

Young Achievers Program

2023 Annual Report




YAP 2023 snapshot

Statistics based on high-school
and UQ students

540 
students supported

53 
schools represented

46% 
students from
regional/remote areas

30 
accommodation scholarships
provided directly to students

66 
students commenced UQ
Top programs:

- Arts
- Psychology
- Pharmacy
- Engineering

62 
students graduated
with UQ degrees

51 
YAP student mentors



Tabitha

Bachelor of Arts/Social Science
3rd year

“My experience with YAP is one of lasting friendships, a sense of community, and growing self-assurance, not to mention instrumental financial support and an accommodation scholarship.

The program has given me the means and confidence to move from a small country town to UQ in pursuit of my interests in anthropology and the social sciences. I’ll always be grateful to be part of YAP, and to now be sharing my experiences with new UQ students as a peer-to-peer mentor.”

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which our University stands. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

Message from the Vice-Chancellor



Impactful change for individuals and the community

Welcome to the 2023 Young Achievers Program (YAP) Annual Report, which celebrates our students' achievements and provides an update on the program's impact in the community.

In 2023 we selected our 15th cohort of students, who were the most diverse yet. They represent a range of backgrounds and lived experiences from across central, South West and South East Queensland, and join a group of 300+ YAP alumni, many of whom have gone on to pursue successful careers and make meaningful contributions to the community. We also introduced a range of new initiatives focussed on empowering student success. This program includes academic preparation programs, employment opportunities, mentoring, leadership development, study space provision, practical and welfare support, and enhanced accommodation options.

These initiatives provide direct support to students, and we have seen their success realised with graduations nearly doubling in the past 5 years. Many successful YAP graduates have returned to complete postgraduate degrees in a range of professions. We also see the success of our Young Achievers through the range of community activities with which they are involved, including Community Ventures and alumni engagement.

Whilst YAP continues to foster a culture of engagement, participation, and success at UQ, we recognise that this work is not done in isolation. The program contributes to UQ's extensive work across Queensland to engage communities and enhance educational outcomes for all students from underrepresented groups. Much of this work is driven by [The Queensland Commitment](#), a UQ initiative to work with our partners to help address the

personal, financial and geographic barriers that often deter Queensland students from aspiring to further study. Through our collaborative efforts, we have engaged with over 20,000 students across Queensland supporting their aspirations and empowering their success.

The outcomes of the Young Achievers Program demonstrate that school-based engagement and ongoing support across the student lifecycle creates real change, but we also know that we have a challenge ahead. As highlighted in the [Australian Universities Accord](#), there is still much to do to address the knowledge, skills, and research our nation needs by ensuring an equitable and innovative education system for all. Nonetheless, through 15 years of student achievement and success, we know that the Young Achievers Program has impact for both students and their families and ultimately is a catalyst for driving positive intergenerational change in our community.

Best wishes
Debbie

Professor Deborah Terry AC
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

The Queensland Commitment is a pledge to break down barriers to education and build a brighter future for the state by 2032. This comprehensive and ambitious initiative will deliver evidence-based strategies to build aspiration, grow pathways to higher education and support student success.

The Queensland Commitment Roadmap, released in April 2024, details 58 strategic actions UQ will take towards more equitable access to education by 2032. The Roadmap clearly defines how we will continue to work in partnership with alumni, schools,

communities, and all levels of government to make this a reality. It also outlines how we can adapt as an organisation to help more Queenslanders access the transformative impact of education.

Under The Queensland Commitment Roadmap, strongly aligned with the Australian Universities Accord, the Young Achievers Program will continue to be a flagship program for educational equity at UQ, resourced with the necessary support to achieve a target of 10% year-on-year growth in program commencements until 2032.



The year in review

In 2023 the Young Achievers Program embedded a number of new initiatives across the student lifecycle to enhance student success.

For students in secondary school, we provided proactive support focussed on increasing awareness of tertiary pathways. This support included offering scholarship information and advice, guidance with QTAC (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre) applications, and maintaining contact with students after receiving their ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) results.

For students entering The University of Queensland we established our new student success program. This program provides tailored transition and welfare support, which has led to increased student engagement in academic skills and personal development activities. Other initiatives delivered in 2023 designed to support students to graduation included:

- Delivery of a new 'on campus' employment program
- Increased number of student leadership opportunities offered
- Wider range and increased number of accommodation scholarships
- Initiation of a new YAP student advisory board
- Design and funding secured for a dedicated YAP student space on campus





We also reviewed the YAP scholarship rules to ensure they remain responsive to student needs and continue to serve as a valuable support mechanism. As a result of this review, we implemented several changes including more flexible entry pathways to UQ, offering various study modes and improved academic support structures.


In 2023 we selected our 15th cohort of students and celebrated our 15th year of the program. The application and selection process for this cohort was transformed to ensure transparency and accessibility resulting in a marked increase in the diversity of students applying and successfully entering the program.

Whilst welcoming students and supporting their transition and experience is important our greatest focus is on graduate outcomes. In 2023 we celebrated a record number of graduates, marking an almost doubling in graduate numbers over the last five years. We are also seeing a number of students return for post graduate degrees. All of these achievements support student success, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to our community as skilled, informed and engaged citizens.

Future Plans

In 2024 the Young Achievers Program will work closely with partners to support the goals of The Queensland Commitment and the Commonwealth Government Australian Universities Accord Report. We will celebrate welcoming our 15th cohort of students and deliver a range of student success initiatives including:

- A peer-to-peer mentoring program
- Targeted pre-orientation transition program
- Celebration activities including the first YAP Ball
- Increase regional engagement through our regional engagement outreach plan
- Celebration of 15 years of YAP across Queensland
- Continue with our school engagement plan
- Increase our engagement with YAP Alumni



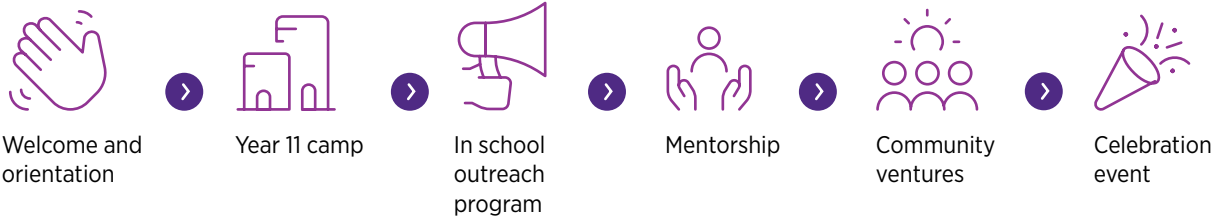
Shantelle
Year 12, Boonah State High School

“The Young Achievers Program has been such a valuable and amazing experience so far. The program has allowed me to have the opportunity to gain valuable information, experience amazing events and make new friends along the way. It has given me helpful insight into university transition, preparing me as I embark on my journey into university. Being selected as UQ Young Achiever has further driven me to do as well as I can across my final year of High school. I am proud to be a UQ Young Achiever.”

Student life cycle

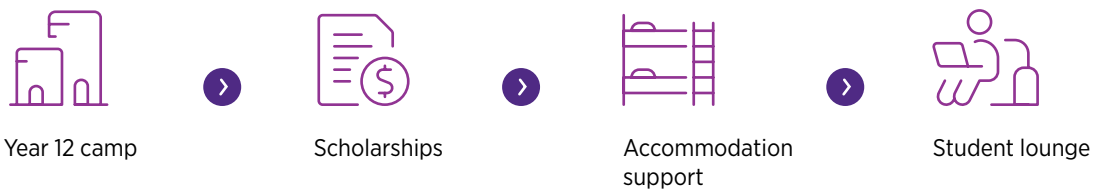
Throughout the student lifecycle students receive a variety of support to facilitate their access to higher education, active engagement in university life and successful attainment of their degree.

Pre-access



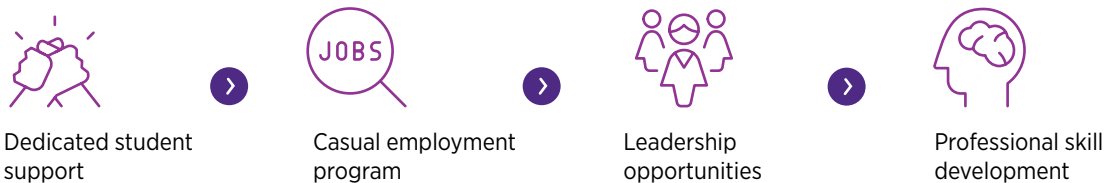
Career options • Study skills • Connection • Mentoring • Knowledge and skills • Through partnered schools

Access



Critical thinking course • Mentorship

Participation



YAP advisory group • Peer monitoring • Students as mentors

Attainment



UQ Young Alumni opportunities



Tara

**Bachelor of Clinical Exercise Physiology
(Honours)**

“When I received the Young Achievers Program Scholarship, my life changed forever.

The opportunity for me to attend University was now more than probable, and the weight was lifted off my family’s shoulders to try to provide me with financial support to achieve my lifelong goals. The doors this program has opened for me changed the course of my life.”

Student spotlight

In celebration of our students, Kyle shares his journey, joining the program over 10 years ago.

I am a proud Yuggera Ugarapul man who is honoured and privileged to be able to work, study and live on my ancestral homelands of South Magan-djin/Meanjin (Brisbane). I have seen first-hand what a lack of education can do to a community. I have also seen the many struggles that my people have overcome to excel in their respective fields.

The resilience exhibited by my community in the face of adversity serves as a constant source of inspiration. Driven by my profound connection to my culture and community, coupled with an innate curiosity and passion for scientific inquiry, I embarked on the journey to become a doctor. I aspire to enact tangible change in the healthcare landscape for my people, advocating fervently for culturally sensitive, integrative, and holistic healthcare practices. Currently nearing the culmination of my Doctor of Medicine program at UQ, following the completion of my Bachelor of Biomedical Science in 2020, I am steadfast in my commitment to this mission.

The generous support from the Young Achiever's Program not only enabled me to pursue my aspiration of becoming a doctor but also provided me with the stability to lead a more comfortable life. Growing up in a low socioeconomic environment, raised by a single mother, the financial strain was a constant challenge.



The funding offered much-needed relief from the stress and anxiety that often accompanies financial struggles, allowing me to focus wholeheartedly on my educational and career pursuits.

The connections I made from the program have also been invaluable. I have kept in touch with fellow mentees while at university. After all these years I am proud to say I keep in contact with quite a few who are still very much active in my life on a monthly basis.

In addition to my pursuit of a medical career, I am deeply committed to community engagement and advocacy. I am honoured to serve as the youngest President in the history of Inala Wangarra, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. Through our initiatives, we actively foster the social and emotional well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Inala. Our comprehensive programs address vital areas including justice, health, education, and overall well-being. Guiding the impactful work at Inala Wangarra is immensely gratifying, witnessing firsthand the transformative impact it has on our community.





I began with AIDA as a Student Representative, later becoming AIDA's Student Director for 2023-2024. I also served as Indigenous Chair for the Australian Medical Student Association (AMSA) for two years, and in a similar capacity for my university's medical society.

I had the honour of being awarded the Brisbane NAIDOC Youth Award, recognizing my leadership as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander within South-East Queensland, nominated by Inala Wangarra. Additionally, I received the Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) Network's Indigenous Health Student Work Award, acknowledging my advocacy for culturally safe medical education. This prestigious award spans both Australia and New Zealand.

In the years ahead, I aspire to harness my deep-seated commitment to my community alongside my passion for medicine. My ultimate goal is to advocate tirelessly for healthcare equity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. With a fervent desire to specialize in Psychiatry, I aim to play a pivotal role in bolstering the mental well-being of Indigenous communities across Australia.

Throughout every endeavour, my focus remains steadfastly on those whom I serve. I anticipate that my journey will equip me with invaluable skills and experiences, enabling me to contribute meaningfully and profoundly to my community in ways beyond my current imagination.

Through the YAP program, I learned the pivotal role of the community in achieving success. Surrounded by supportive peers, I realised the importance of reaching out and sharing life's challenges. Building meaningful connections during this time has been invaluable, and I'm grateful for the lasting friendships forged.



Social and community impact

Community Ventures Project

The Community Ventures Project is an integral component of the Young Achievers Program. Each year, Young Achievers undertake a project that has a significant positive impact on their school or local community. At the end of the project, they present their achievements in the form of a poster, showcasing their impact and the skills they have developed throughout the process.

Projects for the environment

Springfield Central State High School

Maria took the initiative to form a dedicated group focused on regular rubbish collection across various locations in Springfield, meeting twice a week. What started as a simple cleanup effort evolved into a meaningful social activity, fostering stronger relationships within the community. While diligently tidying up local sites, the group also made a conscious effort to collect bottles separately for donation to the containers for change scheme. This thoughtful gesture not only contributed to environmental sustainability but also generated funds that were redirected back to the school for internal improvements.



Anastasia

Bachelor of Clinical Exercise Physiology (Honours)

“The camps, phone calls and support from mentors made me appreciate the time they took out of their personal lives to support young adolescents like myself. It has motivated my interest to apply to become a YAP mentor in the future and, hopefully, continue to nurture its values into those that come after me. This scholarship has taught me that anything is possible if you set your mind to it. Regardless of the challenges that life may throw at you, there is always support at UQ. It may seem difficult in the beginning, but this transition is only one small step to a greater future.”



Projects at school

Warwick State High School

Llewellyn, driven by his passion for teaching and music, embarked on an inspiring journey to offer piano lessons to Year 7 and 8 students in the school's music room. Over the course of seven weeks, during Thursday and Friday lunch breaks, he dedicated himself to nurturing the musical talents of students at his school. Beyond simply teaching piano, Llewellyn aimed to empower the students by introducing them to the art of composition. This opportunity not only allowed him to share his love for music but also provided a platform for students to explore their creativity and build confidence in their musical abilities.

Projects in the community

Miles State High School

Macy transferred her passion for baking into organising weekend sessions to teach the art of bread-making to the elderly community. Through these sessions, she not only shared her culinary skills but also created a space for neighbours to come together, fostering connections and companionship. The overwhelmingly positive feedback she received highlighted the impact of her efforts, with participants expressing gratitude for the opportunity to socialise and learn something new, transforming what would have been solitary weekends into enriching communal experiences.



Hayley

Graduate, Bachelor of Criminal Justice

“Ever since I was young, I dreamed of attending university, however, growing up in a small rural town in a low-income household I did not think it was possible.

YAP not only supported me to relocate and attend university but supported me throughout high school as well. Encouraging me to venture beyond my comfort zone and embrace new experiences, YAP helped me build the courage to take on challenges and try new things which always proved to be immensely rewarding.

Growing up I always had a passion for helping people. I studied a Bachelor of Criminal Justice and am now working as a Case Manager at Queensland Corrective Services to help change the narrative of individuals involved in the Criminal Justice System.

This program provided me with invaluable guidance and afforded me opportunities I never imagined I would have. I am extremely grateful for the Young Achievers Program as it has shaped my journey to where I am today.”



Your support ensures student success – thank you

We're committed to providing our students with the tools and resources they need to succeed in their educational pursuits, and to flourish in their lives beyond university.

Through **The Queensland Commitment**, we're aiming to provide more aspiring students, particularly those from a diverse range of backgrounds and lived experiences, with pathways to obtaining a university education. Our vision is to reduce the personal, financial and geographical barriers facing Queensland students.

We can't do this alone. With your help, we can ensure that access to tertiary education for Queenslanders is no longer limited by financial and geographic barriers by 2032.

Scholarships provide a vital lifeline, particularly in a student's first year as they navigate an unfamiliar

environment, often far from home. Residential support can provide much-needed resources for students transitioning into university life so they can succeed.

With the help of our community of donors, we can empower our students to become leaders who create positive change in our society. Thank you for your continued support of UQ and our students.

Contact UQ Advancement for more information on how to support this life-changing work.

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CREATE CHANGE