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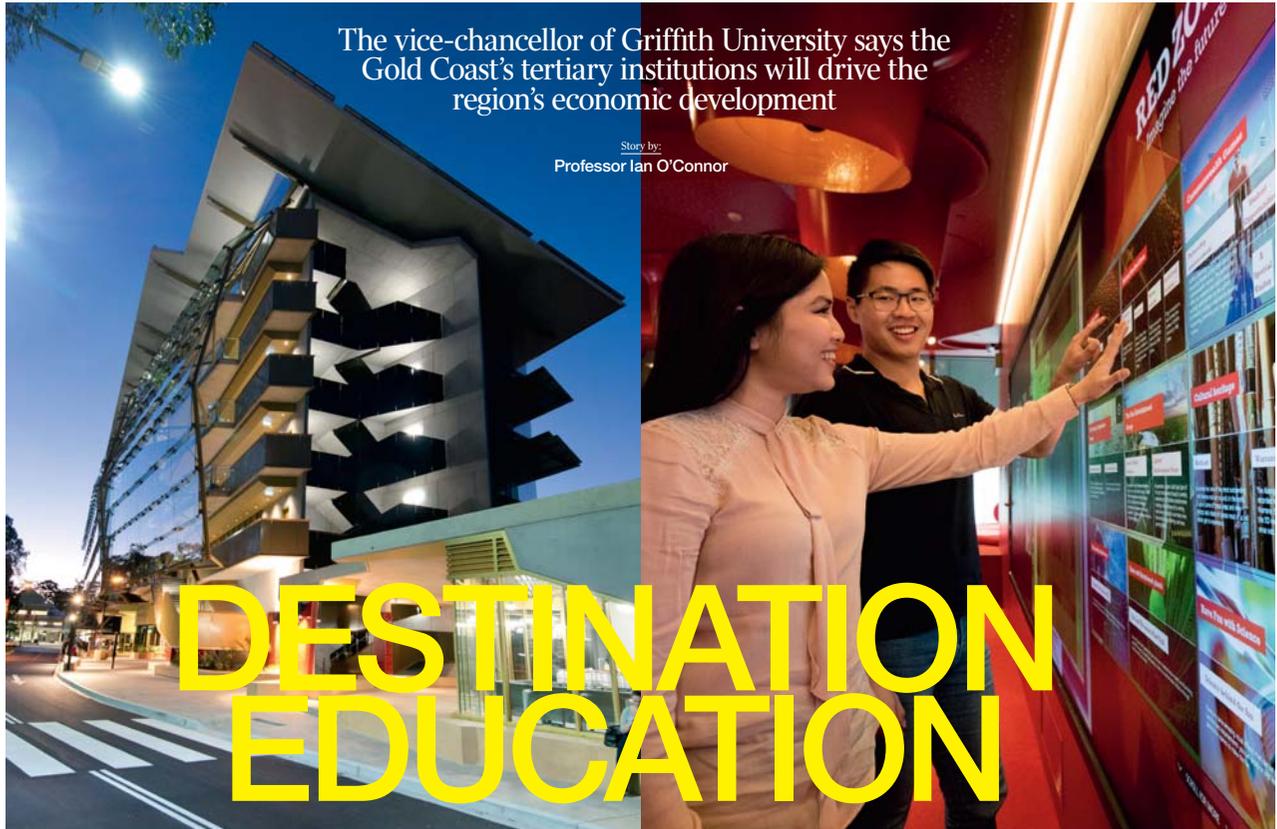
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The vice-chancellor of Griffith University says the Gold Coast's tertiary institutions will drive the region's economic development

Story by:
Professor Ian O'Connor

The growth of the university and research sectors is crucial to growing new economies on the Gold Coast. The region is well placed, with great connectivity thanks to two international airports, limited brownfield industry, and an entrepreneurial spirit that provides the ideal climate for fostering innovation.

Historically, there has been significant under-provision of higher education on the Coast, due to university places being capped. However, in recent years Griffith has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to grow our coast campus.

This includes the Griffith Health Centre, which opened in 2013 and operates in partnership with the co-located \$1.76 billion, 750-bed state-operated Gold Coast University Hospital.

The investment has provided the foundation for billions of dollars of co-investment in the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct by federal and state governments, City of Gold Coast and private investments. It includes the Gold Coast Private Hospital, major road infrastructure, the roll-out of fibreoptic cabling, an upper secondary academy and the Gold Coast Light Rail. This has been accelerated by the co-location of the 2018 Commonwealth Games Village in the precinct.

As well as the accommodation in the village, the Coast will benefit from the post-Games dedication of 9.5ha of developable land. With its focus on high-tech industry development, research collaboration, urban living and driving the jobs of the future, this will be a key element of the precinct's future.

Griffith's contribution will include establishing an Advanced Design and Prototyping Technology Institute (ADaPT), which leverages its capabilities in 3D digital design, material sciences and health. Griffith has committed \$80 million to build the facility after the Games.

It will allow rapid and translational prototype development, which will shape outcomes in fields such as dental and orthopaedic implants, to complex conductive systems like sensors and smart devices. The institute will employ material

scientists, product designers and specialists in 3D scanning and visualisation, advanced fabrication and 3D printing, who will develop and test materials and prototypes.

This builds on other investments in the biomedical sciences space, with our flagship Institute for Glycomics located in the precinct. The institute made headlines earlier this year with its malaria vaccine entering the human trial phase.

Griffith is part of an education ecosystem that includes three universities, and a growing number of Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers. The proactive TAFE Queensland Gold Coast offers a wide range of study areas, enhancing the educational offerings on the Coast.

As a relatively new university – it was established in 1974 – Griffith can respect tradition without being restricted by it, and has the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of students, industry and community.

Since 1990, the Gold Coast campus has expanded from three buildings, a carpark, 1800 students and a small number of enthusiastic staff into our largest campus – an internationally renowned research powerhouse in its own right.

Its development has mirrored the development of the Coast and the Coast campus is now our largest, with more than 20,000 students.

The Coast boasts Queensland's top private and public universities for student experience, with Griffith and Bond outperforming all others in the latest national student experience survey undertaken by the Social Research Centre.

Recent profiling of the city has seen it listed as an education destination rather than just a place for tourism. This focus has been sharpened by the City of Gold Coast's investment in Study Gold Coast, the region's education peak body. It has seen a development of a cohesive strategy that focuses on continuing to improve the student experience and employability.

While universities have traditionally concentrated on the education of school leavers, I now expect to see a diversification in focus towards mature-age students. Already at Griffith,

more than half of our enrolment applications come from non-school leavers.

The trend towards lifelong learning and flexibility will see a rise in micro-credentialing, with students able to access individual courses that can act as building blocks to a degree or higher degree.

There will be steady demand for tourism and hospitality programs, but increasing the numbers qualified to work in health and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) will be critical to meeting the future workforce needs of the Coast, to support the emerging economies and significant infrastructure investments in the city.

Griffith aims to have between 20 and 25 per cent of its student cohort from overseas. We are seeing students from a more diverse range of countries, and this reflects a better understanding of the Coast as a competitive study destination and its growing multiculturalism.

Education on the Coast is also attractive because of the deep links between education institutions and industry, which provide opportunities for work-integrated learning through industry placements and internships.

The opportunity for students to engage with the wider community through their university experience is crucial, because it is this sense of local pride and connectedness with local industry that can underpin the future strength and vibrancy of the city.

Our official partnership with the Games supports this. We wanted to be actively involved in shaping the event for our city and help make significant contributions to its legacy – not least through our future graduates.

We are providing students with unique and meaningful opportunities, sporting and academic scholarships, staff secondments and research opportunities.

The Games will transform the Coast, and are equally transformative for our students, staff, and our research and teaching infrastructure. **D**