

Treading a new path through higher education

Ayman Hill is the first to admit that getting through school was a struggle. Often wayward and weary, he found it hard to stay on top of his studies.

"I'd just be in my own little world," he recalls. "I struggled with focusing, picking the right friends and just being there in general."

Oddly enough, he'd eventually pursue a career that'd see him back at school on a day-to-day basis.

"It's pretty funny I ended up being a teacher," says Ayman, who studied a Bachelor of Education (Primary) at ACU.

"For a long time, it wasn't the career I had in mind for myself."

When he finished high school, Ayman experienced ups and downs. On the one hand, his sporting future was looking bright, as he secured a contract to play in Spain. On the other, he lacked direction, branching off into different avenues.

After some soul-searching, he decided to become a teacher, combining his passion for sport with his desire to guide young people.

Ayman balanced study and football through ACU's Away From Base



Ayman Hill

(AFB) program, which allows Indigenous students to blend online learning with intensive residential blocks twice a semester.

For the early part of his degree, he was in Spain blocking shots as a goalkeeper. When he wasn't on the pitch, he was hitting the books.

Completing group assignments was challenging, as Ayman had to negotiate the time difference with his project partners in Australia.

"Collaborating was tricky, but the Indigenous students on the AFB program have a deep respect for each other. We came from all walks of life, but our passion for education banded us together."

Nurturing success

Caitlyn Joseph also has a passion for teaching. Growing up surrounded by strong Aboriginal women, she'd hear stories of the struggles they'd faced. She wondered why these resourceful women never received a proper education.

"I knew my mum was the first in my family to finish high school, and I'd think to myself, 'Why?'" she says.

"I learnt that in my family, the women had not received an education because they were kicked out of school, simply because they were Aboriginal."

"Since then, I've had this desire to become a teacher and help other Aboriginal students to make it through school."

When Caitlyn arrived on campus to start her degree, she had to overcome her nerves. She found her feet at ACU's Yalbalinga unit, the on-campus hub that provides a culturally safe space for Indigenous students.

"It felt like I was at home with family so I could come out of my shell," she says.



Caitlyn Joseph

Caitlyn now works at a high school, nurturing Indigenous students and helping them to become successful learners. It's a job she's passionate about, and that makes her mother and grandmother proud.

"I look at my nan, and for her, going to university was so far out of reach," Caitlyn says.

"It makes me determined to help others to take advantage of their opportunities, so they can find something that interests them and tread a new path through education."



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