

## COVID-19 Forum – TAG Senior Management 11.00, 20/05/20

Paul Clayton **(PC)** – QUT Guild

Daniel Randell **(DR)** - USASA

Mitch Trevena **(MT)** – Bendigo Student Association

Shelley Valentine **(SV)** – Arc @ UNSW

Luke Gilbert **(LG)** – Arc @ UNSW

Alf Maccioni **(AM)** – UOW Pulse

Monica Millar **(MM)** – UOW Pulse

Jess Reed **(JR)** – University of Sydney Union

Matt Posetti **(MP)** – Swinburne Student Union

Sue Rolland **(SR)** – Deakin University Student Association

Elise Redmond **(ER)** – MONSU Peninsula

Chris O’Grady **(CO)** – FUSA

Belinda Somers **(BS)** – Edith Cowan University

Matt Hoskins **(MH)** - Griffith Gold Coast Student Guild

Kerry-Ann Plant **(KP)** – ActivateUTS

Jane Caton **(JC)** – Australian Catholic University

Evan Battalis **(EB)** – Murdoch Student Guild

Lisa Dwyer **(LD)** – ECU Guild

David Murray **(DM)** – CQ University

Glenda Jacobs **(GJ)** – UQ Union

### General

**EB** Relationship with the university is flourishing.

University has asked that Guild cafes remain open, to provide takeaway and delivery on campus.

**CO** Blended teaching for the rest of the year.

Competition between universities for students is increasing.

**DR** Student rep persistence to be involved in the university decision-making process is now paying dividends, with consultation with the student association now being written into university policy, and representation on university committees.

Extra financial support has been forthcoming from the university as well.

Putting forward a proposal to take over merchandising for the university following the demise of the Co-op Bookshops.

Teaching will remain online until the end of the year. Tutorials and lab work will be face to face from July. This is mixed messaging from the university who is adopting a “campus is open” approach, but effectively discouraging students from attending.

- KP** Campus is restricted to staff and students only, with swipe card access. Five buildings are closed, and activity is restricted to the two main buildings.
- Library is reopening, but all remains as is until at least July 26. S2 will be online except for prac and lab use. This will equate to about 10% of the student population, but it will be staggered, so there will be no critical mass of students to ensure operations are viable.
- Engagement levels with student are very high through a comprehensive online program.
- UTS is projecting a \$120M shortfall this year, then upwards of \$150M for the next three years. This may impact upon Activate's long term funding agreement with the university, which is due for renegotiation.
- One commercial venue remains operational, but with limited capacity of 10 customers under the newly relaxed restrictions.
- DM** Recent COVID case in Rockhampton visited the university library three times. Drive through COVID test unit placed on campus in response.
- CQ University already has a high proportion of online teaching, so the current national move to online is not an issue.
- CQ University is a combined education facility, and the TAFE courses depend heavily on face-to-face teaching, which will bring some students back to campus by the middle of June.
- Campus cafes will open to service these students on a takeaway basis only for the interim.
- Their bookshop remains open. Its trade is traditionally 85% online, so there has been little reduction.
- JC** As a multi-state institution, there are challenges in dealing with four different state and territory jurisdictions and fitting the various requirements into a single university plan.
- Only 13% international students, predominantly Nepalese, so this year's impacts have not been significant. This, however, is expected to worsen over the next couple of years. Nevertheless, all capital has been frozen.
- Students returning to campus in small numbers for lab and prac work. Classes will be held over the mid-semester break to catch up on prac classes.
- Online teaching has been successful and will continue until mid-August.
- Student engagement online is high if the content is fun.
- Cafes reopened this week, and trading very slowly, with tenants subsidised with a weekly allowance until beginning of S2.
- Bookshops are closed and hurting as learning content is being embedded in the online learning systems. Unlikely to continue in the current model into the future.

The School Locker is surviving on their Mac One business, which is trading strongly due to Apple stores being closed.

**AM** Mac One business is also trading well. Bookshop remains open and online sales of textbooks also remains strong, particularly to local schools.

Cash flow will be a major challenge moving forward, with 300 staff on JobKeeper that they pay weekly then having to wait for reimbursement from the ATO.

Their cafes remain open. Tenants are now returning to campus and have not been charged rent since March. This will be the case until the end of June.

Gym remains closed, but their outdoor programs are fully booked.

Delivering alcohol from UniBar to a 5 km radius. Custom is mainly university staff.

**JR** Cash flow is a major problem, brought on by a decrease in commercial operations. \$500K/week has dropped to \$20K/week.

USYD staff returning to campus in July.

Blended learning for S2, with tutorials and labs returning first.

**MT** Despite the disruption, the university is still insisting that the three La Trobe student associations continue working towards an amalgamated model.

Students' need for their essential services is increasing.

All access to campus has been deactivated.

Highly unlikely that there will be a return to campus before August, and that will be in a staged approach with prac work first. Most teaching to the end of the year will be delivered online.

Unlikely that the café will reopen.

**ER** Any proposed amalgamation of the various Monash student associations would be controversial due to the diverse nature of the Monash campuses.

Online engagement of students is becoming over-saturated.

Clubs are becoming concerned about their large-scale events scheduled for later in the year, and the impact of restrictions.

Prac and labs students are beginning to return. University is likely to introduce an online module to be completed before more students can return to campus.

**MH** University is also seeking single student association representation across all campuses.

Difficult navigating the different levels of restrictions: federal, state, local government, and university. Particularly in relation to sports.

Also challenging having to create and launch programs within three weeks as opposed to the usual three months.

Online volunteering has been a big success, such as Zoom hangouts with aged care facilities, creating handwritten cards of support for the vulnerable sections of society or international students in lockdown.

Cross-campus collaboration has improved considerably, eg their assignment checking service has been extended to all campuses, as well as their webinar series, with the university sharing the costs.

Student dial-in hotline has not experienced great take up, despite the content being well-received in other formats.

University is looking to continue blended learning for the rest of the year. Full return likely to be 2021. Commercial operations will be heavily impacted. The concept of the “sticky campus” will be severely tested.

**SV** UNSW particularly hard hit due to high exposure to international students. Projecting a \$600M hit this year, followed by \$450M for the next two years.

University has not moved on the longer-term support agreement currently in place with Arc, although the expectation that the several management contracts that hold with the university such as sport, will have funding cut.

Arc is suffering financially due to the loss of commercial operations, with all campus outlets closed. It is not expected that they will be able to recover quickly. Embarking on forward planning a three-year plan for the organisation.

20-25 online sessions being deployed each week across the full gamut of engagement points: social, fun, information, advice, assistance, wellness, etc.

**SR** Relationship with Deakin university is strong.

Challenge in representing students to university in seeking fairness around grading. DUSA is advocating an opt-in/opt-out system which the university has been firmly resisting and changing approach. Communication from university has been poor which has elicited a huge backlash from students, which is impacting on DUSA’s reputation.

Library and some staff areas are open, but there is no indication of when the university may re-open completely. Unlikely to be soon. DUSA looking to reopen their book shop for a few hours daily around exam period.

Looking at how to maintain online engagement post-COVID, to engage with Deakin’s 15,000 online students.

**LD** All physical operations and activities on campus have ceased. Money allocated for those has been diverted to direct student support and online events where possible.

Secondhand bookshop has benefitted from the closure of the Co-op Bookshop on campus, buying \$215K of stock for only \$750.

**MP** Modelling budgets for next year amidst the current uncertainties is challenging.

Relationship with university continues to strengthen. It is identified by the university that the Union's communication with students is more effective, and the Union's relationship with international students stronger.

Minimum viable physical learning for S2, everything else will remain online.

A positive creative process is underway on how to convert typically physical commercial activity to a virtual model.

Believes that the disruption has hardly been a death knell for the organisation, rather an opportunity to showcase their agility in being able to add value more broadly across the university.

**PC** Online Q&A with Guild executive, advocacy, and legal/student rights have proven successful.

Their up and down relationship with the university, while improving, is still not where it should be in terms of collaboration and communication. Exacerbated by the political stance of a couple of the Guild executive, which erodes the university's trust.

Any move by the university to impose rent for the Guild commercial outlets, or any change to JobKeeper, will be problematic.

**GJ** University communications with students and the Union has been poor.

Students appear to be tiring of the online engagement programs, but online Q&A with university and Union have been relatively well-attended, as they seek to plan on getting through their studies and the disruption.

University is not planning to return to physical classes for S2, other than some tutorials and labs.

Union outlets will re-open around the end of June, starting with a few, then ramping up as demand increases.

**TAG** TAG is hosting a free webinar Tuesday 26/05/20 with two industry specialists to provide insight on developing a COVID safe re-opening of campuses regarding the considerations, demands and requirements of readying your operational spaces for the return of students to campus, whenever that may be. Email [info@tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au](mailto:info@tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au) if you would like to attend.

Don't forget that there are GST exemptions for registered charities.

<https://www.tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au/news/are-you-eligible-for-gst-concessions-relating-to-c/>

## **SSAF**

**EB** S1 SSAF fee has not been impacted. Concerns however, that the absence of international students in S2 will negatively impact on SSAF. UA are looking at methods by which international students may be able to reenter.

Sufficient reserves held for the duration.

**CO** Flinders University has refunded all students their S1 SSAF fee, but at this point, FUSA's funding has been guaranteed for the rest of the year.

Funding for events may be redirected.

**DR** Funding has not been reduced this year, but flags have been raised regarding next year.

SSAF application must be completed by July, but the current uncertainty makes this a difficult process.

**KP** ActivateUTS received part-payment from the university in April, representing roughly half of their usual SSAF allocation, and were told that it was likely to be no more SSAF allocated for the year. Clubs were told that no SSAF funding for ActivateUTS translated to no SSAF funding for clubs. This led to a student backlash on social media, particularly when considering that UTS continues to charge SSAF to students. This has prompted the university to do an about face and offer further SSAF funding later in the year.

**DM** Fully funded by the university, not dependent on SSAF.

Student associations working more closely with the university communications team, which has improved all communications with students.

**JC** No change to SSAF, students being charged as normal. No pushback from students.

**AM** Will receive no SSAF for the remainder of this year and is modelling on receiving none in 2021.

**JR** No change to SSAF, students being charged as normal, but they are becoming restless.

**MT** No SSAF collected from students in S1, and consideration is being given to reducing SSAF charges in S2. Consequently, all three La Trobe student associations have had their SSAF reduced by 50%, backdated to the start of the year.

Next year's SSAF funding will not exceed this year's reduced allocation.

**ER** Current SSAF has been reduced by 50%. Due to commence negotiating their next three-year funding arrangement with the university. The impact of COVID will make that an interesting challenge.

**MH** 20% reduction in SSAF this year, which is manageable considering that their larger events will not be taking place. Online activities are cheaper to run than a large physical event.

Next year expects a reduction in SSAF next year, which may conflict with their desire to return to large events.

Believes that the Guild is easily delivering as much in the way of programs as they were pre-COVID, albeit in a different medium. This may contribute to students not resisting the university charging full SSAF.

**SV** University continues to charge full SSAF, to mixed reaction from students.

- SR** SSAF has been reduced to online level, but no change to DUSA's SSAF funding this year, although notice has been given that there may be consideration of a reduction for next year.
- LD** ECU has cut SSAF to Online Rate. Guild will receive a 50% share of SSAF. Overall, this represents a 57% reduction in expected funding. Successfully negotiated with the university for additional funds over 50% of the share of SSAF, resulting in now receiving two-thirds of what they would normally receive.
- Online events have been successful. S2 orientation, and the Guild Fair, will both be delivered online.
- Blended learning for S2, but no physical lectures of more than 40 persons.
- Relationship with the university has significantly improved.
- MP** Current university stance is that there will be no reduction of SSAF to the Union. Potentially a different scenario next year.
- PC** University has not cut SSAF to the Guild. This is a bonus for what is already an under-resourced and under-funded team.
- GJ** Union may not receive SSAF in S2, but the university has not confirmed or denied this, appearing wary of committing to an outcome either way for now.

## **Staff**

- EB** Eligible for job seeker. This has underwritten the return of staff to campus at 50% of their regular times. Hoping to transition to 100% soon, as WA restrictions ease.
- If staff cuts are necessary next year, first course of action will be that fixed-term contracts will not be renewed.
- CO** Staff have been redeployed across the university, and vacancies are not being filled.
- All staff have been directed to return to campus next week, university is keen to return to normalcy.
- Flinders feel that they are in a reasonably strong position this year and have declined to participate in NTEU proposal to approach universities to protect jobs.
- TAG** Projections are that up to 21,000 jobs may be lost from the university sector.
- DR** Paid casuals for four weeks but has since had to furlough them.
- Staff have been WFH since 18/03/20. Some are doing well, others are beginning to struggle, particularly event staff, who are feeling that they can't contribute and may be unneeded.
- Others are being challenged by the isolation.
- KP** A and B teams operating to mitigate potential exposure.

- More than 100 staff are on JobKeeper. All permanent staff are secure, but casuals are exposed.
- DM** Has run a successful “send us a photo of your WFH space” competition for staff (an extension of a similar study from home photo comp for students). Great for engaging staff and maintaining staff morale and wellness.
- 184 voluntary separations accepted by the university as stage one of their Initial Change Proposal.
- University is in discussions with NTEU proposal to approach universities to protect jobs. This has resulted in the Initial Change Proposal being put on hold.
- JC** Staff are being very strongly encouraged to take leave.
- VC has flatly refused NTEU negotiations.
- All casuals were paid for S1, regardless of whether they were working or not.
- 500 staff have returned to campuses. University don’t provide free parking, but staff are reticent about using public transport. Same with students on their larger campuses.
- JC** JobKeeper has been a lifesaver.
- JR** Managing staff morale is difficult, with all working staff at 60% capacity. Contracted staff have been wound up.
- MT** They would not survive with JobKeeper. 23 on full stand down on JobKeeper. All other staff have taken an FTE reduction relative to the decrease in hours that they can actually do.
- All staff have agreed to bring back accrued leave to two weeks.
- Student board have decreased their honoraria.
- ER** Despite JobKeeper, they will need to dip into cash reserves to continue operating.
- MH** Staff PD’s are currently being scrapped, replaced by a Project Allocation basis. Eg, their sports staff are doing student support such as crisis care food packs, as their support staff are busy with extra advocacy and consultation. Staff have been flexible and amenable to their tasks, simply happy to be doing something.
- SV** Eligible for JobKeeper. Permanents stood down 25%, reduced hours for another 20%, and staff with over two weeks of leave have been asked to take it over the next few months. Likely increase to the hour reductions to all staff in the next month or so. Nearly all casuals stood down. In the process of allocating work for casual through JobKeeper.
- SR** 74 staff on JobKeeper. Staff have adapted well. Those that have no work to do from home are taking online learning.
- LD** Accessed JobKeeper and reduced 50% of staff hours down to recognise the downturn in available work in some areas and to make savings across the year. This will be in place to the end of September.

JobKeeper is being topped up for staff wherever possible. Some casual staff are refusing to work extra shifts to bring them up to the JobKeeper \$1500 threshold.

Three casuals ineligible for JobKeeper are being deployed wherever possible to ensure hours are maintained. Ban on overtime in place.

Staff returning to office on Monday which will be good, as some typically simple processes have been disrupted and amplified by WFH.

**PC** GM and three senior officers will return to office Monday, with a view for full staff return on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

## **Student Support**

**EB** Providing Coles voucher each week for students in need.

Tavern kitchen has been retooled to cook free meals for students.

**CO** Has received \$1M grant from university to support International students.

SA government is also granting \$3M to each SA university to support international students. Some of this will be directed to FUSA to distribute via grants as well.

Woolworth vouchers are being given to students.

FUSA's food relief package proposal rejected by the university. Their trepidation may be from concerns that it may be seen as an admission that the situation is terrible for international students.

**DR** UniSA has established a \$10M hardship fund for students, with association representation involved.

The financial counselling service has been very busy, as expected. The hardship fund has taken much of the financial pressure off the association, but increased its workload, requiring the allocation of a second staff member for the next eight weeks.

**JC** Support for international students is in place through ACU International.

**AM** Giving out 1,000 free meals to students from the UniBar today.

**JR** Experiencing great success with their meal delivery and grocery box service.

**ER** Experiencing great success with their emergency relief welfare program that covers students not eligible for Centrelink or Monash University assistance.

Looking to tap into the Second Bite program for free food for international students, and to extend the successful Clayton and Caulfield campus free frozen meals program to the Peninsula campus.

Student surveys regarding concerns with remote learning are well received and communicated to the various faculties.

Drop-in sessions have not been successful. It appears that their students prefer to email or phone.

- SV** University has established a \$5M support fund, in which Arc was a key stakeholder in the development of.
- SR** University has established a \$25M support fund for international students, on a case-management basis. DUSA handling grocery and day-to-day living expenses, university is handling rent and bigger ticket items.
- LD** Partnered with Foodbank WA to provide food hampers to some students. Open to staff and public for donations. Significant demand has led to delays in delivery of service.
- MP** Have provided access to their professional Zoom for clubs and student groups.
- PC** Weekly \$25 grocery vouchers being distributed to students in need. 95% of these are international students.

Collaborating with local churches in delivering food hampers to students as well.

#### **TAG Mentor Program:**

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<https://www.tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au/for-members/tag-mentor-program/>

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