

Young Achievers Program

2024 Annual Report



Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Impactful change for individuals and the community

Welcome to the 2024 Young Achievers Program (YAP) Annual Report, which celebrates our students' achievements and provides an update on the program's impact in the community.



In 2024, we welcomed our 16th cohort of students into the program, consisting of 121 new participants who commenced their YAP journey as Year 11 students in 2025. This represents a 10% increase in the size of the cohort, compared to 2023.

This diverse cohort, includes participants from across Queensland, including regional areas like Bundaberg, Rockhampton, and southwest Queensland, as well as the Logan region. The majority come from families with no prior university experience, and many are students with English as a second language, or from refugee backgrounds. We are particularly proud to welcome 5 First Nations students to the program this year.

In 2024, we held celebration events across Queensland that created valuable opportunities to reconnect with YAP alumni, while engaging current students and their families. The special 15-year anniversary celebration at our Gatton Campus was a particular highlight, showcasing the program's enduring impact and growth.

Throughout the year, we strengthened our focus on supporting students' transition from high school to university life. We welcomed 81 YAP students to UQ, primarily from the 13th cohort, with 58% coming from regional areas and 46% being first in their family to attend university. The long-term career aspirations of our YAP students are wide-ranging, but Engineering, Arts and Nursing continue to be the most popular degree choices among these talented young scholars.

To support these students as they navigate the crucial transition to university life, we successfully piloted two new initiatives in 2024: the YAP Alumni Mentoring Program and the Pre- 'O' Week YAP Launch Pad Workshops. Both have proven highly effective and will continue into 2025, providing our students with the guidance and support they need to thrive in a university environment.

As we pursue our new goal of increasing the YAP intake by 10%, annually, through to 2032, I am reminded that each percentage point represents young lives transformed. As a result, the ripple effects of this program extend far beyond individual students, to their families and communities, creating meaningful intergenerational change.

The achievements detailed in this report reflect the collaborative efforts of our generous donor community, dedicated staff, school partners, mentors, and most importantly, the remarkable young people who bring their talents and determination to our university community. I would like to thank every one of them for their commitment and contributions in 2024.

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.

YAP 2024 snapshot

Statistics based on high-school and UQ students

530 
students supported

39 
schools represented

60% 
students from regional/remote areas

30 
accommodation scholarships provided directly to students

81 
students commenced UQ

Top programs:

- Engineering
- Arts
- Nursing

67 
students graduated with UQ degrees

60 
YAP student mentors

77% 
first in family

40% 
English as an additional language

22% 
refugee background



Pheng

Bachelor of Arts
Commencing student

“YAP is a passport to opportunities. I’ve been able to board on many flights to my new home at Scape, to new friendships with some of my closest friends, as well as landing me my first ever job as a UQ Outreach Ambassador. YAP is more than just a scholarship program. It is a supportive community empowered by the rich diverse experiences and backgrounds of aspiring leaders. Since the moment I landed at uni, I had a family welcoming me to UQ. Uni was a foreign place to me. I struggled with understanding the academic language, everyone looked so different to me, and I was always lost on campus. It wasn’t the same as high school. However, the staff and other YAP students have helped me navigate through UQ’s systems, campus, and much more. Uni wasn’t so scary anymore. Coming from a family of refugees, I am extremely grateful to have received such a prestigious scholarship of opportunities, mentorship and financial support. University became a possibility. As I embark on my university life, I’m happy that I’m surrounded by other passengers of motivated YAP-pers. As they say, “Once a YAP-per, always a YAP-per”.

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.

The year in review

2024 marked the 15th anniversary of the Young Achievers Program, a milestone celebrated across Queensland. A highlight was the Gatton UQ Open Day, where we hosted a special luncheon with presentations from current Young Achievers. We were particularly delighted when a student from our inaugural cohort attended, reconnecting with the team and sharing insights from their post-graduation journey.

This anniversary also provided an opportunity to enhance our annual Welcome & Celebration events. These presentations welcomed YAP alumni who delivered inspiring talks about their experiences and accomplishments, creating powerful connections between past and present participants. Notably, Jaclyn from Cohort 1, whom we reconnected with at the Gatton celebration, later addressed students as a guest speaker at our Bundaberg Welcome & Celebration event.

We also invited YAP School Champions to speak, offering first-hand accounts of the program's impact on students' educational journeys.

In 2024, we conducted a review of our Residential Camps, establishing three clear objectives:

1. Build knowledge and awareness of study options
2. Develop skills to support their independent learning
3. Form and strengthen connections with their peers and mentors

This framework has enabled our team to tailor activities more effectively to students' needs and provide enhanced support and opportunities for growth.



Our proudest achievement continues to be our graduates, with a record 67 student receiving their degrees in 2024, including 7 post graduate qualifications. The diversity of their career paths is inspiring.

With such a large number of students graduating, we organised the inaugural YAP Ball, attended by 74 students along with representatives from UQ Advancement and Professor Kris Ryan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

In alignment with our peer connection objectives, we successfully piloted the YAP Alumni Mentoring Program. Following positive outcomes, we are expanding this initiative in 2025.

We also strengthened our focus on student transition by introducing the first ever Pre-'O' Week YAP Launch Pad Workshops. These sessions provided crucial support for new students beginning their university journey, creating early connections, familiarising participants with campus resources, and building confidence before formal orientation activities began. This proactive approach has contributed to stronger first-semester engagement and reduced early attrition rates among YAP students.

Future Plans

As we look ahead into 2025, the Young Achievers Program will focus on strategic growth and enhanced support mechanisms. Key initiatives for the upcoming year include:

- Expand The Young Achievers Program by increasing school partners and establishing a partnership with the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.
- Scaling up peer-to-peer mentoring with expanded mentor recruitment, enhanced training, and structured peer-led workshops.
- Improving the mentoring experience by providing an online platform, this will assist with streamlining processes, monitoring engagement and enhancing support to students
- Scaling up Pre-'O' Week Workshops to help with a smooth transition into UQ Life.
- Implementation of the Alumni Mentoring Program.
- In February 2025, a group of 19 UQ students participated in the Young Achievers Study Tour Malaysia Pilot Program. The primary objective of this Pilot Program was to expand access and support for experiential learning opportunities for under-represented student cohorts, promoting both personal and professional growth.

These initiatives aim to foster a more inclusive, supportive, and engaging environment for all participants, ensuring that the Young Achievers Program continues to empower students for success in their academic and professional journeys.



Joy

Year 12
Loganlea State High School

"The Young Achievers Program (YAP) was more than just an experience; it was a life-changing journey filled with people who transformed my future. As a young immigrant in Australia, I had big dreams but no clear path to achieving them. YAP became my source of hope and a community that uplifted me when I felt lost.

My mentors played a crucial role, guiding me through various career pathways and helping me realize my potential. Their support through the monthly phone calls and even at the camps; gave me clarity about my future – (I am going to be a great doctor!). The girl, who some people think is dead, she's here accomplishing great thing through YAP.

This program ignited a drive in me that I never knew existed. Surrounded by people who genuinely wanted to see me succeed, I pushed myself academically and remained committed to my goals. YAP's support, including financial assistance for study materials like UCAT resources, made a significant impact on my journey.

Today, I am a school leader, and I owe my confidence to YAP. They saw potential in me even when I doubted myself, and for that, I will always be grateful."

Social and community impact

Community Ventures Project

The Community Ventures Project is an integral component of the Young Achievers Program. Each Year, the Young Achievers in Year 11 and 12 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

Flagstone State Community College

Esther took the initiative to improve her local environment after noticing a significant amount of litter, including fast-food wrappers and energy drink cans, around the newly developing town. Rather than tackling the issue alone, she encouraged other students who shared her passion for making a difference to join her efforts. By organizing group clean-ups, Esther not only helped beautify the community but also inspired others to take action, showing them that even small efforts can have a meaningful impact. Through this experience, she learned that no matter how much planning goes into an initiative, unexpected challenges can arise—but adaptability and perseverance make all the difference.



Projects at school

Bundaberg North State High School

Bryce from Bundaberg took on the role of coaching the Year 9/10 basketball team, providing players with consistent, personalized training and guidance. Through official sessions and additional daily practices, Bryce helped the team improve their technical skills, teamwork, and confidence on the court. His dedication fostered a stronger team bond and a greater sense of commitment and enjoyment in the sport. Beyond enhancing the players' abilities, Bryce found the experience deeply fulfilling, witnessing their growth in confidence and skill. Coaching also allowed him to develop valuable leadership, team management, and strategic planning skills. By tailoring training sessions to individual needs and motivating young athletes, Bryce not only contributed to their development but also reinforced the importance of dedication and support in sports coaching.

Projects in the community

Glenmore State High School

Nadia from Glenmore State High School made a meaningful impact by supporting women in need through her initiative. When she discovered that Moo & Co, an organization assisting women recovering from domestic violence, had no volunteer openings, she took the initiative to help in another way. Nadia organized the collection of essential supplies and created gift baskets for women struggling financially and facing challenging living situations. These donations provided much-needed resources, offering comfort and support to local women in difficult circumstances. By rallying community support for her cause, Nadia not only helped individuals in need but also contributed to uplifting the broader community. Her dedication highlights the power of initiative and generosity in making a real difference.



Olivia

2024 Graduate, Bachelor of Laws (Hons)

"I joined the Young Achievers Program as a student in Cohort 8, and later as a mentor for Cohort 14. YAP is an incredibly unique and invaluable experience for rural and disadvantaged students. The program allowed me to connect with like-minded people, to gain employment at the university, and to gain a multitude of skills through mentoring. YAP has connected me with people who I believe will be my life-long friends. The scholarship money itself was vital to success within my degree as I had to financially support myself. That money allowed me to spend less time working, and more time on my studies. I truly believe that if I had not had the YAP scholarship, I wouldn't be where I am today. I will be forever grateful for what this program has given me. Thanks to the YAP program, I graduated from a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) in December last year and am currently working in my first legal role in Family Law."





Your support ensures student success – thank you

Since 2022, **The Queensland Commitment** has progressed from vision to action, delivering evidence-based strategies to expand student pathways to higher education, increase equitable outcomes and ensure student-centred success.

We want Queenslanders to have equitable access to tertiary education by 2032. Our aim is to increase participation, academic readiness and successful transitions to university. One way we can do this is through the Young Achievers Program.

Since its inception 15 years ago, over 1,500 donors have generously supported the program, with more than 20 endowment funds established to provide scholarships for 50 YAP students annually, forever.

With the help of our community of donors, we can provide a vital lifeline, particularly for students beginning their university journey, who are often navigating a very unfamiliar environment, far from home. Support and mentorship for students transitioning into university life can be critical to their university success.

Together, we empower the next generation of leaders to go on and create meaningful change in their communities.

Contact UQ Advancement for more information on how to support this impactful work.

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