



Keely Perry is a proud Wiradjuri woman and UQ Bachelor of Biotechnology (Honours) graduate.

Mentoring Indigenous women in STEM

Proud Wiradjuri woman and UQ graduate Keely Perry is a keen advocate for Indigenous women working and studying in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

She graduated with a Bachelor of Biotechnology (Honours) majoring in Plant Biotechnology from The University of Queensland (UQ) in 2023 and continues to gain valuable experience in her field.

Keely recently completed a UQ School of Agriculture and Food Sustainability Kickstarter project analysing finger lime cultivar variations and storage options. She is looking ahead to early 2025 when she hopes to start her PhD.

"I'm incredibly interested in exploring the Australian native plant area, in both food and ecology spaces," Keely says.

"My family has an agricultural background. I'm a fifth-generation cattle farmer, and both my parents have always given me ample opportunities to work on the land."

Growth opportunities through internships

Keely grew up in Longreach, where she was high school captain in 2018 and worked part time as a bakery supervisor and bartender.

During Year 12, she contacted CareerTrackers, which creates yearly internship opportunities for hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. She spent the year between high school and university as a Westpac learning consultant intern, where she gained valuable skills in teamwork and time management.

While enrolled at UQ, Keely has completed internships through CareerTrackers with Origin Energy, Golder and Urban Utilities. She was also a mentor and mentee with the CSIRO Young Indigenous Women in STEM Academy.

"STEM fields should be accessible and in the purview of any Indigenous female," she says.

"Diversity of culture, thought, opinion and knowledge is always important, and supporting Indigenous women in STEM will only increase this."

Leading by example

Mentoring young Indigenous women has been an enriching experience for Keely. She has also worked with the UQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit as a mentor and ambassador for high school students.

"The relationships I've made have been incredibly important to me both professionally and personally," she says.

"The most rewarding aspect would always be watching students become excited or fulfilled by what you get to teach or show them and knowing that

you've made an impact on them."

Keely is currently in a research assistant (community liaison and engagement) role with UQ as part of its emerging relationship with the new National Indigenous Science Translation Centre (NISTC). The centre will facilitate the translation of Indigenous science into Indigenous enterprise, and is seeking support from the federal and state government.

"My work encompasses a lot of foundational research work, not in the lab per say, but in the design of the centre and what its operation will look like," Keely says.

Parting advice

When asked what advice she would give to fellow rural Indigenous students considering moving to pursue university studies, her response was practical and straightforward:

"Really explore your options. You want to give yourself the best environment for doing the best you can at university and getting the most out of your degree."

She emphasises that there are several accommodation options available, including residential colleges, purpose-built student accommodation and private rentals. Students can choose to reside in Brisbane during the university year and move back home for the holidays, or permanently relocate. It's about finding what's right for you.

"It is your own journey, so make sure you are comfortable with it."

Pursue your pathway to medicine

The University of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MD Admission Pathway provides the chance for applicants to gain alternative entry into their preferred program. This pathway gives successful applicants the opportunity to add up to 5 bonus ATAR points to your score. This may be the boost you need to pursue your studies in medicine.

If you are ready to create change in your community by pursuing a career in medicine, apply to UQ.

Applications key dates

MD graduate entry:

1 August 2024
applications close

MD provisional entry:

30 September 2024
applications close

"One thing we all have in common as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at The University of Queensland is that we strive for excellence... We don't allow adversities or roadblocks in our journey to dictate the remainder of our pathways."

Angus Loft
Kamilaroi man and
UQ Doctor of Medicine student



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