

SAGE Cygnet Awards

Institutional Context

The University of Western Australia



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



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The University of Western Australia acknowledges the custodians and traditional owners of land on which its campuses are located.

At the main campus, Crawley, the University acknowledges the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional owners of the land. The Whadjuk Noongar remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practise their values, languages and knowledge.



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Glossary of Terms

| | |
|-----------|---|
| CaLD | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Working Group |
| CoP | Community of Practice |
| DAIWG | Disability and Inclusion Working Group |
| DEI | Diversity, Equity and Inclusion |
| DVCR | Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Research) |
| GEWG | Gender Equity Working Group |
| HoS | Head of School |
| HR | Human Resources |
| I&D | Inclusion and Diversity |
| LGBTIQA+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and all diverse sexualities and genders |
| PVC | Pro Vice-Chancellor |
| PVC(DEI), | Pro Vice-Chancellor (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) |
| SAGE | Science in Australia Gender Equity |
| SAT | Self-Assessment Team |
| SDVC | Senior Deputy Vice -Chancellor |
| STEMM | Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine |
| VC | Vice-Chancellor |
| | |

The University of Western Australia sits on sacred soil alongside the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River) on Whadjuk Noongar Booja.

The Institution & Governance

UWA was established as the State's first university in 1911, with the founding mission to 'advance the prosperity and welfare of our communities'. The University opened in 1913 to just 184 students, and today has more than 25,000 students from 100 countries.

The motto 'Seek Wisdom' is as relevant today and into the future as it was when adopted by the UWA Senate in 1912. UWA's vision of creating the next generation of global leaders through industry-integrated education and world-leading, trustworthy research, is upheld by the core values of excellence, integrity, innovation, collaboration, and equity.



EXCELLENCE

We consistently pursue the highest levels of achievement, creating the best outcomes possible



INTEGRITY

We are honest and ethical and show respect for, and appreciate, each other, our partners and our communities — valuing our differences.



INNOVATION

We are constantly, and creatively, improving and adapting



COLLABORATION

We share our collective intelligence to achieve more.



EQUITY

We are committed to providing everyone at UWA equality of opportunity, experience, and access

Over the last ten years, UWA has gone through two major organisational restructures that streamlined management structures the first reduced the number of faculties and schools and the second removed the faculty layer (Table 1). In 2016, UWA moved from 45 schools in nine faculties, to 21 Schools in four faculties. In late 2020 the faculties were dissolved to make way for the College of Schools, with 22 Schools reporting directly to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor¹ (SDVC).

The current governance (Figure 1) and management (Figure 2) structures are shown.

¹ The faculties and schools are provided in Table 1 as a reference for the Cygnets. UWA's Bronze submission focused on the years 2011-2016 when UWA transitioned from nine faculties to four. In some instances, particularly for Cygnet 1 that focuses on the Engineering discipline, the addition or subtraction of Schools must be noted to highlight nuanced discrepancies between the numbers of academic staff of the schools within the previous faculty groupings.

Figure 1: UWA Governance Structure (July 2024)

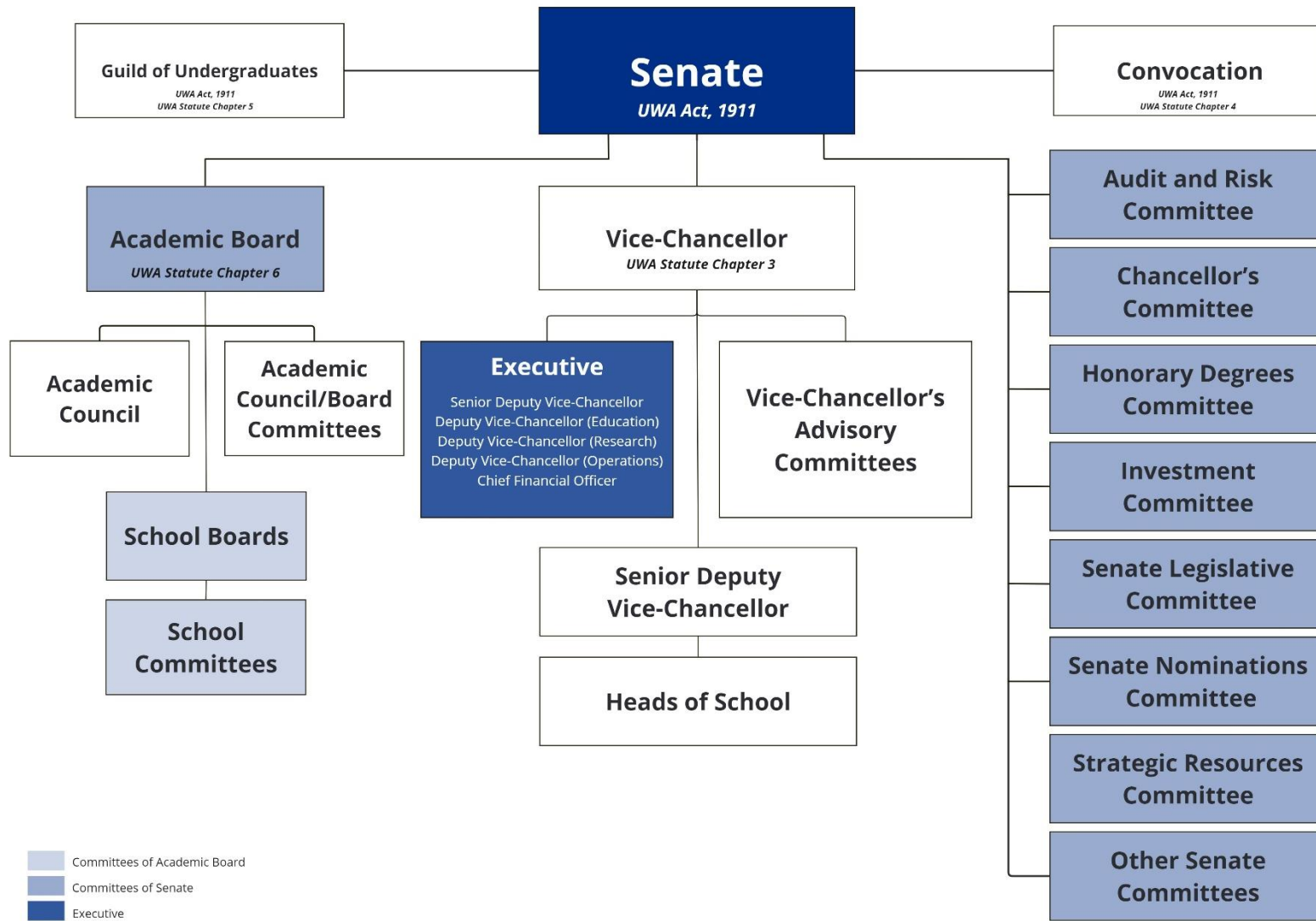


Figure 2: Management Structure (July 2024)

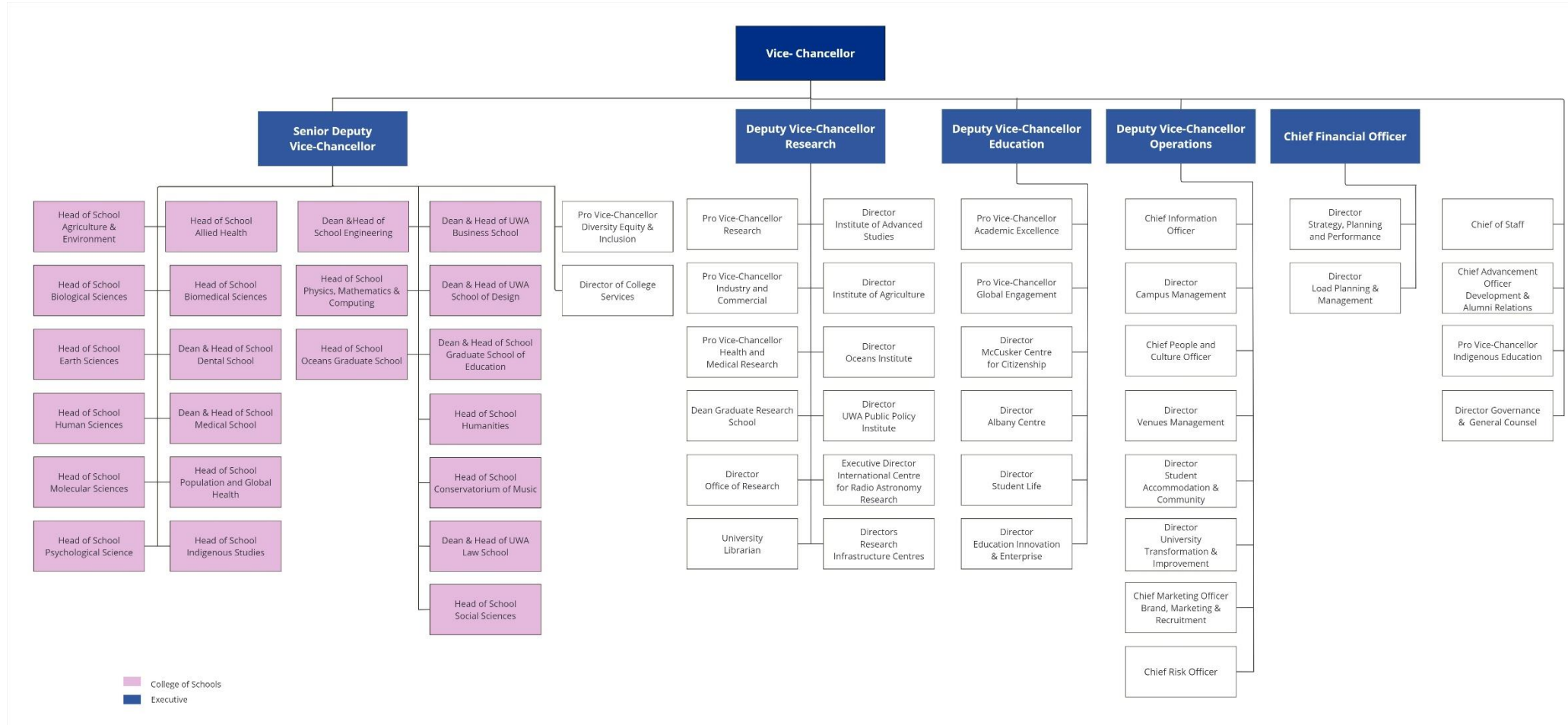


Table 1: Faculties and school composition at UWA during the period 2011-2024

| 2011-2015: Nine faculties with 45 schools & School of Indigenous Studies | 2016-2020: Four faculties with 21 schools & School of Indigenous Studies | 2021 to now: College of Schools (22 Schools) inclusive of School of Indigenous Studies |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts [ALVA] School of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts</p> <p>Arts School of Humanities School of Music School of Social Sciences</p> <p>Business School Business School</p> <p>Education Faculty of Education</p> <p>Engineering, Computing and Mathematics [ECM] School of Civil, Environmental and Mining Engineering School of Computer Science and Software Engineering School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering School of Mathematics and Statistics School of Mechanical and Chemical Engineering</p> <p>Law Law School</p> <p>Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences [MDHS] School of Dentistry School of Medicine and Pharmacology</p> | <p>Arts, Business, Law and Education [ABLE] Business School School of Design Graduate School of Education School of Humanities Law School UWA Conservatorium of Music School of Social Sciences</p> <p>Engineering and Mathematical Sciences [EMS] School of Engineering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Chemical Engineering • Department of Civil, Environmental and Mining Engineering • Department of Electrical, Electronic and Computing Engineering • Department of Mechanical Engineering <p>School of Physics, Mathematics and Computing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering • Department of Mathematics and Statistics • Department of Physics <p>Oceans Graduate School</p> <p>Science UWA School of Agriculture and Environment School of Biological Sciences</p> | <p>Conservatorium of Music Dental School Graduate School of Education Medical School Oceans Graduate School School of Agriculture and Environment School of Allied Health School of Biological Sciences School of Biomedical Sciences School of Earth Sciences School of Engineering School of Humanities School of Human Sciences School of Indigenous Studies School of Molecular Sciences School of Physics, Mathematics and Computing School of Population and Global Health School of Psychological Science School of Social Sciences UWA Business School UWA Law School UWA School of Design</p> |

| 2011-2015: Nine faculties with 45 schools & School of Indigenous Studies | 2016-2020: Four faculties with 21 schools & School of Indigenous Studies | 2021 to now: College of Schools (22 Schools) inclusive of School of Indigenous Studies |
|---|--|---|
| <p>School of Paediatrics and Child Health School of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine School of Population Health School of Primary, Aboriginal and Rural Health Care School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences School of Surgery School of Women's and Infants' Health</p> <p>School of Indigenous Studies</p> <p>Science School of Agricultural and Resource Economics School of Anatomy, Physiology and Human Biology School of Animal Biology School of Chemistry and Biochemistry School of Earth and Environment School of Physics School of Plant Biology School of Psychology School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health</p> | <p>School of Earth Sciences School of Human Sciences School of Molecular Sciences School of Psychological Science</p> <p>Health and Medical Sciences [HMS] School of Biomedical Sciences School of Allied Health Dental School Medical School School of Population and Global Health</p> <p>School of Indigenous Studies</p> | |

Staff Profile

The proportion of staff across UWA who identify as women has remained stable at 58 to 59% across the period 2018 to 2024, with a steady increase in women academics, from 43% in 2018, to 47% in 2024 (Table 2),

Table 2: Headcount of non-casual academic and professional staff 2018 -2024 at UWA, number and proportion of women shown.

| | Academic | | Professional | | UWA Total | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|------------------|---------|------------------|------------|
| | Women /total n‡ | % women | Women / total n‡ | % women | Women / total n‡ | % women |
| 2018 | 677/1578 | 43% | 1558/2216 | 70% | 2225/3794 | 59% |
| 2019 | 690/1606 | 43% | 1527/2210 | 69% | 2217/3816 | 58% |
| 2020 | 743/1660 | 45% | 1566/2247 | 70% | 2309/3907 | 59% |
| 2021 | 744/1666 | 45% | 1489/2133 | 70% | 2233/3799 | 59% |
| 2022 | 747/1676 | 45% | 1409/2026 | 70% | 2156/3702 | 58% |
| 2023 | 793/1726 | 46% | 1468/2108 | 70% | 2261/3834 | 59% |
| 2024 | 831/1778 | 47% | 1537/2244 | 68% | 2368/4022 | 59% |

Data taken from annual government reporting, snapshot at 31 March each year, updated July 2024.

Headcount does not include casuals.

‡ n= the number of staff in the cohort group, includes those who identify as non-binary

The distribution of staff across the former Faculty groups is shown in Table 3.

A full breakdown of staff across the **College of Schools** is shown in Table 4, noting that professional staff who were previously aligned with the faculties are now centralised in College Services.

Student profile

In 2023, UWA had:

- 28,424 enrolled students (63% undergraduate, 30% postgraduate coursework, 7% higher degree by research) of whom 51% were women,
- 11,255 students (39%) enrolled in a course in a STEMM discipline, of whom 49% were women,
- 1,881 HDR students enrolled (52% are women)
- 1,381 HDR students (76% of total) enrolled in STEMM disciplines, of whom 48% were women).

Table 3: Headcount of non-casual academic staff in the four faculty groupings 2018-2024, number and proportion of women shown.

| | Arts, Business, Law and Education [ABLE] | | Engineering and Mathematical Sciences [EMS] | | Health and Medical Sciences [HMS] | | SCIENCE | |
|-------------|--|---------|---|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| | Women /n [‡] | % women | Women /n [‡] | % women | Women /n [‡] | % women [‡] | Women /n | % women [‡] |
| 2018 | 164/343 | 48% | 38/233 | 16% | 256/477 | 54% | 189/434 | 44% |
| 2019 | 173/369 | 47% | 35/218 | 16% | 263/471 | 56% | 182/428 | 43% |
| 2020 | 182/380 | 48% | 35/220 | 16% | 295/512 | 58% | 187/423 | 44% |
| 2021 | 176/374 | 47% | 42/220 | 19% | 304/531 | 57% | 178/411 | 43% |
| 2022 | 179/361 | 50% | 46/243 | 19% | 278/493 | 56% | 170/399 | 43% |
| 2023 | 173/354 | 49% | 46/232 | 20% | 349/605 | 58% | 176/408 | 43% |
| 2024 | 181/357 | 51% | 51/238 | 21% | 366/616 | 59% | 187/432 | 43% |

Data taken from annual government reporting, snapshot at 31 March each year.

Headcount does not include casuals.

‡ n= the number of staff in the cohort group, includes those who identify as non-binary

Heatmap highlights lowest proportion (light) through to highest proportion of women (darker blue)



Table 4: Headcount of academic and professional staff in each School, College of Schools, 2024

| | Academic | | Professional† | | Total | |
|---|-----------|---------|---------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Women /n‡ | % Women | Women /n‡ | % Women | Women /n‡ | % Women |
| Conservatorium of Music | 6/19 | 32% | 5/7 | 71% | 11/26 | 42% |
| Dental School | 13/32 | 41% | 104/124 | 84% | 117/156 | 75% |
| Graduate School of Education | 10/14 | 71% | 2/2 | 100% | 12/16 | 75% |
| Medical School | 193/350 | 55% | 104/123 | 85% | 297/473 | 63% |
| Oceans Graduate School | 4/8 | 50% | 8/14 | 57% | 12/22 | 55% |
| School of Agriculture and Environment | 34/83 | 41% | 22/34 | 65% | 56/117 | 48% |
| School of Allied Health | 90/120 | 75% | 19/24 | 79% | 109/144 | 76% |
| School of Biological Sciences | 40/89 | 45% | 18/33 | 55% | 58/122 | 48% |
| School of Biomedical Sciences | 35/65 | 54% | 11/14 | 79% | 46/79 | 58% |
| School of Earth Sciences | 11/43 | 26% | 4/4 | 100% | 15/47 | 32% |
| School of Engineering | 25/135 | 19% | 17/34 | 50% | 42/169 | 25% |
| School of Human Sciences | 35/64 | 55% | 13/18 | 72% | 48/82 | 59% |
| School of Humanities | 21/43 | 49% | 4/4 | 100% | 24/46 | 52% |
| School of Indigenous Studies | 13/18 | 72% | 13/15 | 87% | 26/33 | 79% |
| School of Molecular Sciences | 27/77 | 35% | 8/11 | 73% | 35/88 | 40% |
| School of Physics, Maths & Computing | 26/103 | 25% | 3/5 | 60% | 29/108 | 27% |
| School of Population and Global Health | 35/49 | 71% | 34/45 | 76% | 64/94 | 73% |
| School of Psychological Science | 32/62 | 52% | 2/4 | 50% | 34/66 | 52% |
| School of Social Sciences | 42/72 | 58% | 11/16 | 69% | 53/88 | 60% |
| UWA Business School | 48/117 | 41% | 12/15 | 80% | 60/132 | 45% |
| UWA Law School | 36/56 | 64% | 2/2 | 100% | 38/58 | 66% |
| UWA School of Design | 18/36 | 50% | 1/1 | 100% | 19/37 | 51% |

STEMM schools in blue text.

† Since 2020, Professional staff in school, teaching and technical operations are employed centrally in College Services,. Professional staff shown here are research and other staff funded by the school.

Data taken from annual government reporting, snapshot at 31 March each year.

Headcount does not include casuals.

‡ n= the number of staff in the cohort group, includes those who identify as non-binary

Heatmap highlights lowest proportion (light) through to highest proportion of women (darker blue)

UWA's SAGE journey to date

In 2015, UWA was accepted into the SAGE Athena Swan Pilot Project. This was the impetus for the reintroduction and reimagining of embedding gender equity initiatives and DEI as a key pillar of success at UWA. The Self-Assessment Team (SAT) was formed in December 2015, and data collection and the reflection on women's experiences began. In 2016, UWA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) was formed as an advisory body to the VC, with five working groups: GEWG, LGBTIQA+, CaLD, DAIWG, and the Athena Swan SAT.

Through 2016 to 2018, extensive data analysis, staff consultation, and action planning took place. UWA's initial Bronze submission in 2018 required further work and was resubmitted the following year. UWA was awarded Athena Swan Bronze in February 2020.

Figure 3: UWA Awarded Athena Swan Bronze, February 2020



UWA Awarded Bronze, from L to R: Professor Marit Kragt, Emeritus Professor Carolyn Oldham (Athena Swan Lead 2015-2023), Professor Charlie Bond and Professor Archa Fox.

After Bronze was awarded, the SAT and the Gender Equity Working Group combined with the central objective of tracking the Bronze Action Plan, and the SDVC joined as the Executive Sponsor.

In 2021, updated data systems enabled access to DEI data dashboards. An EY audit of DEI in 2021 highlighted that DEI was under-resourced at UWA relative to the Go8, resulting in a commitment by the Executive to increase resourcing. UWA's first Pro Vice- Chancellor (Diversity,

Equity & Inclusion) (PVC-DEI, 0.4 FTE) was appointed soon thereafter and has been central to the continued progression of DEI and gender equity initiatives.

In parallel with the implementation of the Athena Swan Action Plan, a raft of notable initiatives have taken place. Communities of Practice (CoP) were established, including a DEI CoP that brings together staff and provides a platform to exchange ideas, experiences and information, and a Women in Science CoP that supports women in STEMM. In 2021, a DEI Contact Officer program was established. DEI Contact Officers are employees from across the University who receive an FTE allocation and training to be a source of advice and preliminary support to staff who might have any concerns relating to DEI. The Executive endorsed and committed to the University's inaugural DEI Strategy 2022-2025. In 2021, UWA Sport developed and implemented the Inclusion in Sport Policy and the Inclusive Sport Framework and received gold in the Pride in Sport Index in 2022 and 2023. The Student Equity and Participation Working Group was established in 2020 to oversee matters relating to student equity and participation at all stages of the student life cycle. The Student Access and Participation Framework 2022-2025 was endorsed in 2022. In 2023, a Gender Equity Specialist was appointed, with the sole focus of advancing gender equity initiatives across the University.

Key findings from Bronze

The Bronze self-assessment process was a pivotal moment for the University in acknowledging the impacts of changing priorities that accompany leadership changes. Immediately prior to the start of the Bronze self-assessment period, many gender equity initiatives that had strongly supported women, including the innovative and successful *Leadership Development for Women* program (1994-2016)² that won several international and national awards and encompassed theoretical and experiential exploration of leadership, formal and informal mentoring, and networking, were discontinued. The data (and sometimes lack thereof), and extensive staff consultation, uncovered some uncomfortable truths about the support for, and of, women at the University.

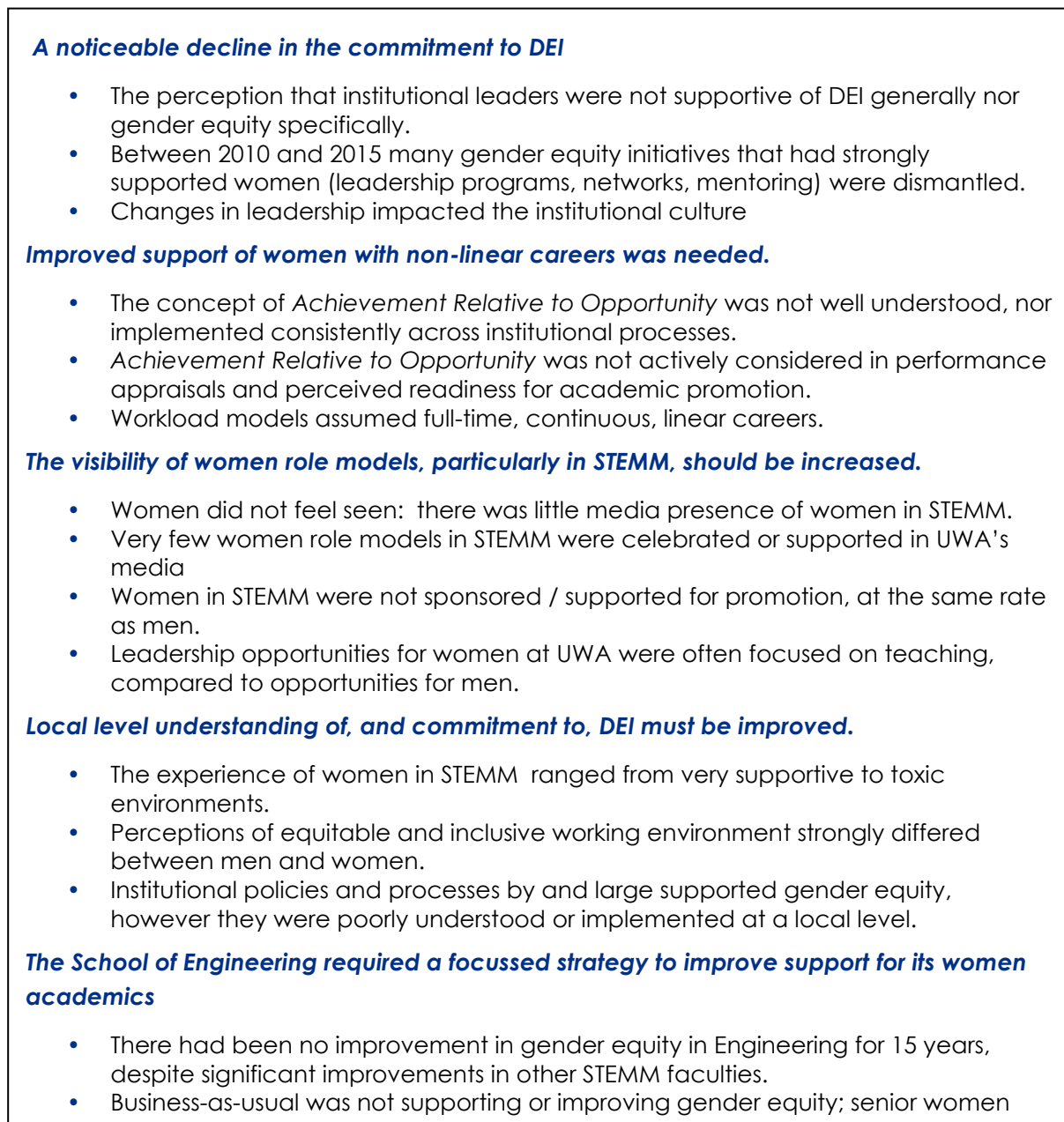
The absence of supportive programs illuminated systemic challenges women faced across academia, and how easy it was for an institution to revert to the entrenched and default dominant paradigms it had been operating under since its beginning. This was a compelling and challenging view for an institution that had once prided itself on being a leader in initiatives towards gender equity. The key findings initiated systemic changes and systematic improvements and are explored in our Cygnets³.

The voices of women in STEMM highlighted the discrepancy in how staff across disciplines experienced academia. Results from the 2017 YourSay (Voice) Staff Survey showed that women more strongly disagreed with the statement "*The behaviours of staff are consistent with the values of UWA*" than men. In non-STEMM faculties, 20% more women than men disagreed with this statement, in STEMM faculties 60% more women than men disagreed.

² Tessens, L., & Webb, C. (2014). *Leading the Way: The first 20 years of the Leadership Development for Women Program*. UWA Publishing.

³ It must be noted that because UWA was a Pilot member, the Bronze Action Plan addressed a broad set of findings, and was not focused on explicitly on *five specific barriers* in the action planning processes.

Figure 4: Summary of key findings of the Bronze SAT (2016 – 2019)



This was accentuated in historically gendered disciplines, as seen in the School of Engineering. The actions pursued by the School to address gender inequities are discussed in **Cygnets 1: Acting on gender imbalance in Engineering.**

To address the low visibility of women in STEMM fields, a multi-pronged approach was required to tackle systemic biases. Brand, Marketing and Recruitment (BMR) were actively engaged to review how the work of academic women was presented in media releases. The Research Portfolio developed a Gender Equity Strategy to address visibility of women academics in fellowship schemes, among other things. This is discussed in **Cygnets 2: Visibility of women.**

How UWA defined success for academics was based on long held rigid systems that did not support and enable non-linear careers. Achievement Relative to Opportunity was introduced and integrated into institutional processes. This is discussed in **Cygnets 3: Changing how we define academic success.**

A change intrinsically linked to the work done in Cygnets 3, has been to review and improve the academic promotion processes, discussed in **Cygnets 4: Improving academic promotions.**

A key finding was that whilst the University had policies and processes that reflected societal progress towards gender equity, there was a marked discrepancy between the intent and how these were implemented and understood. UWA's policies were reviewed, and work has gone into improving accessibility and understanding. This is reviewed in **Cygnets 5: Improving access and understanding of Policies.**

Contextual factors

UWA has experienced organisational change since 2015, when work commenced on Athena Swan Bronze.

Factors that have impacted progress on Athena Swan are summarised here:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| 2016 | Organisational Restructure - moving from nine faculties, with 45 schools (plus the School of Indigenous Studies) to four faculties and 21 schools |
| 2017 | New Vice Chancellor appointed (Professor Dawn Freshwater) |
| 2018-2019 | Resubmission required for Bronze Accreditation |
| 2020 | UWA awarded Athena Swan Bronze accreditation COVID19 worldwide pandemic New Vice Chancellor appointed (Professor Amit Chakma) |
| | Restructures commence: College of Schools replaces faculties. |
| 2021 | Restructures continue (by directorate) |

2020 was a year of radical discontinuity for Australian and global societies, and to quote the UWA Chancellor, the Honourable Robert French AC CitWA, the University "was entering an important period of change in its history". Much of the work over this time was focused on supporting staff and students through the unprecedented challenge of the global pandemic, closed borders, and reorienting learning to online platforms.

The arrival of the new VC, Professor Amit Chakma in mid-2020 accompanied a renewed focus on UWA's sustainability, and a program of structural reforms were initiated. Faculties were dissolved and the College of Schools introduced, alongside a reimagining of the management structure. Despite the impacts of the structural changes, the implementation of the Athena Swan Bronze Action Plan, though delayed, has continued through the extraordinary leadership and commitment of staff across the University.