



Charles Sturt
University

Achieving successful outcomes through evaluation: A practical example of evidence based practice for an Indigenous program

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Indigenous Academic Success Program

Background

We are there to help our students succeed

To support the academic success of our students we provide:

- Content specific tutoring
- Learning Advisers (Indigenous students)
- Personal Success Plans

We work with:

- Student Liaison Officers (Indigenous)
- Academic Skills Team
- Faculty – Head of Schools,
- Subject/Course Coordinators



Evaluation process

- The program uses Program Logic to record short, medium and long term outcomes and the evaluation enables measurement indicators against these outcomes.
- Outcomes were measured through quantitative and qualitative methods.
- This process has led to the successful completion of evaluation of the IASP across a number of student cohorts over a two year period.

Cohorts used for qualitative evaluation included students who had:

- Tutors only
- Learning Advisor only
- Both Tutor and learning Advisor
- Opted in – not commenced
- No response to emails





Methodology

In 2018 Charles Sturt university had 956 Indigenous students of which 501 opted into the IASP to receive tutoring. Of those students 385 commenced tutoring – a 40.27% take up of all eligible indigenous students and an increase of 1.27% over the previous year.

2017 and 2018

- Qualitative evaluation via interviews.
 - A total of 25 students were interviewed by telephone via a scripted interview guide. The guides were adapted to the audience dependant on the service used.
- Quantitative evaluation of progress rates of Indigenous students
 - Non users of Indigenous Academic Success Program (IASP) users vs IASP users

2018

- Division of Student Services online survey – 1 quantitative and 2 qualitative open response questions
 - 95 Indigenous students responded to the survey (4% of total respondents).

Methodology continued



Interviews:

- A total of n=25 students were interviewed to ascertain short and medium term outcomes of the Program, and to test any links between participation in the program and improvements on these measures.
- The sample was randomised and students were called to confirm participation.
- Interviews were conducted with users and non-users of the program.
- An independent employee booked and conducted the interviews to avoid interview bias and provide confidence to students that their feedback was anonymous and would not impact their program participation and relationships.

Online Survey:

- 1 quantitative and 2 open questions were asked to analyse awareness of the service, ability to access help when needed and if the program supported their sense of belonging and success with the University.

Findings/Results



Findings across the 2 qualitative surveys showed consistent responses in regard to meeting short term and medium term outcomes:

- **Knowledge:** Improved knowledge in the areas they are receiving tutoring.
- **Attitudes:** Are comfortable accessing the Indigenous Academic Success program and are more confident in and positive towards their study.
- **Behaviours:** Developing professional connections, feel a greater connection to Charles Sturt University and other Charles Sturt students, student grades have improved and progress has improved.

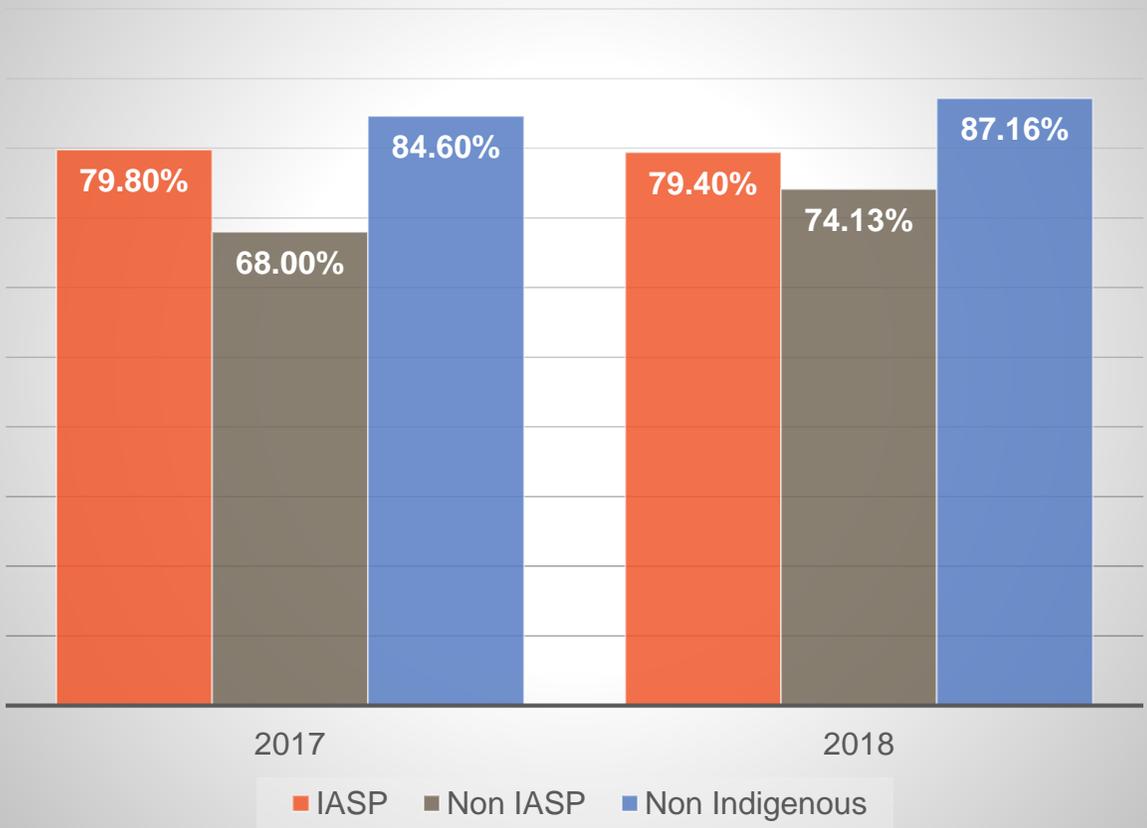
Quantitative data collection improvements have been identified for future evaluations:

- Currently identifying IASP participation for progress comparison only. When measuring long term goals, more extensive drilling down of data is to occur i.e. with GPA of users and non-users to evaluate like for like comparison and analysis of grades and retention.

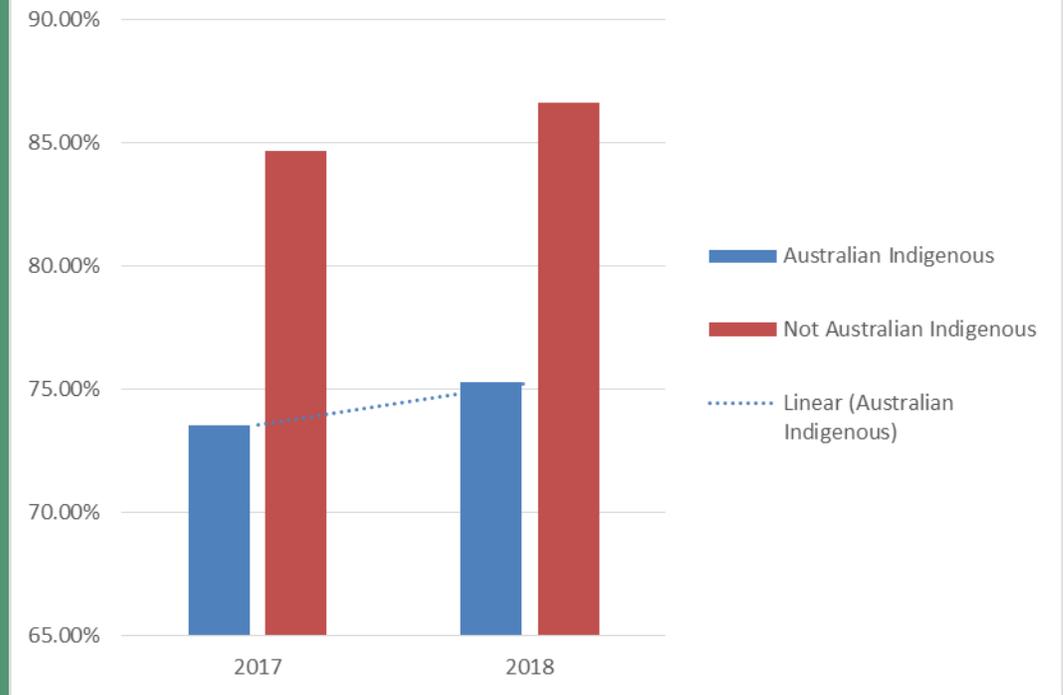
Progress rates: program user vs non user and progress rates across student body



Progress rates - Tutor



Progress rates all students regardless of program participation



Affirmation of Goals - quotes



What does the IASP mean to you?

“In a few words as possible, very helpful. It’s helped me a lot and I think it’s put me at an advantage with my studies. It’s given me insight on how much study I need to get the marks I want, and how important study revision is to retain the course content.”

How do you feel about university right now?

“Pretty good. Confident. I don’t look at my workload and sigh anymore!”

Has that changed since you started the IASP? If yes: How?

“When I first started I wasn’t in the program and if I hadn’t been contacted I believe I would have quit.”

How well do you think you've been able to work with your tutor? Why is that?

“Very good. They have a wealth of information, and they’ve all been really involved in my study.”

Areas for improvement - quotes



How easy is it to access the program? Why is that?

“My first year at university I didn’t know anything about them. I ignored their emails because I was so overwhelmed with everything. When they eventually introduced themselves to me in person it was great and since then I’ve had constant support.”

“It’s always there, I know that but even with the emails, there’s not a lot of info and no further links to click on to show us how to step by step get the support we need.”

Our records show that you opted in to tutoring, but didn’t actually go ahead. Can you tell me why you chose to do this?

“There were a couple of different reasons. The first is that I was assigned a tutor who although was very knowledgeable in the IT field, they weren’t educated properly on this specific topic/subject I was wanting help with. I am also a mature aged student, so I am harsher when it comes to receiving help from a stranger, because I already feel like I have a sound understanding of what we are learning. The second was just a communication issue. When I did reach out for help in my subject, I didn’t receive the feedback/support that I was after. From then on, there was no proper engagement from the tutor and communication just fell off. I think they only checked in on me once.”



'Ignored emails because they I was so overwhelmed by everything'

History: Students were receiving emails from a range of services or programs within CSU, sometimes with the same information.

Current: Working with Communication Team to streamline emails to students so they are receiving less emails but are still being informed of relevant information relating to services and programs.

Strategy:

Communication

To continue to work with Communication Team to further refine the communication plan

To increase face-to-face communication by IASP staff by attending opportune events to provide information about IASP programs. Some examples are discussing program at study sessions and being available for student cohorts to discuss program or any queries they have about the program.

Marketing:

To work with Marketing Team to better promote IASP and to better optimise opportunities for transitioning students to become aware of the suite of services available

Improve marketing to distance education students so they are informed of program for example working with the Student Liaison Officer Indigenous who is allocated to distance students to better promote our program.



‘The process to apply for tutoring was confusing: The email system used is straight forward’.

History: Previously applications were made through the CSU website

Current: Students are now sent an email with a link to apply

Strategy: Streamlining the emails – currently students receive an email for EACH subject but we are refining this so that each student receives one email

Tutors do not always have expertise needed



History: Tutors applications were approved by IASP Team Leader

Current:

Tutor applications are approved at Faculty level to ensure they have the relevant qualification and work background required.

Prior to the next session tutors are sent a list of subjects that fall within those Disciplines. They have the opportunity to choose which subjects they are available for and are able to tutor.

We take it at face value if a tutor states they are able to tutor a specific subject. However this may not take into account currency in terms of current knowledge of content or skills needed.

Strategy:

To work with tutor's on a process where they can better determine if they have the current knowledge and skills required to be able to provide content tutoring for a subject prior to advising they are available and able to tutor a subject.

To work on a way to empower our students to be agents of change meaning they become more in control of their tutoring experience and tutoring works for them. It also means tutoring hours and the budget allocated to a contract are not being wasted. This has the potential to lead to a much more effective program that meets the individual student tutoring need.

Contact list



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Thank you