

The sphere of influence that university outreach programs have on rural youth aspirations toward tertiary education

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Student Voice Needs to Inform Aspirations

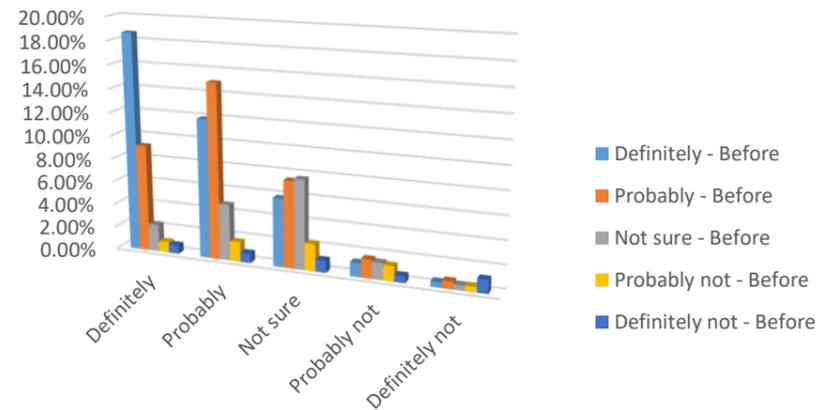
The CQUni Connect schools outreach program works in regional and rural Queensland schools. Program design reflects the need to build capacities for careers through tertiary education that enhance self-awareness and inform decision making. Through such an approach space is provided for student voice to contest the binary notion of rural and urban ideologues and imagine futures enhanced by social and cultural capital⁶.

“Young people’s aspirations for higher education are shaped by how they imagine or accept themselves fitting in with others⁵”

Outreach to Rural Areas Is Vital

Those from rural backgrounds are among groups who miss out, fall behind or have less positive dispositions towards education³. For rural youth the rural-urban divide may lead to an extraverted sense of place informing identity and perception of outmigration as the only way to fulfil imagined futures⁶. One of the most crucial life stages for increased social mobility is post-secondary yet financial pressures & lack of educational preparedness make it difficult to access further education². Furthermore, it becomes a mobility decision informed by family and community expectations⁷. It was expected that findings would show students residing in remote areas (ASGS 3 and 4) would be influenced the most however, it was ASGS Category 2 students who experienced the biggest shift in their belief that university was a possibility for their future post-program.

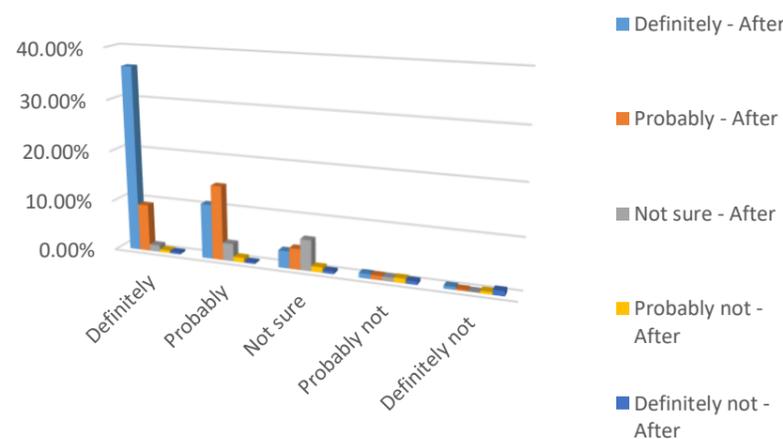
Student Expected Program Benefit by Aspiration Toward Uni (Before)



Source: CQUni Connect evaluation data, student surveys n =5340

“Young people may find imagined futures that do not align with family or lead them away from community as daunting⁴”

Student Expected Program Benefit by Aspiration Toward Uni (After)

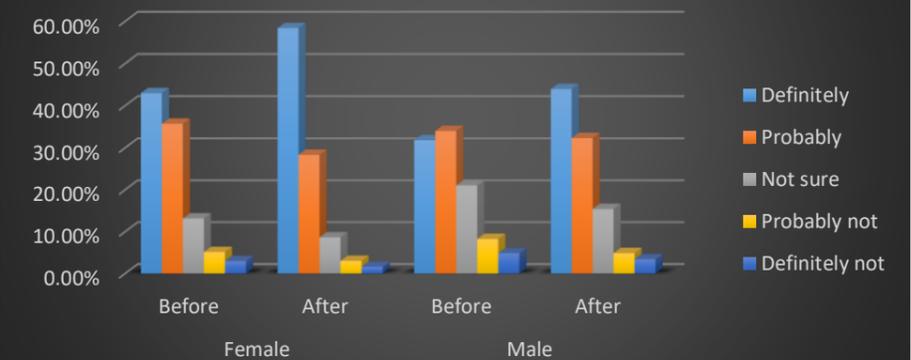


Source: CQUni Connect evaluation data, student surveys n=4579

Gendered Aspirations Play a Role

Evaluation data CQUniversity’s CQUni Connect program in 2016 – 2017 shows that gender plays a role in the perception of university as an option. Rurality factors such as community norms, family expectations, perceived ability and lack of awareness may contribute toward young males in rural communities’ lower expectation of imagined futures⁴.

Gender Comparison of Student's Aspirations Towards University



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