

26 AUGUST 2015

LONG-TERM COMPLETION RATES SHOW VALUE OF UNIVERSITY STUDY

A new report by the Australian Council for Educational Research, *Completing University in a Growing Sector: Is Equity an Issue?*, shows that the overall completion rate for low SES students nine years after commencement is comparable to the national average for undergraduates – 69 per cent compared to 74 per cent.

The Chair of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), Professor Peter Lee, said that despite the multiple disadvantages faced by low SES students, the long-term completion rate demonstrated the worth of university education.

“Low SES, mature age and part-time students take longer to complete university degrees than high SES school leavers. The former groups may take significant breaks during their studies. Given that RUN universities have relatively high proportions of students from these groups, including 16.7 per cent of all low SES commencers, our completion rates need to be considered over a relatively longer period to get the full story,” Professor Lee said.

“It isn’t surprising that the report has found that nine years after commencement 58 per cent of students aged 25 and older and 49.1 per cent of part-time students have completed their degree.

“The report has found that students from at risk groups commonly signal an intention to leave early and that their reasons for considering dropping out are different to those of their more advantaged peers. In particular, reasons such as financial difficulties, family and other responsibilities, were much more likely to be mentioned by equity-group students than other students.

“RUN universities are pursuing a range of measures and sharing their expertise in how to improve the retention and completion of students from disadvantaged groups.

“We should not deny capable regional Australians the opportunity to study at university. The demand-driven student system has given many a chance, and most will successfully complete university study,” Professor Lee said.

“More university educated professionals are vital to diversifying regional Australian economies.”

For media enquiries:

Dr Caroline Perkins, Executive Director, Regional Universities Network, 0408 482 736

Issued by: Diana Streak, RUN Media Adviser, 022 536 064

www.run.edu.au