

Griffith supports student success

Queensland's Griffith University continues to lead and support the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the dedicated GUMURRII Student Success Unit.

GUMURRII and the strong community that support students means Griffith University has some of the highest numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments and graduation of any university in Australia.

Focusing on providing a culturally appropriate learning environment, GUMURRII staff assist students' success from orientation to graduation, across undergraduate and postgraduate degrees through its Tutoring for Success Program (TSP).

GUMURRII offers in-person student support, a physical presence across all five Queensland-based university campus' as well as a range of online support services, tutoring and mentoring.

Recent Bachelor of Health Science graduate, competitive swimmer and proud Wiradjuri woman, Bianca Crisp, said GUMURRII was one of the main reasons she wanted to study at Griffith University.

"I was introduced to GUMURRII while I was at high school, and once I found out what it was and how it could support me, it was a major influence on my decision to study at Griffith," she said.



Georgina Morris - Bachelor of Pharmacy graduate.

Bianca feels the commitment of Griffith University and the GUMURRII Student Success Unit is a continual force that makes the community grow.

Her younger sister has also recently begun her journey at Griffith studying a Bachelor of Physiotherapy, and said she has immediately felt the warmth and support of the community.

That sense of community that GUMURRII offers has created an extremely passionate group that is committed to supporting higher education while acknowledging traditional values and learning structures of First Nations peoples.

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The GUMURRII Student Success Unit story has now gone full circle for Bianca, who is due to start working at the unit in September. She is inspired to make a difference and hopes to encourage students in the same way that she was during her time at Griffith.

"It is a surreal and amazing feeling to now be working at



Bianca Crisp - Bachelor of Health Science graduate.

GUMURRII, and I cannot wait to support and help other young and upcoming First Nations students."

Bachelor of Pharmacy graduate Georgina Morris also engaged with GUMURRII early in her degree and said providing culturally appropriate spaces for First Nations students at universities is so important.

"Providing a culturally safe space for First Nations students in a university setting should be non-negotiable!" Georgina said.

"Griffith promotes reconciliation and education on First Peoples culture and history. Understanding there are still major gaps between First Nations

populations and the rest of Australia, Griffith provides resources, support programs and alternative pathways for students to reach education goals in ways that are achievable for them."

Georgina also is looking at undertaking further study to complete a Doctor of Medicine or a PhD and described the importance of supporting others in higher education and promoting lifelong learning.

"I am very passionate about education, so I could also see myself returning to university and providing education to others."

You can learn more about Griffith Universities GUMURRII Student Success Unit and their commitment to supporting student success by visiting www.griffith.edu.au/gumurri

Culture in the classroom

Engaging Aboriginal high school students in science and maths through dance, art and storytelling inspired Dharawal woman Kylie Day onto a path of research at Southern Cross University's Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples.

Under the guidance of local Elders and supervisor Associate Professor Stuart Barlo, Kylie's Doctorate of Indigenous Philosophies explores the topic of 'Realising the potential of cultural safety in the classroom'.

"My aim is to create better ways of enhancing learning in the classroom for Indigenous students by privileging the voice of local Elders and knowledge holders," Kylie said.

Spending ten years as a high school science teacher and year adviser, Kylie realised the potential of bringing cultural safety into the classroom.

"I developed a relationship with an Aboriginal Reference Group which supported my inquiry about how to make education more engaging for Indigenous students, promoting quality teaching, and building cultural identity," she said.

"I've also spent a lot of time yarning with local



Students at the SoC Caring for Country Residential 2022

Elders about how Aboriginal culture and tradition can be incorporated into pedagogy.

"So, through dance, art, storytelling, weaving and yarning, students can follow my design but also add their own creativity, critical reflection and cultural reality into what they're learning about."

While COVID and the recent floods in the Northern Rivers put the brakes on face-to-face workshops in schools, Kylie has learned from local Elders that students need to be engaged in the cultural classroom workshops on a long-term basis.

"What these students need is consistency and positive role modelling, not microwave teaching.

"Students travelled from far and wide to come and take part in this Caring for Country unit."

"Once I submit my Doctorate I'm planning to engage in long-term workshops with local schools to deliver these programs, we have quite a few who have already expressed an interest," she said.

"I recently co-delivered a

workshop with local Elders and Gnibi staff for Year 10 history students from Trinity Catholic College in Lismore

where we incorporated yarning and weaving into their learning about the Uluru Statement from the Heart."

As a research and teaching academic for Indigenous Knowledge at Southern Cross University, Kylie assisted in teaching a



Dharawal woman and Indigenous research academic Kylie Day at SCU's Gnibi College - in front of Sheldon Harrington's artwork.

one-week residential for environmental science students on Caring for Country.

"Students travelled from far and wide to come and take part in this Caring for Country unit, it's a compulsory and really important part of their learning.

"We talk about cultural safety, fire management and hear about the lived experiences and knowledge of Elders who have grown up on the land," Kylie said.

"We were lucky enough to have local Elders like Uncle Herb, our Elder in residence, Uncle Des

Williams, Aunty Dale Williams, Uncle Warren Williams, Aunty Gwen Williams, and Babani Robyne Bancroft.

"Babani Robyne is one of the head forestry people in the Bundjalung area, so she took us out on her Country, we went to the Washpool National Park to learn about scar trees, massacre sites and the impacts of colonisation on Country.

"The students really get a lot out of it and we're so thankful to the Elders for their time and the knowledge passed on about how to Care for Country."