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More students in Adelaide's north pursuing tertiary pathways through the SACE

An increasing number of Year 12 students – who are now entering their final assessment period – are electing to pursue tertiary studies after secondary school.

SACE Board data shows the number of students completing the SACE and obtaining an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) has risen by more than 14 per cent from 10,066 in 2009 to 11,525 in 2013.

This rise has been steeper in some of Adelaide's northern suburbs high schools, where a series of initiatives have resulted in university offers to students increasing by 100 per cent since 2009.

Working closely with universities, the Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools Alliance (NASSSA) has introduced a mentoring program involving high achieving former students and specialised off-site classes to support and inspire students to pursue a university pathway.

NASSSA comprises Craigmores High School, Fremont-Elizabeth City High School, Gawler and District College B-12, Kairua Plains School, Para West Adult Campus, Parafield Gardens High School, Paralowie R-12 School, Salisbury East High School and Salisbury High School.

Its data shows that for Year 12 students completing school in 2013, 277 received university offers compared to 138 in 2009. Among those students, 208 accepted offers last year compared to 123 in 2009, a 69 per cent rise.

Examples of NASSSA initiatives include an engineering student from the University of Adelaide and former Para Hills High School student tutoring current SACE students in mathematics and physics. At Salisbury High School, three high-achieving former students who are currently at university work alongside classroom teachers to mentor Stage 2 students.

In addition, several schools are collaborating with a university to provide face-to-face courses in Stage 2 Chemistry, Physics and Specialist Mathematics in state-of-the-art facilities at Mawson Lakes

Principal of Salisbury High School Ann Prime said: "The mentors' recent experiences as Stage 2 students, including the challenges often faced in Year 12, provides another dimension of support. Their presence also raises student perceptions about their own ability to achieve."

Para Hills High School principal Janette Scott said the mentoring initiatives and university collaboration had resulted in attitudinal change, in students and teachers, to university pathways.

"Last year, this was reflected in more students across NASSSA schools getting Merits, more A grades being achieved, and higher ATARs," Ms Scott said.

"University aspirations have been a strong area of focus in recent years and strong partnerships and relationships have been made between NASSSA schools and universities," she said.

SACE Board Chief Executive, Dr Neil McGoran, said the SACE prepared students for success in the workplace, in further training and in tertiary studies.

“Through the SACE, students develop the skills and confidence to pursue their chosen pathway,” Dr McGoran said.

“Students learn to direct their own learning through the SACE – this is a great preparation for university study, as well as for the workplace, and for learning throughout their lives,” he added.

This year’s SACE results will be released on Thursday December 18.