

# WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



GRADLIFE  
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## GradLife

Western Sydney's sporting culture

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## MESSAGE FROM VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER



2016 has been a successful year for Western Sydney University. In August, our growing international influence was recognised in the *2016 Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities*. This international ranking places Western Sydney University among the top 400 institutions worldwide.

The University also recorded a significant boost in the latest QS World University Rankings, moving 100 places to now be amongst the world's top 600 universities. These

impressive results reflect Western Sydney University's commitment to a quality research program, which continues to produce world-class research in areas of international interest.

This year the University has focused on building connections to local industry and businesses within Greater Western Sydney. In June a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Western Sydney University and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

This agreement enables staff and students from the School of Business to work alongside PwC, and coincides with their decision to join the University at IPSQ - our new Parramatta City campus which opens in 2017. This industry partnership will contribute to making our Parramatta City campus an innovation precinct that will generate important opportunities for Western Sydney and students of the University.

Our partnerships with regional sporting teams are equally as important. Western Sydney University is a proud partner of the Western Sydney Wanderers, and both organisations are committed to making a positive contribution to the Region. We are proud co-sponsors of the 'Read with a Wanderer' literacy program, which brings together schools, teachers and young people to improve literacy levels across the Western Sydney region.

Western Sydney University continues to advocate for the success of the Western Sydney region. We are proud to serve its students, and look forward to further developing these initiatives in 2017.

Professor Barney Glover  
Vice-Chancellor and President



Front Cover Photo: Paige Hadley, Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Advanced Business Leadership), 2016

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# Women in Sport, Gender in Society

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The recent Olympics and Paralympics have once more thrown the spotlight onto the place of women in sport. Sportswomen get considerable media coverage in these quadrennial global events, but they are atypical of a sporting world that is still massively male dominated.

High-end sport mostly involves watching well-paid men playing other men on behalf of sport organisations run by men. What are the prospects for greater equality in this key area of cultural life?

Sport has historically operated to define masculinity and femininity. Male excellence has been encouraged and even demanded but for women, especially in sports involving contact and muscularity, it still tends to be treated with suspicion.

Enhancing girls' and women's participation in sport, which is below that of boys and men, is an important area of social and cultural policy. This is not only a matter of promoting good health, but also of 'cultural citizenship' and the right to take part fully in social life.

There are many barriers to female involvement in sport, including time pressures, body image concerns, disapproval among some cultural groups, family responsibilities and financial cost. Public policy needs to address each of

these issues and more, both in sport and its more informal physical counterpart, exercise.

But supporting sport is not only a government responsibility given the enormous commercial involvement of media companies and corporate sponsors. The logic of the 'mediasport' market favours a small number of mainly male sports leagues, despite the popularity of predominantly female sports such as netball.

For many years, women's sport advocates have tried to redress this imbalance by getting more women involved and enabling some to carve out professional careers in which they get paid to play, rather than the other way round.

Slow-paced change has recently accelerated, although from a low base. Top women cricketers can now make a reasonable living, and there have been improvements in the pay and conditions of female basketballers and football (soccer) players.

While they earn far less than most professional sportsmen, and also women in individual sports like tennis and golf, elite sportswomen are making significant inroads into this resilient male bastion.

These developments make commercial as well as sociological sense – the men's sport market is saturated and women are still

under-represented as 'producers' and consumers. A new women's AFL league, women's Big Bash cricket and better TV coverage of netball are all signs of progress in this regard.

It is crucial, though, that the price of getting attention is not, as so often before, emphasis on the sexual attractiveness of female athletes.

There is ample room for women to engage with sport at all levels, from playing, coaching and managing to board membership and club ownership. This involvement goes far beyond the traditional nurturing roles of making refreshments and providing 'mum's taxi' services.

Western Sydney University's female students and graduates now have unprecedented opportunities to excel in the culturally prestigious sport world and, in so doing, to contribute to the advancement of all women across the entire society.

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## AUTHOR

**Professor David Rowe** is Professor of Cultural Research in Western Sydney University's Institute for Culture and Society. His books include *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity* and *Global Media Sport: Flows, Forms and Futures*.

# Underdogs become *top* **AFL** talent

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Western Sydney University doctorate student Lael Kassem helped establish Auburn's first women's AFL club in what reads like a classic underdog tale. Having watched her nine older brothers play AFL, Lael wanted to try the game herself and with no existing clubs in the area, the Auburn local set up her own club with a friend.

The pair mustered a group of girls who had never played AFL and, in many cases, hadn't played any sport, and the Auburn Tigers (now known as the Auburn Giants) were born. They lost every game in their first year - most memorably by 150-0 - but now, five years later, they have made it into the premier league.

According to Lael, the individual growth of the Auburn Giants players has been just as impressive as the turnaround in the team's scores. "We've seen such an improvement in the fitness and self-confidence of our players," she says. "This creates not just better players, but stronger women and future leaders of the community." The team's best weapons were a dedicated coach and the camaraderie between teammates, she adds, "When we started out, winning didn't define us - we just enjoyed being together and became lifelong friends. Our camaraderie means that we play for each other really hard. That good club culture can take you a lot further than anything else."

A new National Women's League is set to launch next year and Lael wants to see the Auburn Giants be a launch pad for talented local players who aspire to compete at an elite level. The Greater Western Sydney Giants has fielded Sydney's only team in the national league and with the number of NSW Women's AFL teams having grown from nine to 16 since 2011, it's an exciting time to be involved in the sport. "The talent in female footy is growing and we can see a future in it now," Lael says. "Before, it was a dead-end so we'd lose talent to other sports."

A qualified physiotherapist, Lael is now working towards a Doctor of Philosophy (Science). She is using her thesis research to help uncover more



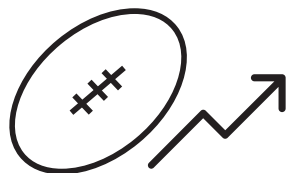


“ The talent in female footy is growing and we can see a future in it now. ”

LAEL KASSEM, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY, PHD STUDENT

hidden AFL talent by assessing decision-making skills on the field through eye movement. “Glasses will track players’ eye movements, what, where and how long they look at things, and how that relates to what they do on the field,” she explains.

According to Lael, visual cognitive ability is the missing link in assessing sporting potential. “People who don’t have the physical ability at the moment might have amazing cognitive abilities,” she says. “Their fitness is something that can be developed. AFL is such a quick-thinking game and a lot of the time, winning or losing comes down to how many times you make the right decisions and put yourself in the right place at the right time.”



Female participation in AFL rose by **46%** last year

**163** new female football teams began in 2015

More than

**284,500**

women now play the game



Almost a quarter of AFL players are female

Source: afl.com.au

# Reflections on

# 2



Steve Mortimer OAM and Tim Gilbert are household names in Australian sport – one as a Rugby League legend and the other as a veteran sports reporter. Both spent some of their formative years studying at Western Sydney University and agree that the experience helped shape who they are today.

| Steve Mortimer OAM, Bachelor  
of Agricultural Science, 1977



# brilliant careers

For Tim, a 1988 Nepean graduate, studying a Bachelor of Arts (Applied Communications Studies) was a move towards emulating his television presenter idols. Despite not being studious during high school, Tim worked hard at university and after starting in radio, got his break into television. His career with the Nine Network has since spanned more than 20 years, beginning with *Wide World of Sports* in the mid-90s, through to his current roles as sports presenter for *Today* and sports reporter with the Nine news team.

The impact of Steve's studies on his career as a footballer was less clear-cut, but he says completing a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Hawkesbury kept him grounded as his football career took off. The halfback's studies in the mid-70s coincided with him being spotted by the Canterbury Bankstown Bulldogs rugby league team where he went on to play for 12 years, winning four rugby league Grand Finals and captaining the first New South Wales team to win a State of Origin series. Ranked amongst the top 100 players of all time, Steve also credits tertiary education for instilling in him the discipline required to work towards a goal. This attribute has been beneficial off the field in his two years as Chief Executive of the Bulldogs and in his business ventures. These include managing the pioneering store of retail chain The Athlete's Foot, later buying his own two franchises and his current ambition of re-launching indoor sport Australian Shuffleboard – a game for Senior Australians over the age of 50.

CONTINUES →



Tim Gilbert, Bachelor of Arts (Applied Communication Studies), 1988

## Steve and Tim caught up for a chat recently to reflect on their careers, swap stories and talk football. Here's what they had to say:

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### ON STARTING OUT

**Tim:** "I didn't have any idea how to get from my love of, say, Rex Mossop and his 'Controversy Corner', and watching *The Don Lane Show* thinking 'I want to do this' to actually doing it. Although I really didn't know a lot of people who followed this path I was fortunate to come from the most wonderful family who backed my every decision. I eventually went down to Goulburn and worked at *Hits and Memories* on the flicker of an income. I found what I loved and my career just took off from there."

**Steve:** "I was born in Sydney at Crown Street Women's Hospital along with my brothers. I had asthma and when I was four-and-a-half, the doctor said to my dad, 'get him out of Sydney'. My dad was a policeman so he got a transfer to Wagga Wagga and he started a junior rugby league club there and that's why we all played rugby league. These things are all stepping stones. You've got to have a good attitude to move on and achieve."

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### ON THEIR WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

**Tim:** "Communications was a brand new degree at Nepean (when I started). One of the big things I learnt over those three years was how to grow up. I was meeting different types of people – people I would never have met going to an all-boys school. I was in classes with girls, there were people of different ages, and different ideas were thrown around. I actually started to study and got through the degree and did reasonably well. A lot of the life experiences, as well as the subjects I learned, I still think about today in my job."

**Steve:** "In my first three years of university I was starting to build a profile in rugby league, but the then Bulldogs Chief Executive Peter 'Bullfrog' Moore said, 'I want you to finish this degree and just see how you go in football'. He said, 'even if you don't take it up, it will show you have the discipline to finish it off'. When I finished my degree, my two mentors, a trainer and an accountant, Dave Cooper and George Fleming had founded the Australian retail chain The Athlete's Foot, and asked me to manage the first store at Westfield Miranda. My degree and experience at university gave me another road to take with confidence, and that was in sales and marketing."

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### ON TAKING A CHANCE

**Tim:** "Half the key to success is being in the mindset to say yes to things. That was how I got my start at Channel 9. I had gone from 2GN to 2UE as a sports reporter and had covered the cricket around Australia when they asked me to go to the 1996 Cricket World Cup in India and Pakistan. I thought I was only going to do it for radio, but when Australia played its first game, Richie Benaud, Ian Chappell, Ravi Shastri and all the other great cricket commentators for Channel 9 didn't turn up because they were caught in a 60-hour travel drama. I was asked, 'can you do the TV commentary?' and I said, 'of course I can.' It was awful commentary but when I came back to Australia, Channel 9 said they saw enough in me to give me a starting job as an entry-level producer-reporter."

**Steve:** "I started bringing shuffleboard back in 1995 when I put my first shuffleboard in a retirement village in Queensland. I've installed 150 shuffleboards into aged care facilities

in New South Wales and Queensland now. I thought, you know what, I love this game, it's going to be very hard, but somehow, I've got to introduce it into the culture and lives of senior Australians. That's what I'm doing now and I'm giving it my best. I love the smile it puts on their faces."

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### ON MEMORABLE MOMENTS

**Steve:** "Being the first New South Wales captain to win the State of Origin series in 1985 was a very special moment. Before the game I got the blokes to sit down and asked, 'is anyone pissed off at anyone else here?' I said, 'get it out of you now, because we have to be 100 per cent standing beside each other to beat Queensland'. Some of them spat out their bits and pieces and we all got over it and we became mates. I remember saying, 'when we win this and look back in 30 years, we'll still be shaking each other's hands and hugging each other.' That's exactly what I do when I see Steve 'Blocker' Roach, but the only thing is, when he hugs me, he crushes my ribs."

**Tim:** "I've been lucky enough to go to the London Olympics, Vancouver Olympics, I've covered State of Origins, I've made four trips to India for the cricket, covered major golf tournaments in the US and two Commonwealth Games. It has been a fantastic ride. Even getting up at a quarter past four to do the *Today* show is a treat when I think back to where it all started out and I am chuffed at how it has all worked out. Even if I sometimes want to throw my alarm clock across the room."



# Kicking goals with the Bulldogs

Western Sydney University has joined forces with the Canterbury Bankstown Bulldogs Rugby League Club to build social inclusion among refugees and other new arrivals through sport.

The *Be All In* program reaches out to high school students from diverse backgrounds and links sports sessions to educational topics. Sessions focus on positive messages ranging from valuing diversity to goal setting, conflict resolution and self-esteem. Examples from sport are used to reinforce these messages, explains Western Sydney University Project Officer Josh Matheson. “We’re strong believers in the power of sport,” he says. “Working with people from non-English speaking backgrounds, sport is the universal language. Our overall goal is to build stronger communities in Western Sydney.”

Leveraging the star power of the Bulldogs has helped encourage students to participate

in the program and, in turn, school life more broadly. “We’ve had teachers tell us that students who weren’t going to class before are now showing up,” Josh says. The program has been particularly successful among female students who may otherwise have limited interactions with the broader community. “We find a lot of the girls have never been encouraged to participate in sport, and have a lot of responsibilities around the home after school,” Josh says. “This gives them an opportunity to get out into the community and make connections beyond the home and school setting.”

The eight-week program was launched in July in four high schools in the Bankstown area, and there are plans to further roll it out across Western Sydney. Sessions are held at the Bulldogs home ground and at the University’s Bankstown campus, where it’s hoped that participants will develop an interest

in attending university. “They’ll become familiar with the campus and see other young people like themselves on campus,” Josh says. “If we can encourage them to be more engaged with school through our program, the more likely it is that they’ll achieve their aspirations of higher education.”

Using sport for community development purposes is a growing field and there are plans to link the *Be All In* program to Western Sydney University research projects in the local area. “There’s potential to look further into how we can use sport as a vehicle for change, how we can develop a multicultural style of teaching sport and how we can further develop that inclusive pedagogy,” Josh says.

**Find out more about Western Sydney University sports programs at [westernsydney.edu.au/sports](https://westernsydney.edu.au/sports)**



The partnership between Western Sydney University and the Canterbury Bankstown Bulldogs Rugby League Club includes:

- The *Be All In* sport for community development project
- Developing mutually beneficial research
- Educational opportunities for Bulldogs players and staff
- Potential internships at the Bulldogs for Western students
- Discounts and other incentives
- Bulldogs merchandise available at Western Sydney University campuses
- Scholarship opportunities

# International alumni *are a* **WORLD** *of* **OPPORTUNITIES**

Western Sydney University's efforts to engage with its international alumni have been bolstered by the launch of a Global Alumni Engagement Strategy through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The four-year strategy recognises the power of international alumni to promote an Australian education, and an understanding of Australia more broadly. It includes appointing international alumni ambassadors across the world, connecting alumni to Australia and each other through an Australian global alumni website and social networks, supporting mentoring programs and events, and working with international alumni networks.

#### **WESTERN SYDNEY GOES GLOBAL**

Expanding its international reach and reputation is a strategic priority for Western Sydney University. Already, over 18,000 graduates live and work abroad and according to Associate Professor Linda Taylor, Pro Vice-Chancellor International, these individuals

are a hugely potent force for spreading the university's message. "When a student who has come through our University talks to others about the quality of the education and experience they had with us, it carries so much more weight than advertising," she says. "Any student who feels a continued connection to the University is a mouthpiece for us."

Recruiting more international students to Western Sydney is just one of the benefits to flow from global alumni. "As we develop bigger and stronger alumni networks, these people become potential employers for other graduates going home, they could be mentors or the link to employment," Professor Taylor says.

#### **AUSTRALIA REACHES OUT**

When graduates from Australian universities go on to become influencers and leaders abroad, they also represent enormous diplomatic potential. According to Robert Tranter, First Assistant Secretary, Public Diplomacy from DFAT's Communications and Scholarships

Division, Australia's global alumni are among our best representatives. "(They're our) strongest supporters and most credible advocates abroad," he says. "Our global alumni network is an extraordinary community of talented individuals. It is a remarkable asset for Australia, and has enormous potential for us to more deeply engage with the world."

Overall, about 2.5 million international students have graduated from Australian universities over the past 50 years. Tranter says that through their experiences, these graduates can spread the word about Australia as a modern and sophisticated society with world-class education and research facilities. "They open doors for Australian diplomacy and business, facilitate research and industry links and represent the quality of Australian education," he says.

#### **TAKING THE NEXT STEP**

According to Professor Taylor, DFAT's focus on international alumni will support the work already being done by Western Sydney

Associate Professor Linda Taylor,  
Pro Vice-Chancellor International



From its origins as an agricultural college in Hawkesbury, Western Sydney University has grown to become a global institution with more than 18,000 international alumni.

## Top 3%

Western Sydney University is ranked amongst the top three per cent of universities in the world.



Education is our nation's largest services export, contributing \$19.65 billion to the economy in 2015.

Australia's international alumni community is estimated to exceed

## 2.5 million

University to engage with international alumni. "They can be important allies for us," she says. "Universities coming together under DFAT as a collective voice will project Australia and an Australian education at a different level, lifting the profile in a very important way."

Western Sydney University regularly engages with international alumni chapters, hosting events and supporting international alumni in local awards programs. Long-standing teaching relationships with international educational institutions, such as the University of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City, and Hong Kong Baptist University, have also helped to produce large and highly-engaged alumni communities, but Professor Taylor says there's enormous potential for growth. Building strong and enduring ties to international alumni into the future starts well before they graduate, she adds. "If we can encourage students to throw themselves into everything that's on offer and to form strong bonds while they're here, they're more likely to stay connected to each other, to the University and to Western Sydney."

**"With the active cooperation and engagement through our institution partners globally, our students and academics have the opportunity to exchange learning and research experiences. Innovative teaching and research initiatives, as well as future employment opportunities for our graduates also emerge through the University's global engagement and international strategies."**

PROFESSOR YI-CHEN LAN, ASSISTANT VICE-CHANCELLOR, GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AND ADVANCEMENT AND WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY ALUMNUS



Find out more about international study opportunities at [westernsydney.edu.au/international](https://westernsydney.edu.au/international)





# Swift comeback brings netball gold

“ We’ve had to do it the hard way and still have a long way to go in terms of pay inequality versus the hours we put in, but role models can do wonders for women’s sport. ”

PAIGE HADLEY, BACHELOR OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE  
(ADVANCED BUSINESS LEADERSHIP), 2016

Sydney Swifts netballer Paige Hadley is a force to be reckoned with on and off the court.

It was sheer grit and determination that saw her graduate from Western Sydney University this year with a distinction average in her Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Advanced Business Leadership) degree. “My lecturers all know how persistent I am,” says the Penrith local. “They were awesome in sending me stuff and giving me weeks off when I had to train and compete. I was away from uni half the time, but I’d be on planes with the team doing my uni work. When I was at uni, I’d give it 100 per cent.”

That same determination led Paige to win gold in last year’s Netball World Cup, having only recently returned to the court following a knee injury that sidelined her for a year. According to Paige, the prospect of playing for

Australia in front of family and friends in the World Cup, which was held in Western Sydney, was a powerful motivator throughout her rehabilitation. It was a lofty dream, however, as Paige had missed a year of training and was on the bench when the squad was chosen. “I had played in the grand final in the ANZ Championships eight weeks prior, and based on that performance I ended up getting the call,” Paige says. “It was like a fairy tale. I couldn’t get a better reward than that for all the hard work and sacrifices I had made.”

Despite the pressure of studying on top of sporting commitments, Paige says her time at Western Sydney University helped to keep her balanced. “I loved meeting people outside of the sporting world who didn’t always talk about netball and sport,” she says. “It was also important for me to have another outlet.”

Paige majored in sports management and while she isn’t sure exactly where she wants to go with her career, she’s happy to keep her options open. “Right now, netball is my main priority, but I know my body can’t play forever,” she says.

Dedicated to being a role model for aspiring female sporting stars, Paige believes there are big things to come for women in sport. “We’ve had to do it the hard way and still have a long way to go in terms of pay inequality versus the hours we put in, but role models can do wonders for women’s sport,” she says.

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**Find out more about Health and Science courses available at Western Sydney University, visit [westernsydney.edu.au/future\\_students](https://westernsydney.edu.au/future_students)**

# Referee now whistles while he works

Donning his striped shirt at the Rio Olympics topped off a winning streak for mature-aged graduate Scott Beker.

Anyone who thinks they're too busy to study can take inspiration from Scott. The 2014 graduate completed a Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Property) online, which helped him switch from a career in banking to property valuation. Along with fitting study around full-time work, the married father of two balanced it with his work as a professional basketball referee. The latter sees him travel interstate and internationally most weekends and recently took him to Rio.

Scott worked his way into commercial lending after starting as a bank teller straight out of university. After 14 years, he was desperate for a change. "I got completely bored," he says. When his employer offered opportunities for staff to study, Scott jumped at the chance. "I was working with commercial valuers every day and I thought it looked interesting," he says. "I looked at how to get into it and that pointed me to Western Sydney University. I live in Newcastle, so being able to study online made perfect sense." Several of his fellow students were already working in the industry, and Scott says the online course setup made it easy to launch into discussions and learn from their experience. He also kept in touch with valuers he knew through work. "I let the guys

know when I finished my course and a week later, a job came up," Scott says.

With that goal ticked off, the next was an Olympic refereeing gig. In his 10 years as an international referee, Scott has been to two Basketball World Cups, two World University Games and countless trips to China to referee in their professional league, but Rio was the best experience by far. "I was lucky enough to ref both the US men's and women's teams in the preliminary rounds and I finished with a semi-final game, which is a pretty big achievement at that level," Scott says. "Even though they were playing for high stakes, the atmosphere was a bit more relaxed."

Not only does Scott now enjoy going to work every day as a valuer, he also has plenty to look forward to in his side job. "I'll start Basketball World Cup qualifiers in 2017, then there's working on being nominated for the 2018 Commonwealth Games, the 2019 World Cup and the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo," he says.

**Find out more about Western Sydney University Online at [westernsydney.edu.au/possibilities](http://westernsydney.edu.au/possibilities)**

## MAKING A SWITCH

SCOTT BEKER, A MATURE-AGED GRADUATE AND CAREER-CHANGER, SHARES HIS TIPS ON STUDYING LATER IN LIFE

### JUST DO IT:

"There are a million reasons not to when you have lots of other things going on, but if you're unsatisfied in your current job, the tools are there to make a change."

### KEEP YOUR PERSPECTIVE:

"Sure there are going to be stressful times, but by the end of the six years it took to complete my course, it seemed like a flash. It's going to be over before you know it."

### THROW OUT A LIFELINE:

"I already knew a number of people in the industry and it was really helpful to keep in touch with them for advice and support."

## RIO 2016

Source: Australian Olympic Committee

There were **422** Australian competitors supported by more than **300** officials



Fencing and handball were the only sports without any Australian competitors

**9** sets of siblings on the team

**4** sets of cousins **9** known couples



Women outnumbered men in the Australian Olympic team, with 214 female athletes



Australia's youngest athlete was footballer Elise Carpenter at 16 years old





Scott Beker, Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Property), 2015

# Going for GOLD

Among the 422 Australian athletes who donned the green and gold to compete in the Olympic Games in Rio was a cohort of Western Sydney University students and alumni. PhD student, Dawn Scott also made her mark as fitness coach of the US women's soccer team. Her team made it to the quarter finals where they drew 1-1 with Sweden before falling 4-3 in a penalty shootout. The international student's research at Western Sydney University investigates the physical demands and training loads of elite female soccer players.

We congratulate all our students and alumni on their Olympic achievements and look forward to following their future success.

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#### **DANI SAMUELS** – BACHELOR OF ARTS

A discus thrower, Dani came fourth in the women's discus finals with her 64.9 metre throw, putting her within inches of a bronze medal. Dani made her Olympic debut at the 2008 Beijing Games as the youngest member of the Australian athletics team, where she placed ninth. She came second in the Shanghai Diamond League in May, claiming her 17th national title.

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#### **ESTHER QIN** – BACHELOR OF COMMERCE

A sixth place in the three-metre springboard diving final put Esther right behind Australian teammate Maddison Keeney. Esther won a gold medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games and came fourth and third in the three-metre springboard individual and synchro events, respectively, at the 2015 World Championships in Russia.

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#### **JENNIFER HENS** – BACHELOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE, 2008; BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS), 2009; AND MASTER OF TEACHING (SECONDARY), 2010

Rifle shooter, Jennifer was ranked 39th in the 10 metre air rifle event, with a score of 410.1. This was an Olympic debut for Jennifer, who first competed in the sport in 2008 and won her first Oceania Championship last year.



# More than passive customers:

## multicultural lessons from the sport stands

Sports cheering has been very important for Australian sports fans for the past few months. Along with the year-round calendar of regular sporting events that occupies millions of local supporters, the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games kept many Australians up late into the night, supporting their heroes from their lounges or on-the-go as they watched the Olympic live action on their mobile devices.

As usual, the world's largest sporting event wasn't exempt from controversies; on the contrary, event run-downs have shared the headlines with issues such as doping and street violence. Reports from Rio were also filled with political discussions, from women's participation to political demonstrations on the competition grounds and the behaviour of fans.

Boisterous Brazilian and South-American supporters in Rio caught the attention of media and local sports fans, who were fast to label them as 'bad sports' for booing opponents, and also claimed that they were disturbing the competitors with all their noise. Even the IOC's president tweeted about the 'shocking

behaviour of the crowd' that booed a French medallist on the podium. He deemed this as 'unacceptable at the Olympics'. On the other hand, Olympian icon Michael Phelps seemed to be truly charmed by the way Brazilian people expressed themselves on the stands. Similarly, less famous competitors such as the Egyptian female beach-volleyball players were grateful for the vocal spectators who cheered them on, despite their weak performances.

It looks like Rio's stands were clearly 'breaking the Olympic etiquette'; the cultural (and political) manifestations of this year's Olympics did not fit the authorities' 'how to support sport' model. What the authorities have been failing to understand, though, is that supporting a team is a cultural construct, and that diverse cultures and diverse people have different ways to enact their passions on the stands. Cheering is part of a sporting culture, entrenched in a specific socio-historical context. Therefore, it would be more efficient for the whole sports industry not to categorise 'non-traditional' supporters as trouble-makers and hence repress and ban them, but rather, to see sport fans as what they

really are: culture makers who want not only to consume but also to be part of the sporting atmosphere and create the show themselves. By chanting and using their corporeality, the fans on the stands in Rio were telling the world that they have a culture that needs to be listened to.

Sport fans perform their cultures across the world. There are (multi) cultural lessons to be learned from these performances. People from all ages and cultures are displaying their dreams in a public space; their voices should not be disqualified. Instead, they should be heard and incorporated as a key element of the multiple sporting cultures existing within our communities.

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### AUTHOR

**Dr Jorge Knijnik** is a senior lecturer in the School of Education and a researcher for Western Sydney University's Institute for Culture and Society. Dr Knijnik's recently published journal article: *Imagining a multicultural community in an everyday football carnival: chants, identity and social resistance on Western Sydney terraces* can be found online at [irs.sagepub.com](http://irs.sagepub.com)

# Plans to grow Indigenous coaching talent

Indigenous athletes have seen huge success in Australian elite sports, but when it comes to coaching, there's virtually no representation at the highest levels.

Encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into sports coaching is the focus of research by Dr Andrew Bennie, academic program director for health and physical education in the School of Science and Health at Western Sydney University.

According to Dr Bennie, promoting Indigenous coaches through the ranks sets them up as positive role models. "For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes, coaching could extend their sporting careers," he says. "It also gives people in the community someone to aspire to that goes beyond athletic achievement."

In compiling his research, Dr Bennie and his team gathered insights from a forum of 26 Aboriginal coaches from various levels and sporting codes across Australia. They also

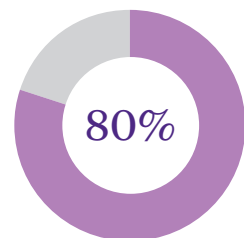
contacted dozens of sporting organisations and found that many were doing great work in promoting Indigenous athletes, but few focused on coaching. Similarly, a literature review revealed several projects on Indigenous athletes, but nothing on coaching in any indigenous population globally.

While Indigenous coaches were found to be active in community sports, there are none in any of Australia's top sporting competitions. "At the highest level of sport, the proportion of athletes who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is around 11 per cent," Dr Bennie says. "That's a fantastic overrepresentation for a group that's three per cent of the Australian population, but this regrettably doesn't translate to people coaching at that level," he says.

Recommendations to emerge from the forum include cross-code camps to upskill Indigenous coaches. There were also suggestions that clubs scout for coaching talent at Indigenous sporting events like Rugby League's Koori Knockout. At the grassroots, Dr Bennie says there should be opportunities for emerging Indigenous athletes to coach younger teams within their clubs. They could then progress in their coaching level as they advance in their sporting career. "Instead of stacking the shelves at Woolies on the side, young people can start coaching early and get accredited early," Dr Bennie says. "Once they're leaders in the form of coaches in clubs, they might think of going to uni to get their education degree. They could choose to progress into a completely different area, but coaching is a tool to give them the confidence to take off."



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“ It can be difficult to find your rhythm at the start, but once you settle into it you just work hard and do your best. ”

HELEN PETINOS, BACHELOR OF ARTS (PATHWAY TO TEACHING PRIMARY) AND MASTER OF TEACHING (PRIMARY), 2015

# Wanderer's balancing act pays off

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While juggling the ball as a Western Sydney Wanderers player, Helen Petinos also juggled her studies at Western Sydney University.

The striker and winger graduated last year with a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Teaching (Primary) and now balances her football career with a full-time teaching position at Liverpool West Public School.

Helen likens the experience of juggling university with football to the game itself. "It can be difficult to find your rhythm at the start, but once you settle into it you just work hard and do your best," she says.

Western Sydney University's sports program for student athletes helped, providing free access to the campus gym and flexibility around her timetable and assignment deadlines. "So many times, assignments were due at 5pm but I was usually on a plane by that time going interstate for competitions." Helen says.

Helen's love affair with the 'beautiful' game started when she was in primary school and joined her local Liverpool team. "I used to watch my younger brother play all the time and I wanted to have a go too," she says. She went on to play for the Marconi Stallions for 10 years, progressing from under 12s to first grade, and made a name for herself in the NSW Premier League. She signed her first contract with the Western Sydney Wanderers in the W-League in 2012. Helen is now one of the most experienced players in the team and dreams of representing Australia as one of the Matildas. "That's the next step for me and if the opportunity came up, I'd be more than happy to take it," she says.

In the meantime, as a teacher and coach of her school's football team, Helen hopes to inspire her students, particularly girls, to try the sport. "It's so good to get out there, away from the television, and get in a team," she says. "The bonding and friendships you form are fantastic."

And while she loves her work as a teacher, Helen looks forward to the day when female professional athletes are paid as much as their male counterparts so that they can spend less time juggling commitments and more time building their skills. "People are starting to take women's sport more seriously and are seeing us as professional athletes and not just women playing soccer," she says.

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**Find out more about Western Sydney University sports programs at [westernsydney.edu.au/sports](https://westernsydney.edu.au/sports)**



# Ben's in a league of his own



For sports management professional Ben Howard, introducing rugby league to Vanuatu is about more than the game – it's about changing people's lives. His work in promoting sport in developing Pacific nations led the Bachelor of Applied Science (Sport Management) and Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) graduate to receive a Western Sydney University Community Award early this year.

## LOBBYING FOR LEAGUE

Ben was working in Vanuatu in 2011 when he saw a newspaper article about the establishment of rugby league in the Pacific nation. He became a founding board member of Vanuatu Rugby League and has since seen the fledgling national team play in four test matches. He helped set up local competitions and is lobbying to have Vanuatu play a curtain raiser game ahead of next year's Rugby League World Cup. Last year's devastating Cyclone Pam was a setback for Vanuatu Rugby League, but after momentum rebuilds, Ben hopes to eventually see players from Vanuatu earn global recognition. "The prestige and economic return could have a massive impact on their families and communities," he says.

## IMPROVING COMMUNITIES

Ben is now based in Canberra and continues his work with Vanuatu Rugby League alongside his main job as program manager for the Pacific Sports Partnerships. This project, funded through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, involves partnering with powerful sporting organisations to help communities in Pacific nations through sport. "Sport has the power to change peoples' lives and to unite people," Ben says. "From an economic perspective it can put talented athletes in a better situation, but for any people experiencing difficulties in their lives, sport provides an outlet." The power and popularity of sport can be used to drive positive outcomes in health, education, disability and gender equality, he adds. "In communities, sporting matches provide everything from a platform for mothers who grow food to sell their products, through to helping chiefs resolve disputes because it brings people together."

## A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Since graduating in 2005, Ben has worked for some of Australia's key sporting bodies, assisted in the 2012 Paralympic Games and worked for Vanuatu's government in a sport for development program. His relationship with Western Sydney University has continued through offering professional placements for students. Ben says he can trace all his career opportunities back to contacts he made doing student internships: "I've been so lucky in my career, doing things I never imagined, by having opportunities come along and taking them".

Working in Vanuatu led Ben to fall in love with the Pacific and he hopes to eventually work abroad again. "It showed me a totally different outlook on life," he says. "People might not have much by western standards, but if you go to their village, they'll give you their last food. They have a fantastic, positive outlook on life."

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“ It showed me a totally different outlook on life. People might not have much by western standards, but if you go to their village, they'll give you their last food. They have a fantastic, positive outlook on life. ”

BEN HOWARD, BACHELOR OF APPLIED SCIENCE (SPORTS MANAGEMENT), 2004 AND BACHELOR OF TEACHING (PRIMARY), 2005



# Science behind footy success

Penrith local Ryan Simmons has cheered the Penrith Panthers from the sidelines for as long as he remembers. Now, the Bachelor of Sport and Exercise Science (Honours), 2016, graduate is supporting the team he loves behind the scenes.

A sports scientist for the Panthers under 20s team, Ryan uses GPS to monitor players during training, ensuring they're working at their optimal intensity. It involves plenty of number crunching, and every detail counts. "One or two percentages can make a big difference to an athlete's achievements," Ryan says.

As part of his Honours research last year, Ryan used his role working with junior Panthers players to analyse the demands of the sport on their bodies. "A lot of research focuses on elite NRL standards, but some of these younger kids have never lifted a weight before," he says. "This area of research can inform strength and conditioning coaches on what to work on, and can help with talent identification."

Ultimately, Ryan aims to help young players progress to elite-level NRL. "Under 20s can be more demanding – a lot of these kids come from the country and interstate, they're still studying and still learning about how their bodies react," he says. "It's a privilege to play a part in helping them go on to bigger and better things."

Ryan's experience behind the scenes of professional rugby league has heightened his respect for the game and its players. "They're working 24/7 treating their bodies like a temple, then having their personal lives in the spotlight too," he says. "They're dedicated human beings and seeing the way they work towards their goals motivates me in my career."

Ryan Simmons, Bachelor of Health Science (Sport and Exercise Science), 2016

## ADVICE ON SCORING A DREAM JOB

In his first year of a Bachelor of Sport and Exercise Science, football fan Ryan Simmons asked the Penrith Panthers for work experience. This turned into 18 months of volunteer work, until Ryan was offered a sports scientist position during his Honours year.

For Ryan, it's a dream job, and shows how much students can gain by approaching prospective employers. "My advice is to give it a shot," he says. "It's the best thing I ever did. I had planned to go on to study physiotherapy, but the work experience showed me that sports science was right down my alley. It's also awesome to rock into Panthers HQ for work and see all my idols."

Along with his Western Sydney University education, Ryan credits his side job in retail for giving him the skills to be successful. "It helped me deal with people, with social and communication skills," he says. "Personality is important in business because the better you get along with people, the better you'll work with them."



# Share YOUR story

Entries for next year's Western Sydney University Alumni Awards are now open and graduates are encouraged to nominate themselves or outstanding alumni they know.

With over 170,000 graduates from Western Sydney University living and working in Australia and across the globe, there are countless stories of alumni success, innovation and community contribution waiting to be told.

“ We want our alumni to tell their story, not just for the recognition they'll receive, but also to inspire others towards similar achievements. ”

RAMYA ACHARYA, ALUMNI MANAGER

Finalists will be selected for all the awards categories, with winners to be announced at a black tie dinner in May 2017 at Western Sydney University's Parramatta campus.

Categories include:

- Business and Professional Alumni Leadership
- Young Alumni
- International Alumni of the Year
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Impact
- Community Champion Alumni
- Hawkesbury Alumni

The Chancellor's Alumni Leadership Award is the highest honour the Alumni Awards can bestow. This award is not open for application but will be decided at the discretion of the awards judging panel considering nominations for all other award categories.

To enter, or to nominate an outstanding graduate, visit [westernsydney.edu.au/alumniawards](http://westernsydney.edu.au/alumniawards)



# Alumni leading the way

This year's inaugural Western Sydney University Alumni Awards uncovered inspiring stories of achievement among our graduates.

Winners across eight categories were announced at a black tie presentation at the Parramatta campus in April, with entrants ranging from fresh graduates through to those who attended the University's antecedent institution, Hawkesbury Agricultural College, in the 70s. Their fields of work were just as diverse and included not-for-profit organisations and large corporations, health and education, entrepreneurial ventures, and academia.

Dr Genevieve Nelson took out the top Award, the Chancellor's Alumni Leadership Award, for her work as one of the founding Directors and CEO of the Kokoda Track Foundation. The Foundation has raised more than \$5 million over the past five years to support projects aimed at improving the lives of people in rural and remote Papua New Guinea. Dr Nelson holds a Doctorate in cross-cultural and educational psychology from Western Sydney University and spent months living in villages along the Kokoda Track, working with communities and collecting data for her PhD research.

Another example of the far reaching impact of a Western Sydney University education is the International Alumni of the Year, Dr Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir. His research

on the sociology of religion has been shared in universities across the world. Closer to home, Bachelor of Arts graduate, Peter Hope, received the Young Alumni Award for his work supporting youth as a community project officer for Fairfield Council, while the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Award acknowledged one of Australia's most successful businessmen, David Southon, the co-founder and joint Managing Director of Charter Hall Limited.

According to Alumni Manager Ramya Acharya, the quality and number of entries for the new award program was overwhelming. "All the categories have a heavy emphasis on alumni who have had some kind of community impact, been innovative and have contributed to significant change," she says. "They are changing lives and it's important to recognise this work as a way of inspiring them to continue on with it into the future."

Another benefit of the awards has been the opportunity for Western Sydney University to connect with its leading alumni. "We can't assume they owe all their post-study success to the University, but something they've learnt from their studies, or the connections they've made during their studies, will have had some kind of significant impact on their career," Ramya says. "Giving them recognition for their achievements is a chance to reconnect and form lifelong relationships with our alumni."

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2016 Chancellor's Alumni Leadership Award winner, Dr Genevieve Nelson, Bachelor of Psychology (Honours), 2004 and Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology), 2008





# Saddling up for global glory

**As one of the world's top dressage riders, an Olympic equestrian coach and the owner of a performance horse business, Brett Parbery calls a horse's back his office. The 1994 Bachelor of Business (Land Economy) graduate takes a few moments out of the saddle to share his story with *GradLife*.**

Whilst studying at Hawkesbury campus, Brett moved to Windsor and started working as a property valuer. Growing up in country Dorriggo, Brett's parents were horse trainers so it was no surprise that when he moved to the Hawkesbury region, he went looking for a horse hobby. He had been into saddle bronc riding but Hawkesbury region was very much an equestrian area. He started helping people part-time take control of unruly dressage horses, and ended up running a full commercial stable while doing property valuations in the evening.

Brett now has 15 horses and three staff at his training stables in the Southern Highlands and also travels to Sydney every day where he rides six horses. He does coaching interstate and spends a fair chunk of the year away when training for the Olympics or World Equestrian Games.

His involvement with the Olympics has been varied, being a first reserve for both the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing as well as Rio this year. Unfortunately, during training in Germany at the beginning of the year, Brett's horse got injured so he didn't compete. He also coached the 2012 Australian eventing team as dressage advisor for the 2012 London Olympics. However, when asked to describe his proudest achievement, Brett said "Being named ninth in the world at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in America. In the equestrian world, it's even bigger than the Olympics."

Brett's competitive ambitions are far from over and he is currently preparing horses to contend for a spot in the 2018 World Equestrian Games

and the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. "I can probably go for another 15 years," he says. "It's something you can't shake out of your system."

Beyond the medals and the titles, Brett says being able to work with horses every day is a reward in itself. "There's nothing more honest in the world than animals – I'd take working with animals over people any day. When everyone else is driving to work in traffic, I'm sitting on a horse breathing fresh air."

Brett credits his Western Sydney University education for giving him the skills and confidence to launch his own business. "It has definitely helped me with running my business, with investing and how I've structured my business and property," he says. "From studying land economy and going on to work as a valuer, I also had the flexibility in my hours to ride and get good at it."

**|** Brett Parbery, Bachelor of Business (Land Economy), 1994

# Boost your career confidence



As CEO and co-founder of Dream Internship, Western Sydney University graduate, Sophia Demetriades-Toftdahl, knows what it takes to achieve career success. A 2016 finalist for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alumni Award, Sophia shares her top five tips for young graduates.

Find out more about Western Sydney University career services at [westernsydney.edu.au/careers](http://westernsydney.edu.au/careers)

Sophia Demetriades-Toftdahl, Bachelor of Communication (Journalism), 2006  
Photograph by: Anna Zhu Photography and Film

## 1

### BE A GIVER, FIND A GIVER

Although giving is often a natural trait, it's definitely something you can learn and apply. Start by reading the book *Give and Take* by Adam Grant to fully understand what giving is and isn't, and how it will support your career. I speak from experience when I say that helping others can lead to greater personal success. Volunteering to establish and run a Chamber of Commerce has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my life. By bringing a community together, I've been lucky to meet givers, mentors, colleagues and friends who have given my life more value. *Give and Take* was given to me by a friend I met through the Chamber, and I hope it will help you find givers, who are also very often the best mentors.

## 2

### BE A MENTOR, FIND A MENTOR

Mentors are good at encouraging others to do what is best for them, which in return often brings out their talents. Being a supporter of others will teach you the value of being a mentor and will help you recognise them when they are right in front of you. It often brings with it a sense of enjoyment. My best mentors have grown from efforts and energy I have put into my initiatives – the mentors came to me. Mentors are great at spotting talent, so make sure you put yourself out there.

## 3

### LEARN TO DO THINGS YOURSELF

Whilst it's great to lean on a team and rely on the advice of others, don't expect people to show you how to do everything in life. If you want to be a web developer, develop a website. If you want to be a sports coach, go to the court and encourage all players to succeed. Always ask people around you for clear direction and feedback.

## 4

### BE PART OF A COMMUNITY

Any community or network will help you meet more people and make more experiences. You don't have to stay in the communities, but you do have to give to them to see them blossom. This can be business networks, women's groups, social clubs, charities – anything.

## 5

### DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY, AND WORK HARD

A positive attitude and hard work will get you further than you think. You may come across people who are negative but don't let them get to you. Continue to look for givers, mentors and generally positive people. Be patient and you will reach your career goals in due time.

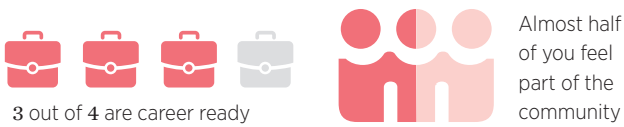
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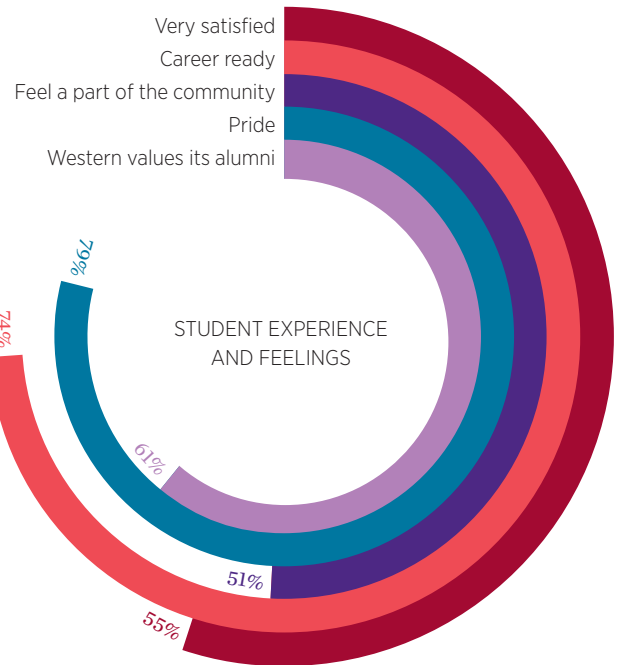
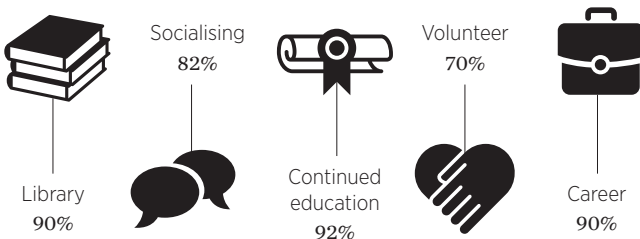
**86%** satisfied overall with their experience as a student at Western.



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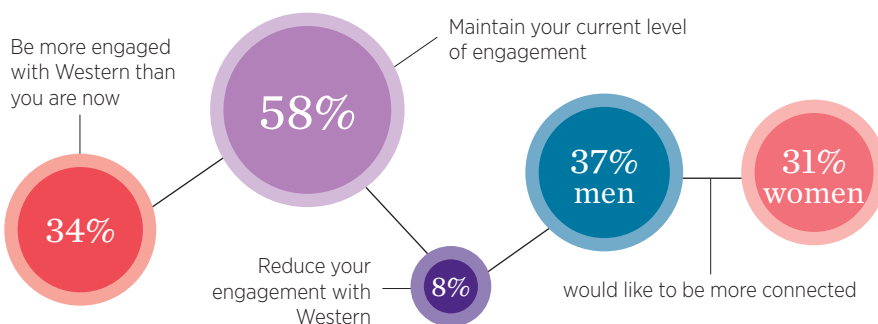
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- 3 Servicing on an advisory board or committee
- 4 Share my experience with current student or recent grads
- 5 Provide assistance with planning alumni events

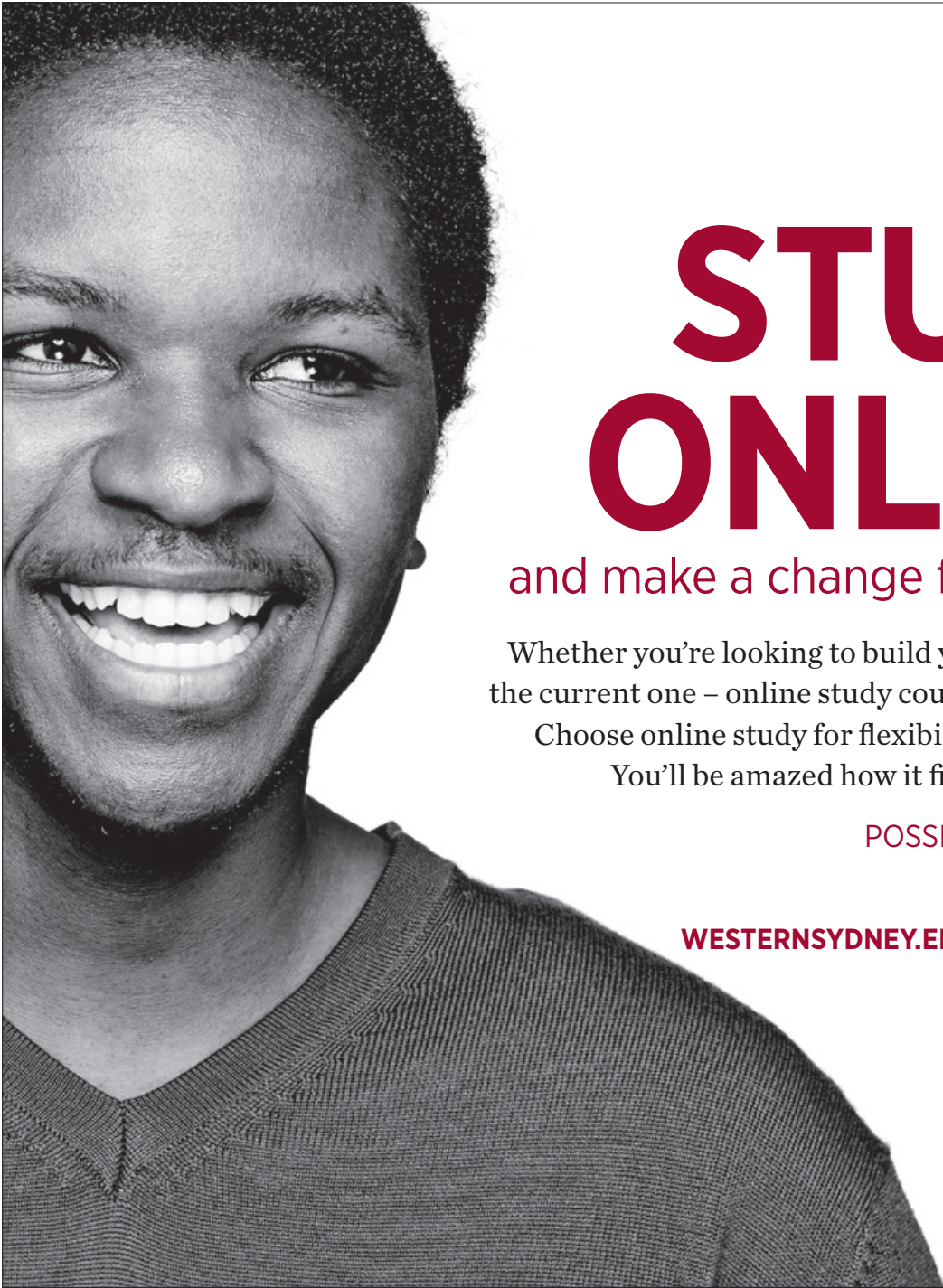
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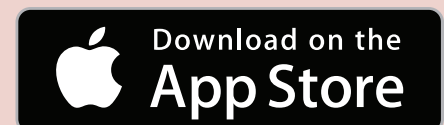
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