



Media Release

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Collaboration and innovation to improve student outcomes and equity

The members of the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) network are teaming up to share best practice and improve programs that support students from under-represented backgrounds to succeed at university.

The IRU has been successful in receiving a grant from the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) at Curtin University for a collaborative project to improve impact evaluation of student equity and support programs.

Led by IRU member Griffith University, the project will support collaboration to improve the evidence-base about what works in student support, to drive the next phase of program design and evaluation.

Chair of the IRU Academic Committee and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) at Griffith University, Professor Shaun Ewen, said the project is about ongoing improvement in universities across the country that prioritise student success and equity.

“It’s not enough to encourage students from under-represented backgrounds to enrol in university, we also need to support them to thrive,” he said. “By working as a group of universities we are better positioned to identify what is working for students and to develop ways to scale up those initiatives.”

IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said the IRU project will help to address the persistent gap in tertiary education attainment for students from under-represented backgrounds.

“The IRU strongly supports the Albanese government’s focus on increased participation and equity in the tertiary education system,” he said. “Improved data and evidence about what works will be critical for the design of future student support programs and the new needs-based funding system.

“We are ready to work collaboratively with the new government to ensure that all Australians have the opportunity and support to succeed at university, to make sure that everyone can gain the skills they will need for the jobs of the future.”

ACSES Executive Director Professor Shamit Saggar said the project represents a critical step towards strengthening how the sector understands and supports student success.

“This important collaboration between IRU universities exemplifies the kind of sector-wide innovation ACSES is proud to support,” he said.

“Robust, shared approaches to evaluating student equity programs are essential to ensuring interventions are effective, scalable, and truly meet the needs of under-represented students. This project will contribute valuable insight as we build a more inclusive and high-performing tertiary education system.”

iru.edu.au

The project, run by Dr Nadine Zacharias from Equity by Design and funded by the ACSES Capacity Building Grants Program, will run between May and October 2025.

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) is an evidence-based research and public policy centre funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and based at Curtin University.

ACSES is committed to providing the higher education sector with tangible proof of what works to improve the quality and impact of student equity practices in higher education. For further information visit aces.edu.au.

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About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven comprehensive universities across Australia committed to inclusive education and research with impact that advances our communities. Its members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

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