

JCU Winter School inspires twins to follow their dreams

By Masalgi and Mariah Mills

Our story begins in 2018 when we, Masalgi and Mariah, were in our final year of high school. We knew we wanted to go to university the following year, but this was a time of uncertainty for us, as we were still unsure of what we wanted to study.

When the James Cook University (JCU) Winter School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was brought to our attention by some of the staff at the Indigenous Education and Research Centre (IERC) we thought it would be a good opportunity to gain an insight into university life. After receiving the program information and the study area options available, Masalgi selected science, and Mariah choose law.

During the days of Winter School we attended our respective classes where professors of our chosen disciplines delivered lectures and guidance on how university works. We were set small projects and worked in teams to complete activities. It was a great week of being inspired, gaining an insight into university life and learning so much new knowledge. We also gained confidence that



Above: Mariah (left) and Masalgi (right) with their grandmother at the 2018 Winter School Graduation. **Right:** Masalgi (left) and Mariah (right), working as mentors for the Winter School program, with their grandmother, Professor Yvonne Cadet-James at the 2021 Winter School Graduation.

university was something that we could both accomplish.

In the evenings we played sports with the other Winter School students, followed by dinner and then night activities which included zumba, drums and traditional crafts with the local Aunties. The whole experience created long lasting friendships as we still talk to friends we made then.

In 2019 we graduated high school. Inspired by Winter School,

we enrolled in and completed JCU's Diploma of Higher Education in preparation for our Bachelor degrees. In 2020 Masalgi completed one year of a Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences then enrolled in a Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery in 2021. Mariah is currently in her third year of a joint Bachelor of Arts–Bachelor of Laws.

In 2021 we became Indigenous student ambassadors at JCU and



we were offered to work as mentors for the Winter School program.

We believe that we are well placed to assist others in gaining an insight into university life because of our history with the program and our current studies. Furthermore, this makes it easy to empathise with the students about their transition from high school to university. It is also interesting getting to know the students, where they come from and what their

goals are for the future. It made us reminisce about the days when we were in such a position a few years prior.

We are proud to be ambassadors for the program and take our responsibilities seriously in helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to reach their goals.

Find out more about Masalgi and Mariah in the IERC February 2022 Newsletter.



The 2022 JCU Winter School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will run from 26 June to 1 July

If you are in Year 10, 11 or 12 and want to know what it's like to be a uni student at JCU, this program is for you!

The Indigenous Education and Research Centre cover all accommodation, meals and travel costs for students participating in this program.

For more information including how to apply, visit jcu.edu.au/ierc or contact the Indigenous Education & Research Centre on 07 4781 4676