


# Social Justice Report 2021

Centre for Social  
Justice & Inclusion







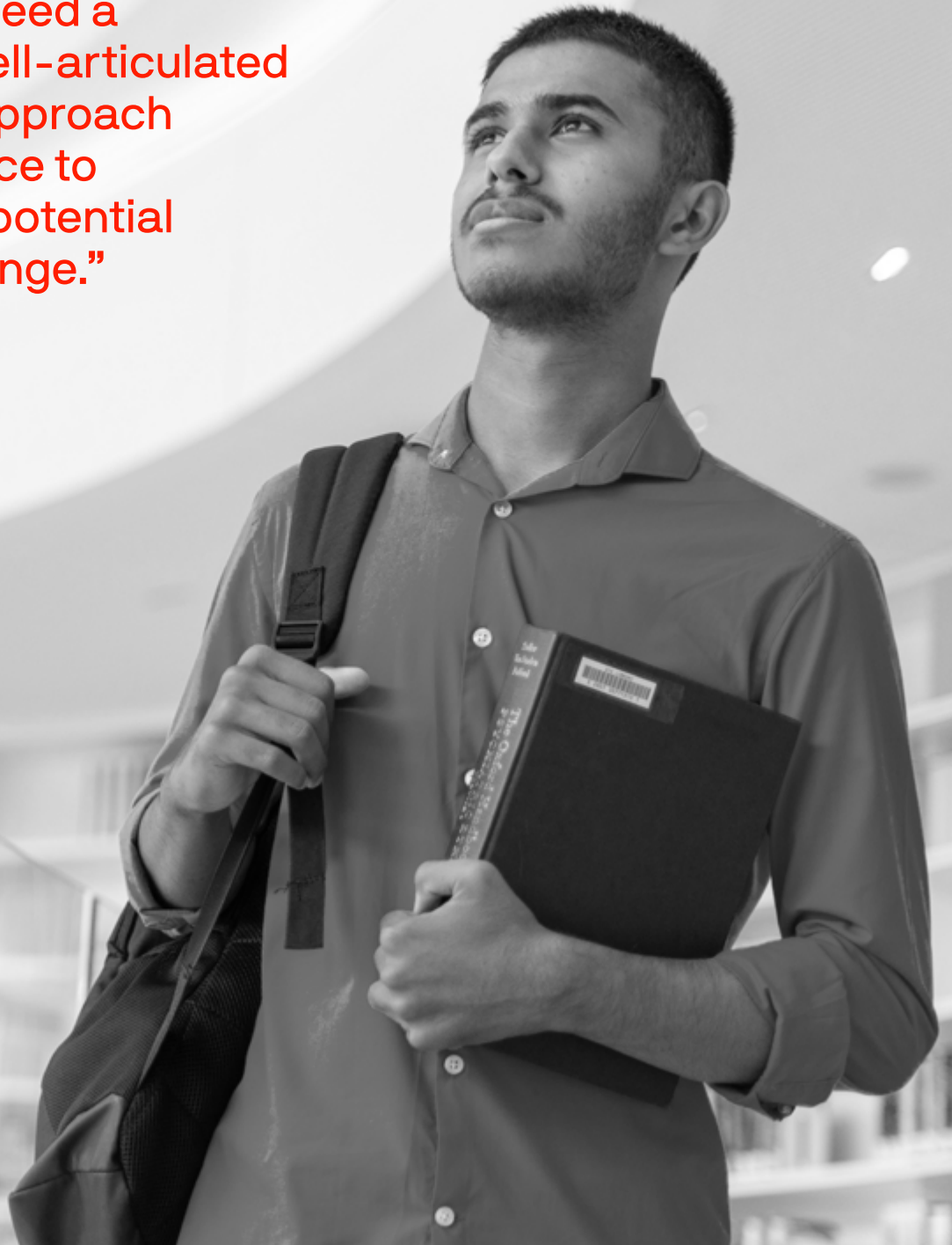
A black and white photograph of a modern university building with a grid-like window pattern. In the foreground, there is a grassy area with several people walking or sitting. A large, solid red heart is superimposed over the center of the image, containing white text. The background includes trees and a tall, thin tower.

UTS is an agent for  
social change,  
transforming communities  
through research,  
education and practice.

**“Universities need a deliberate, well-articulated and holistic approach to social justice to harness real potential for social change.”**

**Professor Andrew Parfitt,  
Vice-Chancellor and  
President UTS**

Student walking  
through UTS Library  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.








# Contents

Welcome	2
2021 highlights	4
Enabling equitable access to education	8
Students as agents for change	14
The UTS Social Impact Framework	20
Maximising staff impact	22
Research, teaching, program outcomes	26
Advocacy	32
Operations	38



## Acknowledgement of Country

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal People of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal People and the Gamaygal People upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

## Vice-Chancellor’s Social Justice & Inclusion Committee

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Angela Dawson   | Lesley Hitchens  |
| Anne Gardner    | Lewis Bizo       |
| Brett Smout     | Michael McDaniel |
| Carl Rhodes     | Aidan O’Rourke   |
| Ian Burnett     | Tracie Conroy    |
| Jacqui Wise     | Verity Firth     |
| James Wallman   | Willa Huston     |
| Jennifer Lagoon | William Purcell  |
| Karen O’Connell |                  |

# Welcome

I have always believed universities exist for the public good, not only for students and staff, but our whole community.

Universities need a deliberate, well-articulated and holistic approach to social justice to harness real potential for social change. We need a whole-of-university effort that ensures we remain focused on our social justice goals in the face of what could be competing priorities.

Our UTS 2027 Strategic Plan has a clear commitment to social justice, inclusion and accessibility. We are a university for all, ensuring everyone who is qualified for a place at UTS is supported equitably to reach their full potential. Our aim is to support a civil, just and democratic society through our research, graduates, and engagement in public discourse.



**Above:** Professor Andrew Parfitt, Vice-Chancellor and President, UTS

In 2017, we created the UTS Social Impact Framework — the first of its kind at an Australian university. We boldly committed to a new strategic direction with a whole-of-institution agenda to harness our resources towards public benefit.

The Framework provides a roadmap of transparent, rigorous, and evidence-based outcomes (See page 20 to view the Framework). It underpins the UTS 2027 strategy, ensuring university policies, systems, priorities, and major projects align with our commitment to social justice.

I was honoured to be appointed Vice-Chancellor of UTS in 2021 after serving five years as UTS's Provost. One of the privileges of my role is its platform to highlight the outstanding work of our staff, students and alumni. This work is often in collaboration with community organisations, government institutions and industry partners.

The *Social Justice Report 2021* is a summary of the work that we did in the past year to support our students, staff and community in realising our social justice goals.

We are also extending our work in technology for social good through research focusing on policy development and enterprise learning.

We have accomplished much more, which you can read about in these pages. Our achievements are spearheaded by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion and the committed work of our faculty and divisional staff.

I would also like to acknowledge the appointment of The Hon. Verity Firth in the newly-created role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice & Inclusion). This is one of my first senior appointments as Vice-Chancellor and reflects the importance of cross-institutional leadership in this area. Continual progress in tracking and expanding our social impact and in maintaining proactive engagement with our many communities is a high priority for this new role, and I am very confident Verity will bring to it the passion and excellence she has shown in her former role as Executive Director.

Please enjoy the *Social Justice Report 2021* and all that it celebrates about UTS and our core values.

**Professor Andrew Parfitt**  
Vice-Chancellor and President, UTS

As 2021 dawned, hopes that we were finished with the interruptions brought about by the global pandemic were dashed with the Delta variant, a subsequent four-month lockdown experienced in Sydney — with harsher restrictions for those in ‘LGAs of concern’ — followed by the Omicron variant at the end of the year.

2021 was the year we realised that being adaptable was the new normal and despite the challenges, the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion had one of our most productive and impactful years yet.

In this report we’ve captured some of the many incredible achievements and stories from our community, including how in the face of mounting obstacles, our staff and students came to the aid of more than 370 community organisations in need.

I was particularly proud to see our Humanitarian Scholarship Program’s impact grow with 12 new Scholars commencing in 2021. We now host Australia’s largest cohort of scholarship-funded refugees and asylum seekers. In addition to help with fees, our Scholars receive comprehensive academic and wellbeing support throughout their studies. You can read more about the impact we made through scholarships and our outreach activities on page 12 of this report.

Throughout the year I was privileged to meet and facilitate conversations with many inspiring members of our community. From tackling entrenched issues of gender inequality, sexual assault and harassment to discussing how to end the removal of First Nations children from their families, communities and culture – together we explored the many drivers of, and possible solutions to, complex global problems.

On page 11 of this report, you’ll read about our life-changing alternate entry pathway program: the U@Uni Academy. 2021 was a particularly exciting year for us because it saw the first group of students graduate from the program and receive their offers to study at UTS – despite the stresses and challenges of online learning. I was privileged to speak at their graduation ceremony in December and hear about their achievements. I have no doubt these students will continue to shine as they begin their university studies.

This report captures only a small snapshot of the rich and diverse social impact our community made in 2021. I am humbled by the contributions of so many at UTS, as well as our community and industry partners.

**The Hon. Verity Firth**

Pro Vice-Chancellor  
(Social Justice and Inclusion), UTS

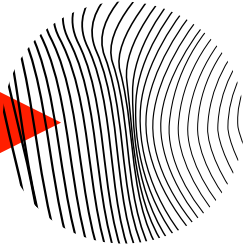


**Above:** Verity Firth,  
Pro Vice-Chancellor  
(Social Justice and Inclusion), UTS



# 2021

# highlights



## Students shining through COVID-19 restrictions

2021 saw our first group of U@Uni Academy students graduate Year 12 and receive offers to study at UTS.

This non-ATAR pathway program for students from low-SES areas of South West Sydney saw students persevere and once again adapt to online learning, despite many living in the 'LGAs of concern' and experiencing the harshest restrictions in Sydney, exacerbating existing inequalities like lack of study space and internet access. A graduation ceremony was held in December for these students and we wish them all the best as they commence their studies at UTS in 2022.

## A year of reckoning for women

2021 was a year that women made their voices heard, calling for action on longstanding issues of inequality, sexual assault and harassment among others, inspired by the activism of Grace Tame, Brittany Higgins and Chantelle Contos.

At UTS we have continued to take action to tackle gender inequity in STEM areas through the next stage of the Athena Swan program. We have identified five key priority areas to address these barriers, known as 'cygnets'.

These will start from encouraging girls and young women at school and undergraduate levels to consider careers in STEM areas, and supporting Higher Degree Research students through their years of study at UTS to understand what it takes to be in academia. Then optimising their chances for recruitment and promotion and addressing some of the flexible work provisions they and their families may need as they move through the ranks of academia.

We want UTS to be an attractive place to work for women seeking academic careers in STEM.

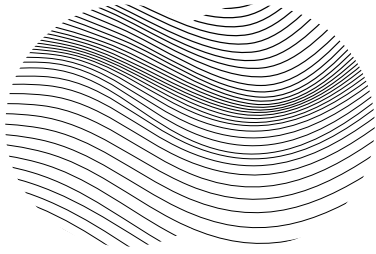
## Appointment of industry professors to tackle social issues

2021 saw several high-profile experts join UTS to tackle social issues from artificial intelligence to educational disadvantage to domestic violence.

**Leslie Loble** is a recognised leader of public purpose reform and innovation. Her fellowship at UTS, supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, is exploring how EdTech can lift learning outcomes for disadvantaged students.

**Edward Santow** After finishing his five-year tenure as Australia's Human Rights Commissioner, Ed joined UTS as Industry Professor — Responsible Technology. He is leading a UTS initiative to build Australia's strategic capability in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

**Dr. Anne Summers AO** is a renowned author and journalist. She joined the UTS Transdisciplinary School under a Paul Ramsay Foundation Fellowship to research innovative solutions to domestic and family violence in Australia.

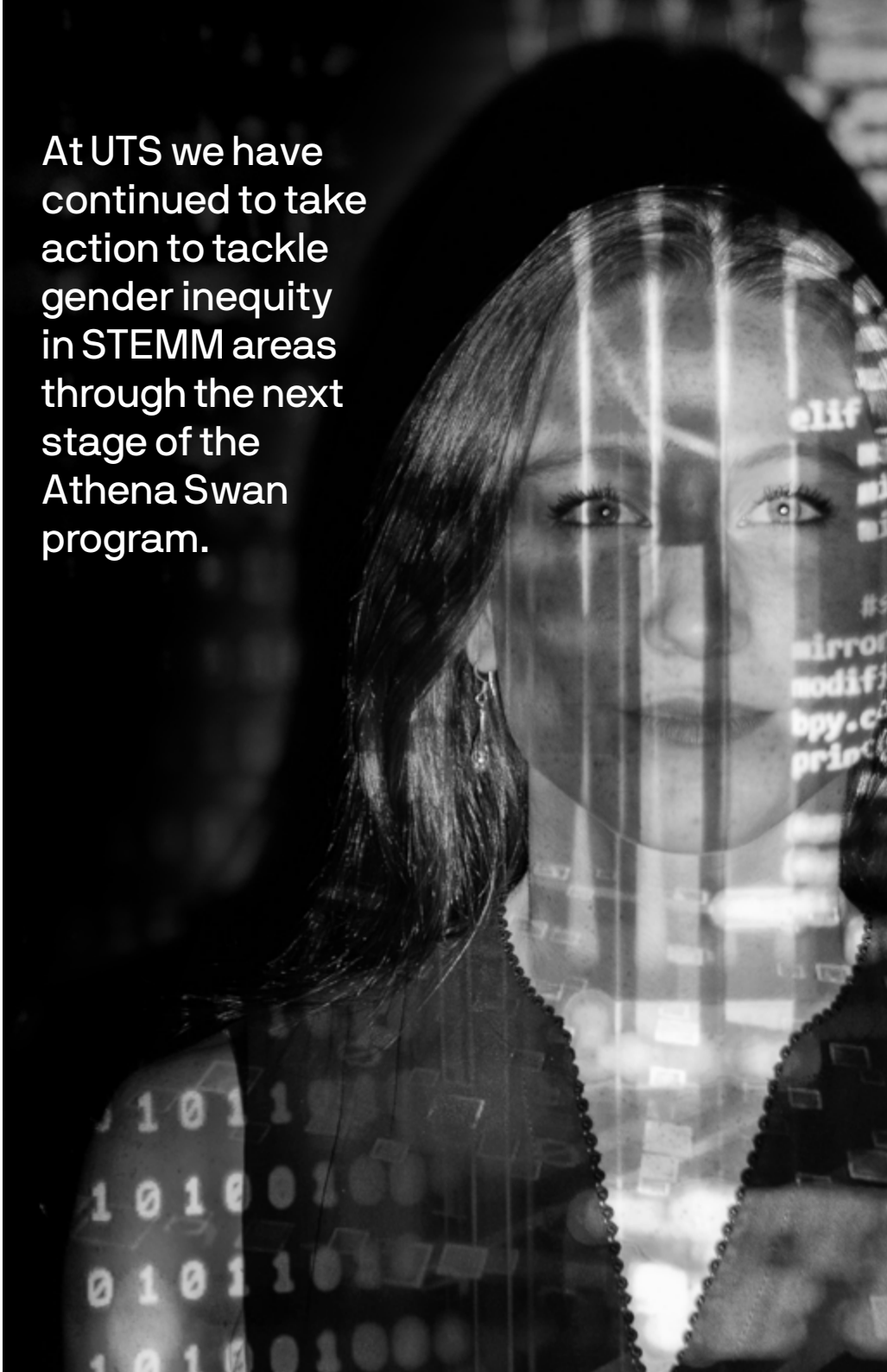


**Above:** U@Uni students shining through COVID-19 restrictions.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.



**Above:** U@Uni Academy graduation ceremony.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

At UTS we have continued to take action to tackle gender inequity in STEMM areas through the next stage of the Athena Swan program.



Over 350 SOUL students put in a total of 13,500 volunteering hours over the course of 2021, assisting 325 different organisations.







**Above:** UTS students walking through Building 8.  
Photographer: Toby Burrows.



**Above:** UTS SOUL students volunteering.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.



**Above:** UTS SOUL students collaborating.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

## Student volunteering & social justice leadership

The 2021 lockdowns didn't stop UTS students from contributing their time through the SOUL volunteering and social justice leadership program. In fact, over 350 students put in a total of 13,500 volunteering hours over the course of 2021, assisting 325 different organisations. That's a more than a 40 per cent increase on 2020!

OzHarvest was one of the many organisations our students supported. During Sydney's 2021 COVID-19 lockdown, the organisation saw community demand for food relief rise by 200 per cent throughout July and August. UTS SOUL students stepped up to help meet the demand by providing emergency volunteering with OzHarvest. Students were on the ground in the warehouse in less than 72 hours after the initial request and continued volunteering through to 2022.

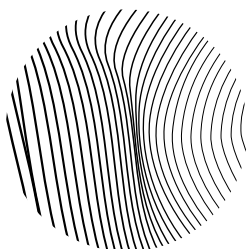
## Conversations that matter

The Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion continued to lead important conversations on key social topics in 2021 — running 28 online events attended by 6,691 people. Some highlights for the year include:

UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, and the Faculty of Law teamed up to present 'More than Sorry' for Reconciliation Week. Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt, Dr Paul Gray, and James Beaufils discussed **how to end the removal of First Nations children from their families, communities, and culture.**

UTS Journalist-in-Residence and award-winning author of *See What You Made Me Do*, Jess Hill, spoke to over 400 attendees about **the national emergency of domestic abuse.** Millions upon millions of Australians are affected by it — as both victims and perpetrators — and it needs to be addressed as one of the most important issues in our society.

Digital access is changing the way we educate young people, but unequal distribution of that access has exposed **a crushing divide in our education system.** NSW Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell, Mikaela Jade, Leslie Loble, Murray Kitteringham, and Verity Firth considered whether the education sector can embrace technological innovation while some students still don't have internet access.



# 1 Enabling equitable access to education

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 1:**

**Increased number of equity target groups successfully complete a Higher Education degree at UTS**

Education has the power to transform the lives of individuals and the communities to which they belong. We believe that universities have a responsibility to support students from the widest range of backgrounds to access quality education. While education opens doors and expands opportunities for individuals to make positive contributions to society, the diversity of our student community is also one of our strengths.





## Widening educational access in a pandemic

All university programs shifted online during the COVID-19 pandemic, including our Widening Participation Outreach (WPO) programs.

Outreach programs engage high school students, along with their teachers, parents and carers, to encourage their participation at university.

UTS student equity practitioners Sonal Singh and Emlyn Dodd partnered with peers at the University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University and Macquarie University to review and evaluate how well each university's programs adapted.

Their findings provide, for the first time, an evidence base to inform future online widening participation outreach program design and delivery:

- Online experiences must ensure that students continue to be active participants and not passive consumers.

- Ongoing co-design with schools, teachers and parents is needed to understand and respond to school needs and ensure students' needs are met.
- Digital access and challenges must be addressed. UTS worked with the NSW Department of Education to supply students with laptops and data packages.
- Flexibility produced new benefits — online WPO programs could be more resource efficient and service new cohorts, as well as increase participants' exposure to more diverse WPO staff.
- While students reported a generally positive experience with online engagement, they had a clear and consistent desire to return to face-to-face or on-campus participation.

The research found moving widening participation programs wholly online should not replace traditional face-to-face delivery. But, implementing online components can engage diverse new cohorts, increase the scale of engagement, and provide participants with exposure to a greater range of learning experiences.

**“The pandemic brought to light several issues from a student equity perspective, especially the digital divide, which continues to have a large impact on vulnerable communities. We are at a critical point in ensuring the gains and progress we have made in improving access and success for underrepresented groups is not lost. Equity leadership and collaboration are needed now more than ever.”**

**Sonal Singh**  
Executive Manager,  
Student Equity



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**2021 equity program involvement**

**1780**  
high school students

**66**  
high school teachers

**120**  
parents of high school students

**153**  
UTS students



## NSW Equity Consortium receives \$500k grant from State Government

In 2021, the NSW Equity Consortium — a partnership between UTS, UNSW and Macquarie University — received a \$500k grant from the NSW Government towards their Imagined Futures project.

The Consortium was formed to demonstrate a new outreach model building student capabilities to access and succeed in post-school learning outcomes.

The partnership's Imagined Futures project — developed in collaboration with schools and teachers — targets whole-cohort year-groups between Years 7-9.

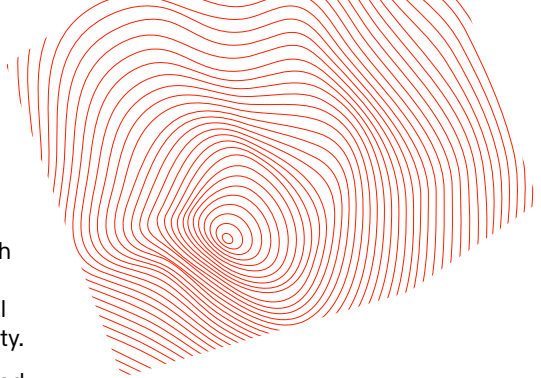
It uses literacy as a vehicle to encourage students to conceptualise their 'imagined futures' and positively impact their learning trajectory. Each university partner undertakes a literacy-focused learning initiative for one year group.

**“University widening participation programs are intended to remove barriers to education and create a more diverse student cohort.”**

**Sonal Singh,  
Executive Manager, Student Equity  
and UTS lead for the project**

“Typical outreach programs target only the senior secondary years. But research shows us that we need to be targeting these students much earlier,” said Sonal Singh, Executive Manager, Student Equity.

“This partnership is using evidence-based teaching programs and evaluating their efficacy, and early feedback from the first term of implementation suggests that the program is yielding positive results.”



**Below:** Students walking along the Goods Line.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.



## Congratulations to our graduating U@Uni Academy students

The first cohort of students to enter the U@Uni Academy graduated in 2021, with 96 per cent of participants offered a place at UTS.

This outstanding result comes after two years of hard work and dedication from the students, in the face of disruption and uncertainty. In December, a graduation ceremony was held on-campus in the Great Hall for the 229 successful students, with Channel 9 news covering the event.

Many of the students lived in COVID-19 hotspot areas and faced stricter lockdowns than the rest of Greater Sydney, on top of challenges like home schooling and having to share study space with other family members.

Belinda Stanton, Head Teacher, Liverpool Boys High School, said she knew as soon as she stepped onto the UTS campus that this opportunity was

going to be huge for her students.

“The U@Uni Academy has really given the boys a great introduction to university life and what they will need to succeed. They are so excited and grateful for what their future holds.”

The U@Uni Academy is an alternate, non-ATAR entry pathway to study at UTS, for Year 11 and Year 12 high school students at UTS partner schools in South West Sydney. The two-year program provides uni experiences, in-school mentoring and tutoring, and builds 21st century skills like communication, critical thinking, and innovation. Students who complete the program are offered a place at UTS, regardless of their ATAR.

Students are now being supported to make the transition from school to uni and to set them up for success in their studies and beyond, including 1:1 advisory and support meetings, tutoring support, group study and peer mentoring.



**Above:** Student taking part in the U@Uni Academy Summer School program. Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

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**96%**  
of U@Uni's first cohort  
offered places at UTS

**229**  
students graduated  
U@Uni Academy

## 2021 student equity programs involvement

The Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion welcomed the first student cohort for UniPrep — part of the U@Uni Academy — offering academic tutoring and help with goal setting and focused planning.

136 online sessions were delivered to Year 12 students by 76 U@Uni Ambassadors, who helped guide the high school students and build their confidence.

Sophie Phan, a Year 12 student from Liverpool Girls High School said

U@Uni Academy made her realise there are so many options and pathways for getting into university.

“Before the Academy I was stressing over the ATAR, over how scaling throughout high school worked. I didn't think I was capable of getting into uni.

“But this experience made me realise there are so many ways to achieve your goals. It built my confidence and motivated me to work hard, without fear or stress.”

# Scholarships & outreach



**Below:** Students collaborating in Building 8.  
Photographer: Anna Zhu.

## Jumbunna Pathways Program

The Jumbunna Pathways Program offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students an opportunity to illustrate their capability for Higher Education based on factors including previous life, education, and work experience. It recognises that the ATAR is not the primary measure of success.

In 2021, the following offers were made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to study at UTS through the Jumbunna Pathways Program:

- **22 offers for students to gain direct entry to UTS**, straight into the undergraduate degree of their choice.
- **20 offers for students to do Unistart**, a one-year program that helps students to build skills in the degree they are interested in, as well as literacy and maths. Successful Unistart students go straight into the first year of their chosen degree.
- **7 offers to students for UTS College**, a foundation diploma course where students develop and strengthen their knowledge in their chosen course area. Upon successful completion, students are invited to apply directly for a bachelor degree.
- **44 offers to students through UAC.**



## UTS Humanitarian Access

The UTS Humanitarian Access Program exists to support students who have lived experience of forced migration who want to study in Australia.

UTS Humanitarian Scholars continued to demonstrate a desire to succeed despite COVID-19 restrictions, ineligibility for government support, and extended sessions of online learning.

- **6 Humanitarian Scholar students completed their degree in 2021.**
- **27 UTS academics participated in the Humanitarian Academic Mentoring Program in 2021**, helping build the Scholars' academic and professional identities.

## Pasifika Experience Day

Pasifika Experience Day is an annual event for Pasifika high school students and their families to connect with current UTS Pasifika students and industry professionals. The experience offers additional support, encouragement and — most importantly — representation for Pacific young people in Australia.

Year 11 student from Blacktown High School, Summer Jitoko said, “Before I came here (Pasifika Experience Day) ... I thought that you had to have it all figured out in high school before you left to be eligible to take a course in university.”

- **150+ students from 24 schools across Sydney attended.**
- **16 UTS academics, 14 Pasifika career and industry professionals and 11 UTS Pasifika student mentors delivered faculty workshops.** Among the industry professionals speaking to the students were a Forensic Scientist, Civil Engineers, Lawyers, IT Specialists, a Music Label Executive and Health Practitioners.

## Women in Engineering & IT outreach

Women in Engineering and IT (WiEIT) aims to increase the number of women in the discipline and ensure that study and career opportunities are not limited by gender.

Their primary and high school outreach programs provide in-curriculum, hands-on STEMM experience to increase girls' interest, identity, and confidence with STEMM. Due to COVID-19, this moved online in Terms 3 and 4.

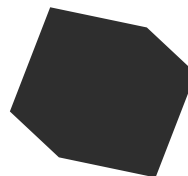
Despite the challenges, WiEIT worked with 11 primary and 15 high schools, encompassing more than 1,500 students.

A longitudinal research project attached to the outreach program is already showing significantly increased interest in the disciplines and confidence among female students. Their holiday workshops received positive responses for awareness, interest in, and plans for future engagement in STEMM subjects among female students:

- **90%** agreed or strongly agreed the workshops have been an enjoyable way to study STEMM subjects.
- **95%** agreed or strongly agreed they learned something useful to their studies from these workshops.
- **76%** agreed or strongly agreed the workshops increased the chances of studying STEMM subjects in the future.

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**12** new UTS Humanitarian Scholars commenced in 2021 raising UTS's total number of current Humanitarian Scholars to **38** — the largest cohort of scholarship-funded refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. They are undertaking degrees across every faculty at UTS.



# 2 Students as agents for change

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 2:**

### **Students have the agency to enact personal & social responsibility**

While students arrive at UTS with existing civic capacity, we also recognise our institutional role to further enable active citizenship, encouraging them to contribute to society in meaningful ways throughout their education. We are proud of the impact our students make in the world, both during their time as students at UTS, and in their professional and personal lives beyond, as alumni.



## 2021 UTS Startups Awards

Congratulations to Generation Entrepreneur who took out Best UTS Startup (Social Impact) at the 2021 UTS Startups Awards.

Generation Entrepreneur makes entrepreneurial and enterprise skills accessible for high school students no matter their background, through workshops, hackathons, incubators, and nationwide business-building tournaments.

## Peter Greste UTS Journalism event

The UTS Journalism Society kicked off their 'In Conversation With' series for the year with internationally acclaimed journalist Peter Greste. Peter is an award-winning foreign correspondent who spent 25 years working for the BBC, Reuters, CNN, and Al Jazeera in some of the world's most volatile places. In 2013, Greste was one of three journalists falsely imprisoned in Egypt. He is now the UNESCO Chair of Journalism and Communication and advocates for press freedom.

Peter spoke about his experiences in the field, the highs and lows of journalism, his time in solitary confinement in Egypt, as well as his new role in advocating for press freedom.

**Below:** Students collaborating.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

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**“We see entrepreneurship as a key vehicle for change, and an opportunity for students to live a life filled with passion, solving issues in their communities and making a positive impact on their world.”**

**Generation Entrepreneur**



# UTS Shopfront Community Program



**Above:** Students collaborating.  
Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

The UTS Shopfront program places students at the heart of the community sector to gain real-world experience and make a meaningful difference to local not-for-profit organisations.

## Students help build plastic recycling program's brand identity & advocacy tools

UTS Business School students worked with not-for-profit social enterprise Boxhead Plastics to encourage businesses to divert plastic automotive waste from landfill into their Autoplus plastic recycling program.

Through the UTS Shopfront Community Program, the students created branding and educational assets to advocate for support from businesses, industry and government.

The students worked closely with Boxhead Plastics to gain an understanding of the ethics and values of the company and carry out research and surveys to understand the industry's customers, clients and key stakeholders.

From their research, the students produced collateral, including business cards, information pamphlets, posters, and packaging for the program. This included designing customised fonts, illustrations, and logos. They also created social media collateral and branded merchandise including tote bags, t-shirts, and badges.

"We had lots of fun putting this program together and the results were above and beyond our expectations," said BoxHead Plastics CEO, Bec Healey, with the team producing "a set of amazing, relevant, and very useful products which will be used immediately. They tell a visual story that is captivating, engaging and easy to understand."

The students reported that working on the project was rewarding. "Our designs are about inspiring and including the community, encouraging them to get involved and become part of what Autoplas is doing. Boxhead Plastics has a genuine positive environmental impact through the Autoplas program and this is what ultimately inspired our project."

**In 2021:**

**59**

community  
organisations assisted  
through the program

**600+**

students participated  
in the program





### UTS students help community radio find new audiences

Postgraduate Management Consulting students helped 2RRR 88.5FM community radio station develop a strategic plan for expanding their reach in what is a rapidly evolving media industry.

The students consulted key stakeholders and conducted industry research, before presenting their new insights on how to reach key audiences, goals and deliverables over the next three and a half years.

Lachlan Stevens, 2RRR 88.5FM Station Manager, said the students helped to increase engagement.

“They helped us to recognise the importance of increasing our digital presence and in expanding our focus

to capture the strong presence of the youth age group in the radio consuming market. These insights were supported with extremely useful techniques that will assist our organisation in making and communicating these changes.”

He added, the students’ provided a fresh and unbiased perspective that was greatly needed.

“Their research was so detailed — they looked at trends and gave us really useful feedback that we can integrate.

“The station isn’t well resourced and to outsource to a company to develop a strategic plan is out of our financial capacity. So, to have this completed for us by students was amazing.”

**“We wouldn’t have a strategic plan as good as this if we had to do it ourselves. It was just a fantastic opportunity for 2RRR 88.5FM.”**

**Lachlan Stevens,  
2RRR 88.5FM Station Manager**

# UTS SOUL Award

UTS SOUL Award is a two-stage, extra-curricular social justice leadership and volunteering program for students. It allows students to follow their passions to make social change beyond their degree.

Through the UTS SOUL Award, students stepped into their agency in a variety of ways, from volunteering to provide food support to the community, specialist consulting skills, ideating on sustainability for the City of Sydney and developing their skills and knowledge on how to make positive change.

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## 350

**individuals assisting  
325 organisations**

## 13,500

**hours of student  
volunteering**

## 40%

**increase on 2020  
hours despite  
COVID-19 restrictions  
and lockdowns**



**Above:** Students taking part in UTS SOUL Award program. Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

### OzHarvest partnership

Sydney's 2021 COVID-19 lockdowns raised community demand for food relief by 200 per cent throughout July and August. UTS SOUL students stepped up to provide emergency volunteering with OzHarvest. Students were on the ground in the warehouse in less than 72 hours after the initial request, and continued volunteering through to 2022.

Nicole Khoury, NSW and ACT Volunteer Coordinator at OzHarvest, said, "The SOUL volunteers offered incredible assistance to our food relief programs ... some of the students have now joined our volunteer team as regulars and are even helping lead new teams of people. It has given us the chance to connect with different demographics and share our message of nourishing our country. It's been a wonderful partnership and experience."

### Code Club Australia

SOUL has partnered with Code Club since 2019, whereby volunteers teach coding skills to 8–13 year olds in weekly sessions. In 2021, the course moved online, and students ran six-week programs for primary school students. This free program not only built students' capabilities, but helped provide students and work from home parents a valuable afternoon activity during lockdown.

### Practera Opportunity Accelerator

SOUL also provided specialist skills as consultants. In 2021 the program partnered with Practera to launch Opportunity Accelerator, which involved 14 not-for-profit organisations setting a real-world challenge to student teams. Students researched and completed a report on how the organisation could improve its services and client experiences, and their communications.

"The project saved us a lot of time and brought new thinking into the process," said the project team from Stronger Brains, student cognitive and social health organisation.

Megan O'Shannessy, Chief Executive Officer at Rural Medical Education Australia described their report as an "excellent comprehensive analysis with innovative recommendations. I will implement each recommendation. Before this report I was floundering to find a way forward."

## What 2021 UTS SOUL Award students had to say:

“After we rescued an old woman from her flooded home, she held my hand and said, ‘Now I will get to see another sunny day all because of you, my son!’ That absolutely shook me and made me think how little initiatives can make big impacts on others’ lives. I am lucky to have experienced this in my life because of UTS SOUL.”

**Fahad Dewan Mohammad**

Masters of Project Management

**Volunteer:** State Emergency Service

“More than anything, I have learned that I am capable. There are a lot of things I didn’t know I could add value to until I pushed myself to get involved in them. I did not possess the necessary skills at the start, but that didn’t mean I couldn’t develop them. I’ll be carrying that mindset in my future endeavours.”

**Aman Sehmbey**

Masters of Business Administration  
(International student)

**Volunteer:** Practera Accelerator  
Stronger Brains; and Rural  
Medical Education Australia

“SOUL helped me recognise that I have the skill set to become a leader, and then helped me to expand these skills so I could use them effectively and to their greatest potential.”

**Maddison King**

Bachelor of Construction Project  
Management

**Volunteer:** Rotary Youth  
Program of Enrichment

“I’m much more aware of the social challenges happening around the world. I know this experience will help me throughout my career and to be a better person every day.”

**Wassim Keireddine**

Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) Diploma  
in Professional Engineering Practice

**Volunteer:** Real Skills Education

“Due to the SOUL program, I learned about the impact that one individual person can have. Before this program, I believed that I couldn’t make a meaningful difference when it came to social justice issues, and I was apathetic as to whether I could encourage any changes. Having had the opportunity to volunteer for causes that I’m passionate about through the SOUL program highlighted that I could make a difference to society.”

**Matthew Robson**

Bachelor of Laws; Bachelor of Business

**Volunteer:** Capital Punishment  
Justice Project

“Each program was different and unique in its own way. The enthusiasm the kids showed each week — it wasn’t just for the first week — each week they had the same enthusiasm going on, and they asked so many questions, in the way that they are aware that they are learning, and they want to learn.”

**Sancheeta Pugalia**

Doctor of Philosophy

**Volunteer:** Women in Engineering and  
IT’s school outreach programs; Code Club

“It grows you in a way that I don’t necessarily think you get from your degree, those skills that are necessary for the workplace and just being a human in general.”

**Dana Rutner**

Bachelor of Communication  
(Journalism); Bachelor of Laws

**Volunteer:** Refugee Advice and  
Casework Service (RACS)

“It was an invaluable experience for me, as it helped me develop my passion for helping people. It led me into my Postgraduate Medicine degree and led me to a job.”

**Bronte Cross**

Bachelor of Medicine

**Volunteer:** St John’s Ambulance Service

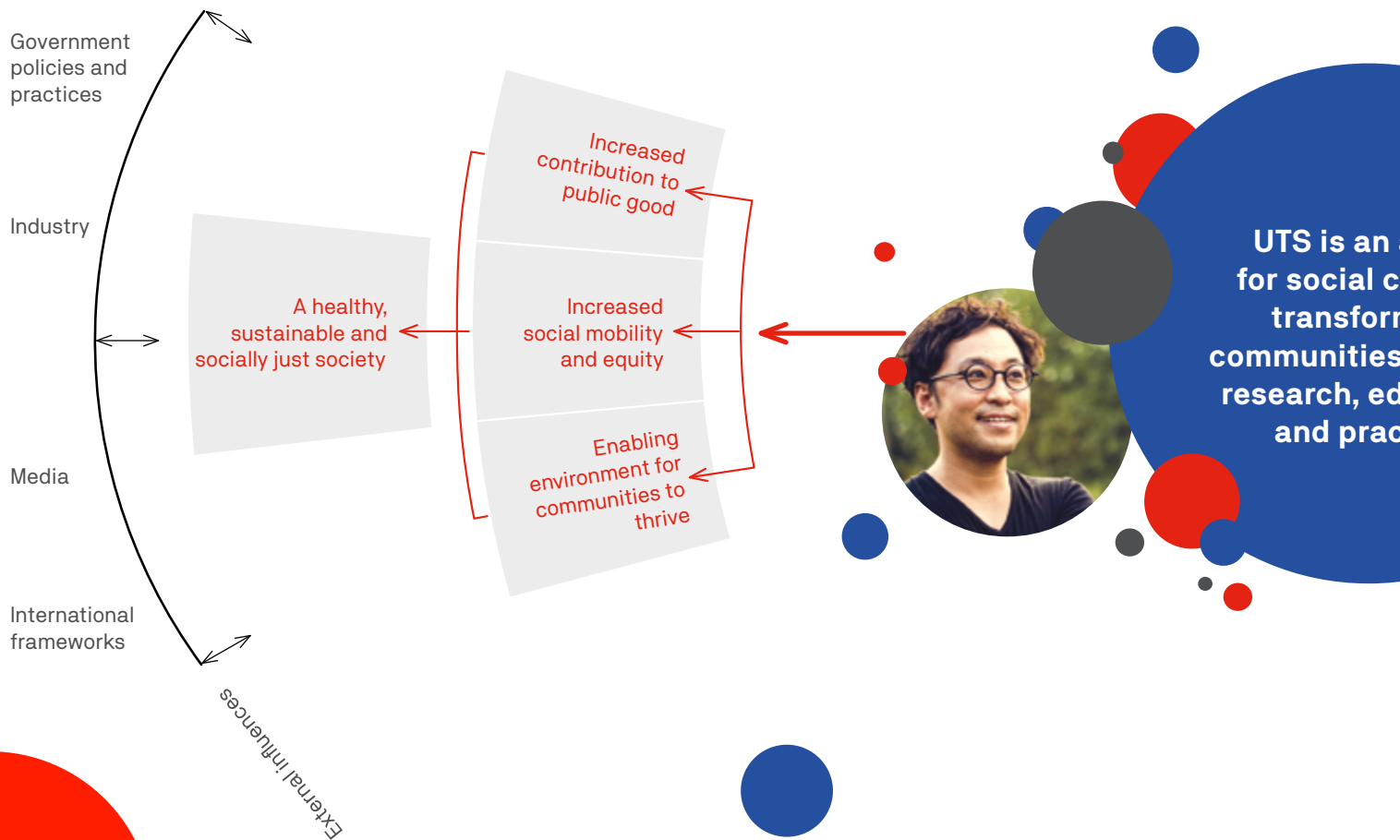
“I felt that becoming a volunteer teacher was... a great way to help with the future generations by ensuring that they have the opportunity to learn our language and our culture.”

**Brintha Srirankan**

Bachelor of Accounting

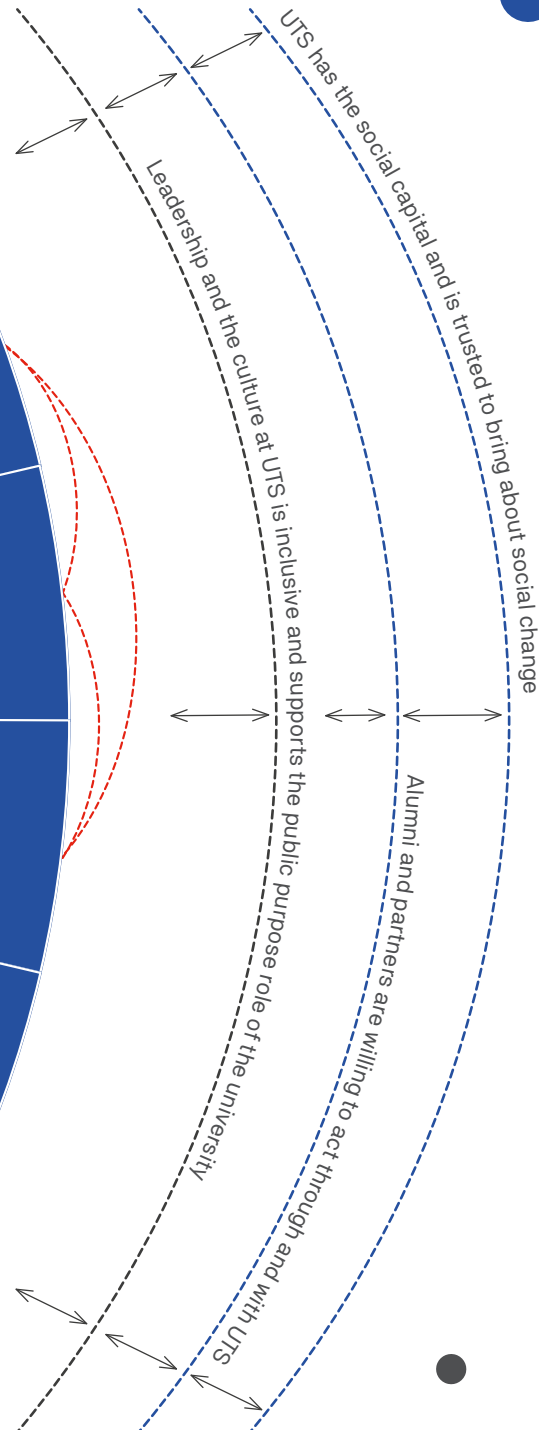
**Volunteer:** Tamil language  
teacher; radio host

# The UTS Social Impact Framework





agent  
change,  
ming  
through  
education  
practice



# 3 Maximising staff impact

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 3:**

**Staff have the confidence & are supported to maximise their social impact**

Supporting the civic capacity of our staff community is a fundamental tenet of our social justice agenda. UTS strategies, systems and processes are instituted with a view to enabling staff to maximise and amplify their social impact. The following pages showcase just some of the ways that UTS is supporting staff to contribute to social justice causes.



## RACS supported through paid corporate volunteering program

UTS's Social Justice Leave policy gives professional and academic staff five days of personal leave per year allocated to volunteer work.

Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion staff member Fiona Versey used her Social Justice Leave to devote several hours during her regular work week to helping the Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS) launch a new fundraising initiative.

Skills-based volunteering is a growing area. It's a mutually beneficial arrangement that enables businesses and large organisations to authentically contribute to society. This kind of volunteering usually involves applying a job-related expertise to a volunteer placement — for example in marketing, project management, IT or — as in Fiona's case — event management.

"RACS put out the call for a volunteer event coordinator — and of course it's hard to find someone with the time and skills who can take on a project in a certain time frame," said Fiona.

"When I explained that I was going to do this while working full time, I think they were a little dubious, until I told them that UTS would pay for my time.

"It means a lot to be able to help an organisation like RACS. The event itself was the launch of the RACS book club, highlighting books written by people from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds or from their communities. This is a new initiative for them, which they'll do twice yearly, so they'll be able to recreate this again and again."

## Mental health training for Stay Kind volunteers

The Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion partnered with Stay Kind to offer pro bono mental health first aid and mental health self-care training to Stay Kind's on-the-ground ambassadors.

These volunteers help run Take Kare Safe Spaces — pop up facilities in Sydney's CBD providing a safe space for young people after a night out.

Take Kare Ambassadors need to be able to identify and support young people in need and understand how to de-escalate a crisis situation, particularly with those who may have mental health issues.

Participants learned techniques to identify and support people in mental distress, including those suffering a panic attack, exhibiting suicidal behaviour or experiencing psychosis.

Arif Ongu, Training Specialist at the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion said, "Stay Kind does frontline work, and are not in a position where they can pay for this type of training. Partnering with them to upskill their volunteers is one way we can have social impact."



**"Sharing knowledge like this is one way we can have a positive impact on community, and I feel strongly that it's our responsibility as an institution that's committed to social justice to seek out these opportunities."**

**Arif Ongu,  
Training Specialist, the Centre  
for Social Justice & Inclusion**



# Social Impact Grants

Ten grants of up to \$5000 were awarded by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion to researchers and practitioners working on projects with a social impact.

## Congratulations to the 2021 grant recipients:

**Professor Martin Bryant, Professor Penny Allan and James Melsom, School of Architecture, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building**  
Post-fire communities: Collective landscapes  
**Partners:** Rosedale Residents Association, Eurobadalla Shire Council, Yuin Aboriginal Land Council, and the Rural Fire Service

**Dr David Carter, Law Health Justice Research Centre, Faculty of Law**  
Positive migration: Enhancing immigration advice and support for people living with HIV  
**Partner:** HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC)

**Claudia Cowell and Helena Asher, Careers Consultants, UTS Careers**  
Empowering clients of the Asylum Seekers Centre with life-long employability skills  
**Partner:** Asylum Seekers Centre

**Urtzi Grau, Guillermo Fernandez-Abascal, Campbell Drake, Saskia Schut, and Louisa King, School of Architecture, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building; Allan Teale, School of Built Environment, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building**  
Murrin Bridge Preschool and Community Hub  
**Partners:** Murrin Bridge Preschool, and Murrin Bridge Local Aboriginal Land Council

**Dr Tania Leimbach, Dr Jennifer Kent and Dr Jeremy Walker, Climate Justice Research Centre, School of Communication, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**  
Staying sane in the face of climate change: Building a climate education network and evaluating the impact of a teaching and learning resource  
**Partners:** Australian Student Environment Network, UTS Enviro Collective, and Climate Change Communication and Narrative Network, Deakin University

**Melissa Miao and Associate Professor Emma Power, Graduate School of Health, Faculty of Health; Dr Deborah Debono, Centre for Health Services Management, Faculty of Health**  
Community evaluation of a communication intervention for adults with brain injury and their communication partners  
**Partners:** Brain Injury Australia, icare NSW, Acquired Brain Injury Communication Lab, University of Sydney and Changineers

**Sophie Ritchie, UTS Rapido Social, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology**  
R&D engineering to revolutionise wheelchair design to support individuals with uncontrollable tremors  
**Partners:** Northcott, Northcott Innovation and Quantum Rehab

**Professor Shankar Sankaran, Professor Martin Loosemore and Dr Phillippa Carnemolla, School of Built Environment, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building; Professor Simon Darcy, UTS Business School**  
Investigating employment opportunities for people with disability in the construction sector  
**Partners:** Multiplex Construction, Rotary Club of North Ryde, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and Settlement Services International

**Fernanda Tavares Vasconcelos Oliveira and Associate Professor Valerie Gay, School of Electrical and Data Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology; Dr Jaime Garcia, School of Computer Science, Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology**  
Games as cognitive screening instruments for older adults  
**Partner:** Meals on Wheels







**“I hope our work increases access to tested COVID-19 PPE that can save lives. Longer term, I hope that it also paves the way for cheaper and easier-to-manufacture testing methodologies and practices for other medical devices as well.”**

**Sophie Ritchie,  
Rapido’s Social Impact Manager**

## Testing times — ensuring PPE’s effectiveness in low-income countries

During a pandemic, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can save lives — and there are strict testing requirements in place to ensure they are up to standard.

However, these testing procedures are often very technical and require machines that cost millions of dollars — which can create barriers for developing countries to be able to verify their PPE standards. In the worst circumstances that can mean substandard PPE can fall through the cracks, potentially costing lives.

With the help of a Social Impact Grant, UTS Engineers from Rapido Social, who use engineering and technology to bring about social change, have teamed up with Field Ready to find a solution.

It may not look like much — a barrel connected by a recycled hose to a plastic base — but this Rapido Social prototype can be used to check if face shields are blocking the infectious droplets produced when patients cough, sneeze, talk or even breathe, especially in small or cramped spaces.

It also comes with a set of instructions: CAD drawings and a step-by-step guide to construction and use that can be used by engineers, medical workers and others in the field.

So far, Rapido Social equipment drawings and guides have been shared with in-country engineers in Kenya, Iraq, Bangladesh, and Uganda. The team has also developed similar drawings and instructions for machines to test face masks.

The collaboration is only just starting to bear fruit, but the longer-term impact of the work has the potential to be profound, according to Sophie Ritchie, Rapido’s Social Impact Manager.



**Above:** Rapido Social dust chamber barrel prototype. Photo supplied.

# 4 Research, teaching, program outcomes

## **UTS Social Impact Framework – Domain 4:**

**Targeted research, teaching  
& program outcomes have  
social impact & collectively  
contribute to community**

As a public purpose institution, UTS is committed to delivering significant economic, environmental, cultural and social impact through our research and practice. These outcomes are further enhanced through strategic partnerships with community, industry and government bodies. Our culture of external collaboration informs and brings added value to all that we do and drives outcomes that benefit people and communities.



## Senior public servants to learn ethics in AI at UTS

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) granted funding to UTS to develop a course for senior public servants and government leaders in the Asia-Pacific region to learn about the ethical use of artificial intelligence.

The course is part of UTS's partnership with the Federal Government's International Cyber and Critical Technology Engagement Strategy.

'The Ethical AI: Serving People, Supporting Communities, Learning from Diversity' course will consist of three modules and will be developed by leading AI experts at UTS, across law, communications, business and engineering and IT.

## Launch of James Martin Institute for Public Policy

The James Martin Institute for Public Policy (JMI) was established by the NSW Government in partnership with UTS, as well as the University of Western Sydney and the University of Sydney.

The JMI is an independent public policy institute that will solve complex public policy challenges through smart collaborations that harness world-leading research. It works to bring academic expertise into the early stages of policy making, working in partnership with government, to enable the contestability of ideas.

It brings together policy makers, academics, industry, and community groups to identify solutions to complex policy challenges and deliver long-lasting public good.

This venture is built on a genuine commitment and excitement about what can be achieved through collaboration with other university partners and with government.

**"Public policymaking is evolving to match society's increasing complexity. By partnering academics with policy makers and stakeholders, we can help to overcome complex policy challenges and deliver long-lasting public good."**

**Professor Attila Brungs,  
Former Vice-Chancellor  
and President, UTS**

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**Appointed 2021:**

# Industry Professors tackle social issues



**Leslie Loble**

Leslie Loble is a recognised leader of public purpose reform and innovation. Her fellowship at UTS, supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, is exploring how EdTech can lift learning outcomes for disadvantaged students.

**“I am honoured that the Paul Ramsay Foundation has provided me with a fellowship to investigate how we can better deploy artificial intelligence and public purpose technology toward lifting education achievement and outcomes for disadvantaged students. Where are the opportunities and risks and how does public policy need to shift?”**

**Leslie Loble**



**Edward Santow**

After finishing his five-year tenure as Australia’s Human Rights Commissioner, Edward Santow joined UTS as Industry Professor — Responsible Technology.

Ed previously worked closely with UTS academics and practitioners on The Human Rights & Technology Project, the most influential project worldwide on the human rights and social implications of AI, in which UTS was the official university partner.

Ed is leading a UTS initiative to build Australia’s strategic capability in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

**“I am excited to work with UTS’s world-class experts on a defining challenge of our time: to ensure that the AI we increasingly rely on gives us the future we want and need, not one we fear.”**

**Ed Santow**



**Dr. Anne Summers AO**

Renowned author and journalist, Dr Anne Summers AO joined the UTS Transdisciplinary School under a Paul Ramsay Foundation Fellowship to research innovative solutions to domestic and family violence in Australia.

Delivering the keynote address for the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion’s International Women’s Day event to over 400 attendees, Dr Summers noted that violence against women and children has increased during the last decade. She is calling for a national plan, with set objectives and measurable targets:

**“We need comparable targets, based on hard data, for reducing, and ultimately eradicating, domestic and family, and sexual violence against women... It is no longer enough to say that we need gender equality to reduce violence. Rather, we should be measuring reductions in violence as a performance indicator of our progress towards achieving gender equality.”**

**Dr Anne Summers AO**





## New database to make refugee research more accessible

When it comes to knowledge sharing in academia, the uncomfortable reality is that not everyone has equal access to information. The commodification of knowledge and individualistic, metrics-driven approaches to academic publication keeps most papers hidden behind paywalls.

This is a big problem when it comes to research with a social justice mission e.g. forced migration and refugee studies.

To help combat this, the Refugee Education Special Interest Group (RESIG) along with the Melbourne Social Equity Institute, developed the Australian Research on Refugee Integration Database (ARRID) — an open-source database facilitating access for academics, students, refugee-background communities, policymakers, and practitioners to research refugee integration in Australia.

“We wanted to address the moral failure of making publicly-funded knowledge inaccessible,” said John Tran, ARRID co-developer and Student Equity Project Officer at the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

“When valuable knowledge is hidden behind a paywall, its full potential for impact is diminished.

“For example, the insights and learnings from forced migration research do not translate well or easily into much-needed shifts in policy and practice, largely because people don’t have access to, or know what information is out there.”

While the ARRID hasn’t reversed the paywall problem, it does allow users to see how much research or writing has been done in the field of forced migration and refugee studies.

Research, teaching, program outcomes

## Reconnection after isolation in Glebe

UTS created a time capsule of life during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Glebe community, which went on exhibition at various spots around Glebe in 2021.

The Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion has an ongoing relationship with the Glebe community, through the Glebe Connected project — part of UTS’s goal to be a supportive and accessible institution.

With the onset of COVID-19, the centre’s work in Glebe shifted, focusing on place-based solutions to answer challenges of maintaining social connectedness, access to essential services, and health and wellbeing. This included collaborating on an online community hub and piloting a digital mentoring program for elderly members of the community and UTS students.

They also ran a series of COVID-safe picnics in the pocket parks of Glebe, to celebrate community, togetherness, and resilience through a difficult time. Picnic groups reflected Glebe’s diversity with mums, carers and bubs, artist groups, patrons from the Have-A-Chat cafe/Glebe Computer Project, St Helen’s community gardeners, Treehouse regulars and other locals.

# Research with impact



## Disability Research Network

The UTS Disability Research Network supports interdisciplinary research and enhances partnerships between UTS scholars, people with disability, community and government.

It brings together faculties as diverse as business, design, health, law, science and engineering to address real-world contemporary and future 'wicked problems' facing people with disability.

In 2021, more than a dozen projects led by Network members received external funding with a further 10 projects awarded UTS research funding. Two major projects were awarded UTS Cross Faculty Funding in 2021:

- Transforming Data with the Disability Community — which is developing an innovative data-driven research program for the disability community that deploys tools and techniques from the field of artificial intelligence and data science to unlock real-world value for people with disability.
- Disability Citizenship and Social Participation Monitor — which will provide an 'accounting' of the perception of people with disabilities' lived experience of how they have been able to participate in the community.

**Above:** Students on the Goods Line.  
Photographer: Anna Zhu.



**Left:** Students and staff on the rooftop of UTS Central. Photographer: Kwa Nguyen.

### Careers Breakfasts: a career information program for parents of high school students

In early 2021, Sonal Singh, Executive Manager Student Equity, UTS, along with the University of Wollongong led research to establish principles for best practice career education for school students and non-school leavers from low-SES backgrounds, as part of a National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) funded project.

During 2020–21, parents of current UTS students from equity backgrounds ran Careers Breakfasts information sessions to parents of high school students. These aimed to both support aspiring students and empower parents to help children in their education and career journeys.

Key findings from the report included:

- The lack of a staged and systemic approach to career education in school meant that effective career education is a ‘game of chance’. What is needed is well-resourced careers curriculum in schools.
- Parents, teachers, career advisers and the students all share a role in students’ career and education decision-making, however there is a lack of clarity among these groups about who is responsible for career guidance.
- Navigating the post-secondary education and employment environment is complex and requires more collaboration between tertiary education and industry.

### New partnership on community research journal

In 2021, the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion embarked on a new partnership with Albion College in Michigan, USA to support ‘Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement’.

Margaret Malone, Managing Editor for Gateways said that the partnership will “bring innovative and important community-based research to a wide audience.”



# 5 Advocacy

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 5:**

**UTS is an advocate,  
critical voice and thought  
leader on issues that concern  
& impact communities**

While supporting academic integrity and independence, the university hosts events and contributes to public dialogue from our institutional platform. In collaboration with external partners, UTS convenes thinkers, analysts and experts to explore drivers of, and develop solutions to, complex global problems.





# 40.3 million

people are estimated to be in some form of modern slavery worldwide

**“One of the most crucial steps we can take towards eliminating modern slavery in Australia is to show people what it looks like.”**

**Jennifer Burn,  
Anti-Slavery Australia  
Director and UTS  
Law Professor**

## Welcome to Human Mart

In 2021, Anti-Slavery Australia (ASA) brought its innovative awareness and fundraising campaign, Human Mart, to UTS. Human Mart, a pro bono collaboration between ASA in the Faculty of Law and creative agency Coffee Cocoa Gunpowder, was an interactive art installation presenting as a 'supermarket' where nothing was for sale — instead over 60 'products' represented true stories of modern slavery in Australia.

‘Modern slavery’ describes all forms of slavery and human trafficking, including servitude, forced labour and debt bondage. Worldwide, it’s estimated that 40.3 million people are in some form of modern slavery.

ASA Director and UTS Law Professor Jennifer Burn said, “Anti-Slavery Australia has been operating for almost 20 years, and in that time, we’ve come to understand that one of the greatest challenges to the elimination of modern slavery is that often people aren’t aware it exists.

“So, one of the most crucial steps we can take towards eliminating modern slavery in Australia is to show people what it looks like. Human Mart was an unprecedented and unique attempt to do just this. By telling victims’ stories, we also sought to show the humanity of those who have experienced these offences, and that people can, and do, rebuild their lives after slavery.”

## How many people in immigration detention have been vaccinated? Home Affairs won’t tell us

In August 2021, deep in Sydney’s Delta lockdown, Dr Anthea Vogl from the UTS Faculty of Law wrote in *The Conversation* about the concerning lack of information about vaccination rates for people in immigration detention, particularly for those in Villawood Detention Centre, within one of the LGAs of concern at the time, and which houses 500 people. Dr Vogl argued that the government was prioritising border policies over public health and safety.

COVID-19 thrives in confined spaces, which makes people incarcerated in prisons and immigration detention among the most at-risk populations in terms of infection.

Dr Vogl called for the government to immediately respond to the danger of COVID-19 infection in all sites of incarceration, including immigration detention. This would have involved the urgent release of refugees, asylum seekers and other non-citizens from detention as numerous other countries have done in response to the pandemic, as well as making vaccines available.

# What's on(line)

UTS continued to grow their national audience through online events and to advocate for social justice in the university sector and beyond.

Events featured leaders in equality, education, and engagement — deepening our connections with alumni, partners, and community stakeholders.

**“Listen to our communities. Listen to our families, our grandmothers who continue to lead the way in this space. Understand their experiences and the challenges facing the child protection system. These are systems that, as a society, we built and that we maintain.”**

Dr Paul Gray

## Reckoning with racism

Randa Abdel-Fattah kicked off our event program for 2021, with her new book *Coming of Age in the War on Terror*. Born in the aftermath of 9/11, a generation of young people — Muslim and non-Muslim — have grown up in a **climate of widespread Islamophobia, surveillance, and suspicion**. Randa and Verity Firth discussed the growing partisanship on the lives and political consciousness of young people.

On the back of the ground-breaking ‘Do Better’ report into systemic racism at Collingwood Football Club written by Professor Lindon Coombes and Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO, UTS teamed up with the University of Sydney and Western Sydney University to look at **Australia’s scorecard on eliminating racial discrimination**, with Lindon Coombes, Antoinette Lattouf, Tim Soutphommasane and Valentine Mukuria.

In May, UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, and the Faculty of Law teamed up to present ‘More than Sorry’ for Reconciliation Week. Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt, Dr Paul Gray, and James Beaufile discussed **how to end the removal of First Nations children from their families, communities, and culture**.

How does the media shape the conversation on **human rights issues in Palestine and Israel**? Samah Sabawi, Antony Loewenstein and Professor Saba Bebbawi discussed the influence of social media to include more perspectives in reporting.

People who have arrived in Australia seeking safety or are from a refugee background offer richness and diversity to our community. But the experience **for those who arrive in Australia seeking safety is incredibly challenging**, with hostile policies and systemic uncertainty adding barriers at every turn. UTS partnered with the Refugee Advice & Casework Service during Refugee Week to advocate for a more inclusive society.

After 20 years of occupation, allied forces withdrew from Afghanistan and stood by as the Taliban re-took control of the country. UTS partnered with Hunar Symposia to ask, **what will it take to galvanise Australians into action to support the needs of Afghans**, and the diaspora and refugee communities in Australia and around the world?



## Ending violence against women & children

For International Women’s Day, Dr Anne Summers AO, Dixie Link-Gordon, Catherine Gander, and Verity Firth called for governments to be **held to account with hard data and measurable targets** on rising rates of violence against women.

UTS Journalist-in-Residence and award-winning author of *See What You Made Me Do*, Jess Hill spoke to over 400 attendees about the **national emergency of domestic abuse**.

**Below:** UTS Journalist-in-Residence and award-winning author, Jess Hill. Photographer: Jack Fisher.



**Laws are written, implemented, and judged by men**, in Australia and abroad. Dr Ramona Vijeyarasa launched her latest book highlighting that our laws are failing women, but how greater equality in our institutions and consideration of the gendered effects of laws — from tax to the environment — could make legislation a powerful tool for gender equality.

For 11 years, the **National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children** has had questionable outcomes. Ahead of its renewal in 2022, Senator Jenny McAllister, June Oscar AO, Anne Summers AO, and Verity Firth discussed the needs for the next plan and how it could deliver better results, particularly for First Nations women.

## Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion online events:

**34**  
events

**13,500+**  
registrations

**75%**  
of attendees  
external to UTS

“A plan is not just a good intention, it’s not a strategy, it’s not a set of great ideas. A plan is something that has a set of objectives, it has measurable targets that have to be achieved.”

Dr Anne Summers AO

# What's on(line)

## Advocating for a fairer society

Workplace rights took centre stage in parliamentary debates in 2021. UTS partnered with the Human Rights Law Centre, and speakers Michele O'Neil, Alison Barnes, Hugh de Kretser, and Verity Firth discussed why human rights should be the focal point for **safe, respectful, and healthy workplaces.**

**We are in the grip of a climate emergency,** yet Australia continues to lag behind the world in taking action to address global warming. Zali Steggall OAM, Ketan Joshi, Professor Robynne Quiggin, and Verity Firth explored what forms of advocacy are getting the most traction.

Since 1985, the Australian imprisonment rate has more than tripled. **Has our criminal justice system failed, or is it doing exactly what it's designed to do?** Keenan Mundine, Debbie Kilroy, Mindy Sotiri and Verity Firth explored decarceration, abolitionism, and how to change public perception of jailing.

The **UTS Disability Research Network launch event** reflected on proposed changes to NDIS eligibility and planning policies, which rather than make the system fairer, made it harder for people with disability. El Gibbs, Professor Simon Darcy, Dr George Taleporos, Fiona Given and Dr Linda Steele laid out how better NDIS policies could promote a fair, inclusive, and thriving society.

Artificial intelligence is already a firm fixture in our lives. It could be a powerful tool in disrupting disadvantage, but can equally be used to further systemic discrimination. Ed Santow, Mikaela Jade, Distinguished Professor Fang Chen, and Verity Firth asked, is **Australia equipped to embrace the opportunities of AI** while ensuring human rights and dignities?

**"Disabled people are a mighty force. We have to fight all the time. When we fight together, we can really change things."**

El Gibbs

## Evolution of education

The Australian Higher Education sector is on a knife's edge — **how will universities respond to the evolving social, financial, and technological influences of the 21st century?** Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO, Professor Glyn Davis AC, Professor Jonathan Grant, and Verity Firth discussed what our society needs from a university.

Digital access is changing the way we educate young people, but unequal distribution of that access has exposed **a crushing divide in our education system.** NSW Minister for Education Sarah Mitchell, Mikaela Jade, Leslie Loble, Murray Kitteringham and Verity Firth considered whether the education sector can embrace technological innovation while some students still don't have internet access.

**"My ancestors have fought and worked in at least three dimensions for 80,000 years, so for us it's really the point of time — and we're lucky to live in this time — where the technology actually caught up with the way that we experience the world and the way that we educate our young people."**

Mikaela Jade





## The Vice-Chancellor's Democracy Forum

Rana Foroohar, the author of *Don't Be Evil: How Big Tech Betrayed Its Founding Principles And All Of Us*, joined Emeritus Professor Roy Green to ask, **is the rise of Big Tech a clear and present danger to democracy?**

The likes of Facebook or Google offer their services for free, taking personal data in the transaction. What we are collectively paying as individuals and as a society over the years is less transparent.

Rana called for a new set of regulations for the digital era, and for greater government regulation to set the standards.

“We don’t really know what we’re giving up, it has some value, and it particularly has some value when it’s correlated throughout the course of a day or a week or a lifetime, and then pooled with other people’s data.”

Rana Foroohar



# 6 Operations



## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 6:**

**UTS business operations  
and strategies reflect a  
long-term independent  
commitment to social impact**

Driving social change begins on campus and in our community. We strive to embed inclusivity, sustainability and accessibility as part of our business and employment practices. Our organisational initiatives enable UTS, and our people, to bring about social change.

## New partnership to enhance inclusive practice

In 2021, UTS announced a partnership with the Centre for Inclusive Design (CfID) to make our own systems and practices more inclusive and collaborate on key strategic areas, as well as lead and advocate for a more inclusive society. The CfID is now based at UTS in the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice & Inclusion) Verity Firth said, “Our role at the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion is to drive the university’s social justice agenda, ensuring that the university’s engagement with communities, government, industry, and individuals brings about a more just and equal society. External partnerships like this are crucial to achieve this.”

“What really excites me about this partnership is the opportunity to make huge systemic change,” said Dr Manisha Amin, CEO of CfID.

“We are looking forward to bringing more people together to co-design solutions. One of our strengths at the Centre for Inclusive Design is working with businesses and companies, using evidence-based approaches to inclusion that generate return for everyone. We are looking forward to leveraging UTS’s strengths in methodology and research around diversity to engage further on complex social issues.”

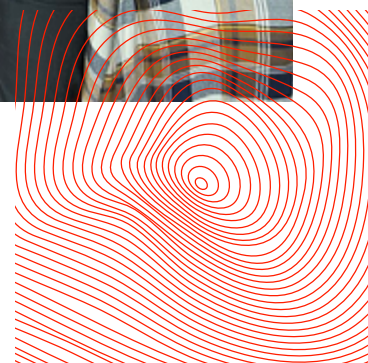


## Developing inclusive leaders at UTS

In September, as part of the ongoing partnership between UTS and the CfID to advance inclusive practice within UTS and in the broader community, academic and professional staff were invited to participate in CfID’s popular ‘Inclusive Leadership’ workshop – exploring why inclusive leadership is essential, what it looks like, and how individuals can grow their capacity to be leaders of inclusivity in organisations, no matter their level.

The two-hour, interactive workshop was held online with 90 staff members participating from 130 registrations.

**Above:** Centre for Inclusive Design team. Photo supplied.





## Athena Swan update — new plan to address gender equity in STEMM

Gender inequity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) faculties continues to be a challenge across the tertiary sector. At UTS, this challenge is being tackled head on through a new strategic plan announced in 2021 focusing on five key priority areas.

Six years ago, UTS committed to the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena Swan program and was among the first pilot institutions to be awarded a Bronze accreditation for the initiative.

The next phase of the program builds on these efforts, taking an intersectional approach to gender equity. Five key barriers to gender equity in STEMM faculties will be addressed. These barriers, or priority areas, are referred to as Cygnet Awards.

### Our priority areas

- **Building the pipeline** through outreach to attract women to Engineering and IT in early education. Currently, low numbers of women are drawn to Engineering and IT disciplines. This begins in early primary and continues through secondary and undergraduate education.
- **Supporting career progression** for Higher Degree Research (HDR) students in the Faculty of Engineering and IT (FEIT). UTS is losing talent due to lack of career progression pathways that work for women, especially for HDR and Early Career Research women.

- **Targeting recruitment** to combat the gender imbalance in applications for STEMM positions. This will address the unequal numbers of women and men that are applying for positions in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering and IT.
- **Making flexible work the norm** across STEMM work areas. Flexible work arrangements available at UTS are not well known or taken up in STEMM work areas. Flexible work provisions need to be applied equally across the university.
- **Promotion pathways** to increase numbers of women ascending to senior positions in STEMM. This will address the unequal numbers of women applying for promotion in the Faculties of Science and Engineering and IT, resulting in a gender imbalance that increases at every level of seniority.

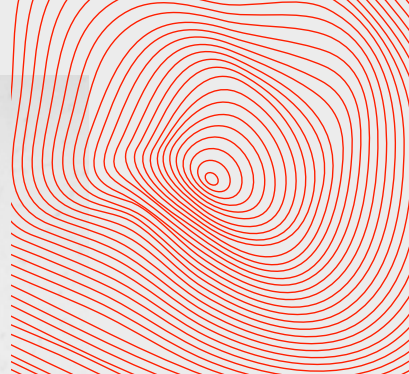
Supporting the implementation of these priority areas will be Associate Professor Anne Gardner — the new Academic Lead for the Athena Swan program at UTS.

**“I am seeking to bring  
positive disruption  
to gender equity in  
FEIT at UTS.”**

**Associate Professor  
Anne Gardner,  
Academic Lead for the  
Athena Swan program at UTS**







## Support for the people of Afghanistan

2021 saw the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, precipitating a humanitarian emergency. UTS extended solidarity to those impacted by the violence in Afghanistan by:

- providing pastoral care support, academic support, financial assistance to current students from Afghanistan at UTS
- providing visa sponsorship support to scholars at risk in Afghanistan with a commitment to facilitating housing and accommodation support for them when they arrive in Australia
- lobbying the Federal Government to increase Australia's humanitarian intake and to provide a safe haven for vulnerable Afghans, particularly women, who work in government and educational institutions
- offering PhD scholarships to scholars at risk, and
- joining the Scholars At Risk Network which is seeking to assist as many scholars and practitioners at risk as possible.

**Left:** Journalism class in Mashaal University, Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: Alamy.



**UTS named as national hub for the global Talloires Network Leaders Conference 2021**

UTS was awarded a US\$10,000 grant to host the Australian hub for the Talloires Network Leaders Conference 2021.

The Talloires Network of Engaged Universities is the largest international network of universities working in community engagement. The international conference brought together Higher Education leaders, students, and community partners to critically reflect on the power and responsibility of universities to equitably address global challenges.

On Friday 1 October, UTS hosted a full day line-up of talks, case studies and an interactive workshop for Australian universities, providing a regional hub for the conference.

Local and international speakers shared their insights into how to authentically engage with communities, opened by UTS Elder-in-Residence Aunty Glendra Stubbs, and including Jihad Dib MP, Cassandra Goldie, James Arvinitakis, Mathew Johnson, Joanne Curry, and John Saltmarsh.

The event also launched the Network for Community Engagement and Carnegie Classification Australia, and recruited 16 additional individuals and institutions as members.



**US\$10K**

**grant was awarded to UTS to host the Australian hub for the Talloires Network Leaders Conference 2021**

**Inclusive Practice in Education Fellowship program**

2021 saw the launch of the next phase of the Inclusivity Experiment — which aims to challenge conventional thinking about inclusive practice and to make ethical and inclusive design easier for everyone.

The Inclusive Practice in Education Fellowship program launched in October and 16 Associates are currently engaging together as a community of practice to:

- build their capacity to deliver inclusive education
- access targeted support, and
- work together to contribute to the system change needed for inclusive practice to flourish.

Associates are supported by the initiative’s collaborative partners including Canva, the Centre for Inclusive Design, the Institute for Interactive Media and Learning, and the UTS Transdisciplinary School.





## Our submission to consultation on the National Disability Employment Scheme

In May 2021, UTS put in a submission to the public consultation on the National Disability Employment Scheme, calling on the Federal Government to use evidence-based insights to deliver better socioeconomic outcomes for people with disability.

People with disability continue to have far lower employment outcomes than the general population. These were the main points in the submission:

### **Inclusive education — funding to better support students with disability at university**

People with disability leave school early at higher rates and go on to tertiary study at far lower rates — even though higher levels of education equate to better employment outcomes and higher incomes. A review of the Disability Support Fund — for universities to attract and support students with disability — is needed. The funding given does not reflect the needs of students with long-term health conditions who may not identify as people with disability, and yet still access university accessibility services.

### **Inclusive employment — flexible work for those who need it**

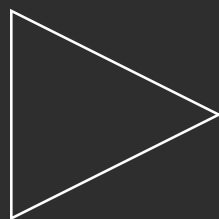
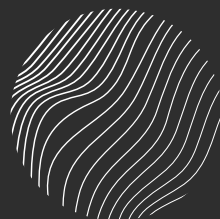
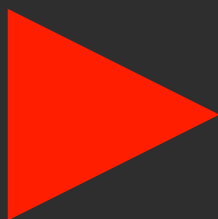
COVID-19 accelerated the move to flexible and hybrid working, and ideally this momentum can be maintained, creating better working conditions for everyone.

The Commonwealth must support employers, particularly small and medium enterprises, to provide an environment that ensures equity and wellbeing for vulnerable cohorts of employees.

### **Advancing inclusive employment research**

At UTS, our inclusive disability research agenda goes beyond health to include consideration of education, employment, housing and community living, freedom of movement, freedom from abuse and the upholding of dignity and respect in all services.

For employment to be meaningful and sustainable, people with disabilities must be employed in roles where they are socially included and have equal career and employment opportunities to people without disabilities. Integral to this is job satisfaction, opportunities to utilise skills and competencies, and being valued in the workplace.



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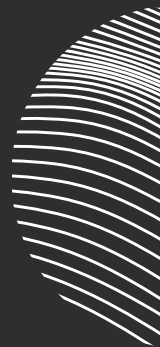
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