and Athelstane public schools descended upon the University of Sydney campus for a day of activities aimed at showing what post-secondary education is really about. These students are the youngest members of the Compass program.

The days started with students attending their first informal 'lecture' in one of the lecture halls in the Quadrangle. In addition to some higher education jargon-busting, and discussions about studying at university and TAFE, the presentation included an abridged history of universities. Students were stunned to learn that university students in the middle ages were expected to study from 5am to at least 5pm, and that for seemingly minor infringements, they could be jailed or even flogged.

After their first ever lecture, the Year 3 students were tutored in the finer points of paper plane-making by Faculty of Engineering students, who also offered school students insights into why they chose to study engineering and what they plan to do after they finish studying. A guided bus tour of the Camperdown and Darlington campuses, where the architecturally designed chairs on Cadigal Green proved an unexpected highlight, showed the students the vast scale of the University.

Dr Craig Barker and his colleagues from Sydney University Museums provided the students with a wonderful tour of the Nicholson and Macleay museums, then after lunch Neil Finlay, Community Programs Manager with Sydney Uni Sports & Fitness, and a number of Sydney's elite athletes spoke to students about sport at the University and coached students in a range of fun sporting activities.

Lea Kitchener, Principal of Kogarah Public School, said the day was a great beginning. "For primary-age students it's all about the significance and context."

In early 2010, the University of Sydney will host a similar event for all Year 3 students across our 12 primary schools, which will serve as their official welcome to the Compass program.



## Compass University experience day

On Friday 25 September, 160 students from Marrickville and Kogarah high schools attended the first Compass experience day. The Year 10 students chose from a series of hands-on workshops where they learned about computers and face recognition, found out how to make medicines and discovered the secrets of our amazing earth, among many other topics.

The high school students spent time with current University of Sydney students, had a tour of the campus and spent their lunch break with some of the University's athletes.

"Experience days like these have in the past been aimed at high school students in years 11 and 12," said Dr Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Sydney. "By introducing students earlier to the University, we hope to encourage them to stay on at school and consider higher education as a real option for themselves."

Parents from the Compass schools were also invited. Parents from the Marrickville West Families in Cultural Transition program took part in a physics session with Dr Phil Dooley, visited the campus and libraries, participated in a session on higher education pathways and discovered the secrets of the Nicholson Museum.

Tana Tuake, a Community Information Officer from DET's Sydney Region, forwarded us some of the comments from the parents on their way home in the bus:

- "Lots of information and very friendly staff."
- "This is a different world."
- "I love the physics, I am going to encourage my child to take up science, science is the way of life."
- "As a mother I am going to start talking to my kids about uni."
- "Definitely think about uni and come down in our own time as a family outing."
- "Now I can talk to my children about the mummy, and if they say how do you know, I can say I have seen it and touched it at the uni".
- "This is a picture us mothers will not forget, have put it on save."



## Crash test dummies

Have you ever wanted to learn about Newton's Laws of Motion? Or build a prototype that could revolutionise the crash test dummy world?

All of this was done with the help of five engineering students, two enthusiastic Year 9 classes and a bunch of golf balls that were strapped on for dear life as they were hurled through collision tests!

The engineering students from the University's advanced engineering program organised a workshop with Year 9 students from Marrickville High School to investigate the science behind car crashes. The day-long event, called *Impact!*, was part science experiment, part engineering challenge and part university open day.

The students worked in groups to solve a simplified real-world engineering problem: how to minimise the force on passengers in the event of a crash. Their brief was to design, build and test models of a safety harness and crumple zone, which together would minimise the force on the car and protect its cargo. Using everyday materials such as straws, paperclips and rubber bands, the students devised creative solutions to keeping the passenger

(a golf ball) free of injury! The safety of each group's solution was tested in a competition at the end of the day, where their cars were rolled down a ramp to collide with a brick wall.

The day presented an excellent opportunity for the high school students to interact with university students and to have a small taste of university life. And to save a golf ball or two.

## Science in the City

Approximately 400 students from Compass schools have participated in innovative science events this year through the Science in the City program.

A collaboration between the University of Sydney, the Australian Museum and City of Sydney, Science in the City is Australia's largest science event for students, attracting approximately 6000 primary and high school students each year.

Students from Wilkins and Marrickville West public schools, and Athelstone and Marrickville high schools have attended Science in the City events. Students from Bexley and Kogarah public schools participated in a partner program, Science in the Suburbs, at Homebush in May.

The program includes workshops, shows and talks covering a wide range of issues such as dinosaurs, Lego robotics and climate change.

## Do you know about Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness?

Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness (SUSF) is more than just a gym. SUSF prides itself on not only providing outstanding sport and recreational facilities and activities for staff and students, but also for the wider community. The SUSF community outreach program includes school holiday sports camps, swim school, tennis lessons, competitions and much more.

Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness, in conjunction with Rebel Sport and Camp Australia, offer a school holiday program to cater for the needs of all children. The camps are a great way to keep kids actively entertained during the holiday break.

The kids have access to the University of Sydney's premier venues, including the ovals, gyms and other sports facilities located across the University. The camps are run by professional sporting coaches and elite athletes from within the University who cater for the abilities of all children.

Being part of SUSF not only fosters healthy, happy attitudes, but also a sense of community.

Get involved today!

For more information contact Neil Finlay (Community Programs Manager) on **9351 4987** or alternatively email Neil at [n.finlay@sport.usyd.edu.au](mailto:n.finlay@sport.usyd.edu.au)

## Who we are

Annette Cairnduff – Director, Social Inclusion  
 Kanina Mackay – Senior Project Officer  
 Miriam Pellicano – Senior Project Officer  
 Simone Ross – Senior Project Officer  
 Caroline O'Neill – Project Support Officer  
 Abigail Clarkson – Administration Assistant

You can see more photos of the primary and high school students taking part in the Compass program in our online photo gallery: [www.usyd.edu.au/compass](http://www.usyd.edu.au/compass)



**The  
University  
of Sydney**

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