



Charles Sturt  
University

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# Women in STEM Decadal Plan Champion Response

2020



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*Charles Sturt University acknowledges the Wiradjuri, Ngunawal, Gundungarra and Biripai peoples of Australia, who are the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located, and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.*

# Foreword

**Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor John Germov**

I am immensely proud to present Charles Sturt University's Response to the Women in STEM Decadal Plan. Together with our SAGE Athena SWAN Bronze Award, and our Gender Equity Strategy, becoming a Decadal Plan Champion is another important way in which we can reaffirm our commitment to improving equity outcomes for women and girls in the STEM disciplines and industries.

As Acting Vice-Chancellor, I am committed to gender equity as a key element of our core University values – Inclusive, Insightful, Impactful and Inspiring. You will note from the Plan that I am the University's Executive Sponsor of our Athena SWAN action plan. I am also proud to lead the six-person senior executive team comprising four women.

Our Decadal Plan Response outlines some of the gains we have made to date, and our goals for the future. Some highlights from our work so far include, implementing a pilot 'Return to Research Scheme' to encourage STEMM academics back into research after a career break, and piloting a 'Gender Parity of Presenters Guideline' in the Faculty of Science to ensure we have equal visibility of men and women. In addition to my appointment to Athena SWAN as Executive Sponsor, we have recently appoint an Executive Champion, Dean of Science, Professor Megan Smith, which will see our STEM equity work embedded in our leadership and structures across the university.

While I am proud of the improvements we are making, I acknowledge there is always much work to do. I am committed to staying the course and doing all I can to ensure Charles Sturt continues to remove barriers that may limit the opportunities and contributions of female staff. On behalf of Charles Sturt, I welcome the opportunity to become a Champion of the Women in STEM Decadal Plan and look forward to working with the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Academy of Engineering and Technology to help deliver on its promises.

Professor John Germov  
Acting Vice-Chancellor

# Charles Sturt University

*Yindyamarra Winhanganha: The wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in.*



Charles Sturt University is a regional institution with campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga. The University ethos, *Yindyamarra Winhanganha*, is a Wiradjuri phrase meaning, 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in'. Our University Values – Inclusive, Impactful, Inspiring, and Insightful – are built from this ethos and drive us to be leaders in gender equity within the University and more broadly in the regions in which we work and live.

We welcome the opportunity to become a Women in STEM Decadal Plan Champion. We are proud of our efforts to create an inclusive, diverse and truly welcoming University for our staff, students and communities. We take pride in celebrating our female STEM academics, and in our work towards removing structural and cultural barriers that stymie their opportunities for success and career fulfilment. Through our Athena SWAN Bronze Award we are making improvements in gender equity in our STEM areas. In order to more accurately reflect our broad focus across the science fields, including medicine and allied health disciplines, we use STEMM rather than STEM throughout this document.

Becoming a Decadal Plan Champion is another important way in which we can reaffirm our University's ongoing commitment to our ethos and values, and our vision for gender equity in STEMM. The Decadal Plan is a vital contribution to the national discussion around the future of STEMM in Australia. As an anchor institution in our regions, we realise the vital role the University plays in the continuing vibrancy, health and prosperity of the communities we serve. We believe equity is for everyone, and that achieving it helps to create a world worth living in.





# Leadership



*Microbiologist and Charles Sturt's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Engagement, Professor Heather Cavanagh, is one of four women on the six-member senior executive team of the University.*

## LEADING FROM THE TOP

Leadership from senior executive members across the University is a central part of our gender equity approach at Charles Sturt, as exemplified by:

- Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Germov, providing strong sponsorship and ongoing commitment to implementing our [Athena SWAN Action Plan](#) and our [Gender-Equity Strategy \(2018-2022\)](#) – both of which will have significant institution-wide cultural and structural outcomes.
- Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Professor Megan Smith, is an Executive Champion of Athena Swan Action Plan.
- Associate Professor Cate Thomas in the role of Athena SWAN Convenor.
- Being a WGEA Pay Equity Ambassador demonstrating commitment to [closing the pay gap](#) at Charles Sturt.
- Frequent public support and participation in key events and initiatives, such as International Women's Day; the Leadership Shadow Exercise run by Male Champions of Change and Chief Executive Women.
- A commitment under our Gender Equity Strategy for 100% of Senior Staff to be trained in Unconscious Bias and Inclusivity Training by the end of 2020. Our Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Team was the first to do the training, and our VC as well as other senior leaders promoted the training via a [video](#) released on Equal Pay Day in 2019.

Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students), Jenny Roberts, also provides key leadership for gender equity, diversity and inclusion, including being the Chair of the University's Equity and Diversity Committee; being a White Ribbon Advocate; providing visible leadership in key initiatives such as '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based

Violence' and as a keynote speaker for 'Reclaim the Night' in Bathurst in 2019.

### LEADING FOR THE FUTURE

We are working to create opportunities, visible role models and systems that encourage and support women to take up senior roles.

As part of our Gender Equity Strategy we have set the University-wide KPI of 50% of Senior Staff roles to be held by women.

We run a leadership scheme called '[Leadership Development for Women](#)', which aims to improve the status, career development and decision-making contribution of women to Charles Sturt.

This programme has been running successfully for over a decade.

Senior Women at the University are invited to be part of a [Senior Women's Forum](#), which, amongst other things, promotes and advocates for cultural change across the University, and supports the professional development and career advancement of women.

As part of our Athena SWAN work, in 2020 we will host an inaugural Dean's leadership event in the Faculty of Science for academic women in our STEM schools. It aims to recognise leadership, emerging leadership and provide networking and learning opportunities for STEM women.

## Evaluation

We have participated in a range of robust evidence-based evaluation processes, including:

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Citation in 2018/19 and again in 2019/20. Our 2019/20 Application is available [here](#); Annual compliance reports made public by [WGEA](#).
- The SAGE Athena SWAN Bronze Award Accreditation process – we achieved the institutional Bronze Award in December 2018. Application available publicly at [SAGE](#).
- We participated in the Times Higher Education World University Impact Rankings evaluation process for the first time in 2020. We ranked 61<sup>st</sup> overall out of 766 institutions worldwide and placed 6<sup>th</sup> in Gender Equality out of 547 institutions worldwide and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Australia. Rankings are publicly available on [THE website](#).
- In 2019 we began participating in the [Australian Workplace Equality Index](#), a rigorous national benchmarking scheme measuring LGBTI workplace inclusion. We have since become members of Pride in Diversity. Reports available [here](#).





# Workplace Culture



Left: Athena SWAN Convenor and Associate Dean (Academic) in the Faculty of Science, Associate Professor Cate Thomas; From top right: Ally Network display; Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Germov; Members of our Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team

We have a range of activities and employment practices at Charles Sturt that aim to create an inclusive culture, one that especially fosters the retention and progression of women.

Our leave and flexible working conditions include 6 weeks maternity leave for those giving birth, 20 weeks paid primary carers leave for full-time continuing and fixed-term staff (pro rata for part-time staff), and casuals with 12 months continuous employment. We also have 15 days Family and Domestic Violence leave, with potential for a further 5 days in special circumstances. In addition, we offer a range of flexible working arrangements.

As part of our Athena SWAN commitments, we have a 'Return to Research Scheme' that supports staff with up to \$7000 to kick-start their research after returning from an extended break. We have funded Early to Mid-Career female staff in the

Faculty of Science to attend conferences that have a focus on developing career skills. We are encouraging part-time academic staff to apply for promotion and working with promotion panels to understand 'merit relative to opportunity' principles. In 2020, we launched a leadership event for women hosted by the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science to acknowledge and support women's leadership. We also plan to pilot a parental leave support scheme in the Faculty of Science to better understand and address the needs of STEMM academic and professional staff as they navigate new parenthood and their professional lives.

Alongside our Family and Domestic Violence Leave, we are raising awareness and building a supportive culture around the reasons for, and ways to respond to, Family and Domestic Violence,

especially in terms of its overwhelming impact on women and children, For [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence](#) in 2019, we created a [‘Know Your A-Z’ video](#) featuring our senior leaders. In May 2020, we partnered with SAGE in a webinar, ‘Supporting Employees Experiencing Family & Domestic Violence (during COVID-19)’. Prior to it going into administration, we were set to become institutional members of White Ribbon. We also have an informal partnership with Lifeline Central West to deliver [DV-Alert](#) training to staff and students, including our Vice-Chancellor’s Leadership Team.

We have developed an [Unconscious Bias and Inclusivity](#) training module open to all staff, but compulsory for all our Senior Staff who are to be

trained by the end of 2020. We also have a focus on making sure all recruitment and promotion panels undertake unconscious bias training. Further, the training module is being modified to become a part of our student leadership programme, [STRIVE](#).

In line with our current Gender Equity Strategy commitment towards a culture of inclusivity, we are working towards implementing gender neutral language in all official University Policies by the end of 2022.

We have also established an [Ally Network](#) that seeks to create a supportive and inclusive environment for our LGBTIQ+ community by training staff and students to become Allies.

## Visibility



*Clockwise from top left: Dr Lihong Zheng (6<sup>th</sup> from left) winning her CISCO Women in IT Award; Still from our video celebrating International Women and Girls in Science Day 2020; Associate Professor Lucy Webster and her children featured in our newsletter highlighting flexible working arrangements and return to work support; From left DVC (Research and Engagement) Professor Heather Cavanaugh, DVC (Students) Jenny Roberts and Dean of the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Professor Tracey Green, celebrating International Women’s Day 2019.*



We publish a quarterly '[Gender Equity Newsletter](#)' in which we routinely profile a female member of staff from our STEM disciplines highlighting their work achievements and experiences as STEM academic women. We also deliver six internal [webinars](#) and three videos a year in which we involve STEM women. For instance, during Bluestocking week in 2019, we held a '[Challenges and Successes of Female Academics](#)' panel where we heard from women academics from a range of disciplines.

As part of our Athena SWAN work in 2020 we are piloting a 'Gender Parity of Presenters Guideline' in the Faculty of Science which will require organising committees to achieve gender parity at major Faculty events.

As members of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), we co-produced a '[RUN Women in Science, Technology and Engineering in Regional Australia](#)' booklet which showcased the work and

experiences of female STEM researchers based in regional communities.

University-wide media across various platforms routinely highlight and celebrate the achievements of Charles Sturt's female STEM staff. Some recent examples include celebrating the 2020 [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#), with a video featuring female STEM staff sharing their stories, and young girls sharing their aspirations to be scientists. As well as an [interview](#) with our Faculty of Science Executive Dean, Professor Megan Smith, reflecting on the achievements and challenges for women's leadership in STEM. We also seek to continually promote the success of our female STEM students and staff, such as [an article](#) celebrating the high-achieving women in our IT Security Masters Programme and [this article](#) celebrating School of Computing and Maths lecturer, Dr Lihong Zheng when she won her CISCO Women in IT Award in 2019.

## Education

Across the University we work diligently to reach out and collaborate with our communities with a variety of initiatives and events aimed at school-aged girls to inspire, encourage and provide opportunities for them to study STEM. We also seek to support and, as outlined in the previous section, celebrate women as they come to study and research in STEM with us.

[Girls in Cyber Security Advancing](#) – Professor [Tanveer Zia](#) from our School of Computing and Mathematics has developed and been running a major project aimed at increasing the number of women in cyber security professions by focusing on educating girls in years 9-10. The programme involves girls participating in a series of workshops across the regions in which Charles Sturt is based. So far 120 girls from across NSW have participated in the project, which is co-funded by Charles Sturt and the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation and Science as part of the Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship programme. In late 2019 the project won the best Education Programme for Young Ladies in Security at the [2019 Women in Security Awards](#). And in 2020, it won third place in the Community Initiative of the Year at [the Asia-Pacific Triple E Awards](#) on Entrepreneurship and Engagement Excellence in

Higher Education. To hear what girls from the project have to say, view this [video](#).



*Girls in Cyber Security Advancing Programme.*

[STEM 2020 Strategies for a Rapidly Changing World, On Demand](#) – In early 2020 Charles Sturt was an in-kind sponsor of the NSW Department of Education's STEM 2020 Conference aimed at supporting and providing strategies and ideas to STEM educators from across the world. Amongst the speakers were seven [Charles Sturt academics](#) who delivered workshops to over 4000 delegates.

[Girls Day Out in STEM](#) – Our Port Macquarie campus hosted the first regional Girls Day Out in

STEM event as part of National Science Week in 2019. Designed for girls aged 10-14 years, the event, a partnership between Charles Sturt and



Girls Day Out in STEM, Port Macquarie.

Eureka Explorers, was a carnival-like day full of interactive learning experiences with industry leaders in STEM. The event is an effort to try to inspire girls to gain STEM skills with a long-term goal to help address the gender imbalance in STEM industries.

**Women in Engineering Scholarships** – As an example of our efforts to support women studying STEM disciplines once they get to Charles Sturt we offer an Engineering Scholarship specifically targeted at first-year women entering our Engineering programme. In 2020 the scholarships of \$3000 were awarded to two women from regional NSW.

## Industry Action

Strong relationships with the communities in which we work and live are central to our values and mission.

**A Trade of One's Own: Women in Manual Trades** – A research team of Charles Sturt staff engaged with a wide range of industry stakeholders across the construction and building sector to seek to understand how resilience is developed and utilised by women in male dominated industries. The research examined how women can be supported to achieve success and longevity in male-dominated occupations. The project explored the reasons why some women prosper in the trades, who and what facilitates their journey and how this occurs.

**SAGE ACT Regional Network** – We work closely with our Athena SWAN regional partners to share learning, resources and best practice. We recently collaborated with our Network to produce an interactive workshop on intersectionality for the Australian Academy of Science and SAGE conference, 'Catalysing Gender Equity 2020'. Consequently, 29 organisations including smaller not-for-profits and social enterprises received our training package for internal training sessions. The training package and resources are now publicly available and free-to-use for any group or organisation via the [SAGE website](#).

As part of our Gender Equity Strategy and Athena SWAN work we are committed to training our staff in unconscious bias and inclusivity, as well as sharing our training resources and experiences with the wider community. As such we have delivered training sessions to [Wagga Wagga City Council](#) and NSW Health – Western Local Health District. Moving forward we will look to continue these collaborations, and for new ways we can provide our resources and training experience to other organisations.



Top left and right: Attendees at the launch of a 'Trade of One's Own: Women in Manual Trades' report; Bottom left: Members of the research team Elizabeth Wulff, Branka Krivokapic-Skoko and Donna Bridges