



Ngunawal woman finds pathway to success studying law at WSU



Ngunawal woman Jess Oehm was fortunate enough to go to the Nepean Creative and

Performing Arts High School in Sydney's West – a place that was supportive of her dreams, but a severe back injury sustained a few months before her trial HSC exams impacted her studies.

"I was anxious as I knew I wanted to be a lawyer but at the time I couldn't sit down for extended periods to do the study that I knew I needed to do," said Jess.

Despite this setback, Jess was determined to find her own path to study law at university.

During high school she was part of Western Sydney University's Pathways to Dreaming high school engagement initiative and it was here that she learnt about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program.

"I started to engage in the Pathways to Dreaming Program in Year 8 when I had no clue about university and no one in my family had ever gone. The program encouraged me to look at all of my options and familiarise myself with campus," said Jess.

"It allowed me to have hands-on experience with all

the areas that you can study. It supported my cultural knowledge, mentored me to be a strong Aboriginal woman and encouraged me to push myself to do my best for me, my family and my people."

"I realised the Pathway Program would be an option in case my grades didn't get me the ATAR I needed. I sat the numeracy and literacy assessments in July and was offered a spot by September – this was before I even stepped foot into the hall for my exams!"

Jess said applying for an early offer through the Pathway Program was a simple and stress-free process.

"The hardest choice was deciding which campus I wanted to attend if I got an offer. I got a call from the university notifying me of my offer and accepting the offer was just as easy."

Now in her fourth year of a Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Laws double degree at Western Sydney University, Jess is part of a community of 750 talented Indigenous students of which 40% have received an early offer through the highly successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathway Program.

Jess said the university

provides exceptional support to its students, including through the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education, which is "like an extended family for many Indigenous students".

"They offer us free 24/7 access to computers, printing services and stationery supplies, as well as student support officers who help advocate for us in the case of special considerations or enrolment needs – with many services now available online."

"This year the School of Law also launched an Indigenous Textbook Scheme for all laws students to provide us with hard copies of the textbooks to aid our learning."

"In addition, the university provides \$25 million in scholarships each year with many specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. I myself am the proud recipient of the Pathways to Dreaming Scholarship."

Jess said during these difficult times it was more important than ever for students to reach out for help when they need it, to consider all of their options and never give up on their aspirations.

For more information or to apply, visit westernsydney.edu.au/pathwayprogram.



Jess Oehm is in the fourth year of a Bachelor of Business and Bachelor of Laws double degree at Western Sydney University.

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