

COVID-19 Forum – TAG Senior Management 11.00, 22/06/20

Paul Clayton **(PC)** – QUT Guild

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

Sarah Jennett **(SJ)** – UCX

Tania Moroko **(TM)** – University of Sydney Union

Kelly Wang **(KW)** – University of Sydney Union

Ella Scorringle **(ES)** – Swinburne Student Life

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

Chris Beattie **(CB)** – Griffith University Campus Life

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

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

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

Lisa Dwyer **(LD)** – ECU Guild

Clint Wooler **(CW)** – UQ Union

Dee Jarrett **(DJ)** – University of Melbourne Student Union

General

ER Successful online AGM held.

Success of some online programs towards the end of semester (mindfulness, yoga) were not successful in engaging many students.

MT Orientation has been delivered online, and students have been advised that unless they have critical face-to-face teaching requirements, that they will be studying online for S2.

Despite the disruption, the university is still insisting that the three La Trobe student associations continue working towards an amalgamated model by the end of the year.

Café is now in hibernation until the end of the year, with no intention of reopening before the amalgamation. Has not been closed permanently, in the hope that the new student services entity will be able to operate it. This will depend on the university agreeing to them having a commercial income.

Online AGM successful, and fun.

SJ UC and ANU are planning to charter a jet to bring 350 international students from a Singapore hub into Australia, test them, quarantine them, and then re-test them before allowing them to resume studies on campus. Targeting further progress students in their second and third years. Quarantine paid for by universities. Plan has been approved by ACT government, waiting for Federal government approval.

Virtual O Week supported by some smaller activations on campus under COVID-safe practices.

- ES** Challenge is achieving a coordinated and collaborative approach to online orientation for the last week of July with the university.
- Focusing on 4-week engagement programs for S2.
- EB** Relationship with the university is flourishing. Guild is being treated as a partner, by being focused on the joint objectives of the university and guild and by improving governance and reporting. To support this, Deloitte have been appointed Guild auditors, with reduced fees as a NFP.
- LD** Orientation will be hybrid online and campus-based, with small campus tours taking place. Launching dedicated website for orientation activities.
- Successfully negotiated with the university for a commitment to Guild funding despite reduced SSAF fees. VC is very supportive of the Guild, and the university has recognised the good work being done for students.
- MH** Challenge is understanding how to keep all the good virtual programs and activities that they have developed in response to the lockdown, while also returning to all the previous face-to-face engagement.
- The moving goalposts are also a challenge, as no sooner is a problem solved, than the rules and regulations have changed again. E.g. the return to campus requirements have changed faster than can be announced.
- The online conversion of Guild activities has been a great success, but this has impacted on the time that could have been used to update governance requirements.
- Difficult navigating the different levels of restrictions: federal, state, local government, and university. Particularly in relation to sports.
- CB** Planning and budgeting is challenging in this uncertain environment.
- 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.
- Cafés business has been impacted significantly, with tenants subsidised with a weekly allowance until beginning of S2.
- Students appear to have total disregard for social distancing on campus and disregard all instruction or efforts to enforce it.
- As with other members, the moving regulatory goal posts are proving challenging, requiring plans to be continually rewritten.
- ACU is progressing on schedule to open their new Blacktown campus next year, with around 1,000 students initially.
- DJ** Challenge is bringing UMSU's long history of physical activity into an online environment.
- The university will not currently support any on-campus activity, including orientation.

- PC** QUT campuses are dead presently. Will all students want to come back given the concerns regarding COVID. This will make the concept of a sticky campus even more difficult to achieve. This will in turn have significant effect on the Guild's commercial services.
- The Gardens Point campus bar is open, but the Kelvin Grove campus bar will remain closed until student numbers increase. Their retail outlets on both campuses are open, but only turning enough revenue to cover wages.
- TM** Challenged by significant fall in cash flow from commercial operations. However, the USYD Store Sale turned approx \$55k over 4 days. The USU2U prepaid meal service to student accommodation is also performing well.
- With graduations currently cancelled, the Union is working with the university to create a Do it Yourself Grads/Capture the Moment - hire a gown take photos on campus.
- Digital platform still working well focusing on Virtual Day in collab with the university.
- Online election received good voter turnout, as did the online AGM.
- TAG** 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/>

Return to Campus

- ER** Town Hall meeting held last week with Monash Orientation and Transition Team. Still lots of confusion at university level as to who will be allowed to attend campus, considering that the university has advised that anyone who can study from home should do so until the end of July, which coincides with the commencement of orientation. Consequently, it appears that it will be an online orientation.
- Monash Building and Property have provided guidelines for students allowed to return to campus. Lots of COVID stickers, signs, cordons, and reduced furniture across campus.
- Challenges in the uncertainty regarding return to campus for prac and labs students. University communications in this matter are corporate and not received well by students.
- MT** No indication from the university of a date for return to campus. Possible that a very small area of the Bendigo campus library may be reopened to students from end of July. Greater student numbers on campus will not be until late August, or even September.
- SJ** Campus will be open for S2, with O week at end of July, classes first week of August.
- Staff have been on campus for three weeks, with university providing flexibility for those that don't want to return presently.
- University is preparing campus for COVID-safe return of students. Lots of COVID stickers, signs, cordons, and reduced furniture across campus.

ES Swinburne were in the midst of return-to-campus planning, but the recent Victorian spike in COVID cases has affected that. Students advised to remain online for as much of their studies as possible, exceptions being prac and lab work.

The Student Life team will not return to campus until September at the earliest.

EB University is in discussion with state and federal government to create a “safe corridor” for international students to reenter the country and return to campus for S2 This is very similar to the ACT university proposal.

LD Preparing for COVID-safe return. Perspex screens being installed in their reception areas, BYO crockery and cutlery in their student kitchen. All staff involved with food have undertaken Australian Hospitality Association COVID-19 training, as enforced by WA government regulations for all hospitality staff.

MH University Is returning technical workshops to campus in July. Guild will focus on sport, health, and mental wellness at that time. Social, cultural, study support and employability to follow. Lectures, major events, market days, campus stores and travel unlikely to return to normal operations until 2021.

Less people on campus means that the traditional busy times of transitions between tutorials and lectures won’t eventuate to the same extent.

University is looking to continue blended learning for the rest of the year. Full return likely to be 2021.

University has put together a “Sprint Team” to risk-assess and approve every activity.

Looking to draft a Guild return to campus plan that utilises the guiding principles of all the different authorities, that will hopefully fulfill the requirements of any authorisation process at the time.

CB Griffith University has created a Project Recovery Team and a three-stage plan culminating on Aug 17th, to facilitate on-campus experience for any student that wishes to do so. To drive this, every section or service of the university develops a COVID plan which then goes to the Team for review and approval.

This requires jumping through a lot of hoops, which may be difficult particularly with tenants who may be dragging their heels on developing a COVID plan.

Aim is to have every building on campus open by Aug 17th. Lectures will remain online.

JC Campus has not closed, all buildings are open. Essential staff only until a few weeks ago, but now all staff expect Victorian are expected to be on campus by July 1st. No WFH, all on campus, but with staggered start times to alleviate public transport concerns.

Difficult to maintain social distancing as they are all city campuses with limited space, particularly during cold weather. This will be a challenge when students return for S2 at the end of July.

Students have been on campus in small numbers for lab and prac work. Classes have been held over the mid-semester break to catch up on prac classes.

In S2 lectures will remain online, but students will be able to attend tutorials, etc on campus.

DJ Return to campus will be dictated by government considering the current spike in Victorian COVID cases.

Orientation will be online, using the Hopin event platform.

PC 50% of faculties to be back on campus for beginning of S2. Pending the success of that, the remainder will be transitioned back Sep/Oct. However, there appears to be mixed messaging, as the university is still maintaining that lectures will be online.

TM University hosting a Townhall meeting this Wednesday, hoping for an announcement opening 24th August, although not a lot of preparation on campus yet.

USU are fully prepped with their own COVID plans/Signage including registration system for dine in.

Staff

ER Will shrink their events team significantly once JobKeeper ends, to reflect the reduced events on campus.

Keeping WFH team morale and cohesion through regular virtual meetings. Many small parked jobs and projects have finally been attended to.

MT All operational staff are now P/T. Another 22 on full stand down on JobKeeper.

All PPT café staff will be entitled to redundancy.

SJ Staff have been utilising accrued leave, supported by JobKeeper. Some have been stood down.

ES Have recently discovered that Swinburne Student Life is eligible for JobKeeper. Staff working 9-day fortnights, and 9 casual positions have been lost.

University is seeking 200 voluntary redundancies.

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.

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.

Do not anticipate any further staff shrinkage, in fact there may be a little growth.

The team 1 and team 2 WFH program had eroded the effectiveness of the Guild team, with some typically simple processes being disrupted and amplified by WFH. All staff have now returned to office now, which allows for immediate redress when issues arise.

MH Staff numbers are not expected to change significantly, although the Guild is undertaking a three-month full review of service structure, which was already scheduled for later but now fast-tracked due to COVID.

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.

CB University is reviewing staff requirements across three areas: learning and teaching, research, and corporate services. End goal is to determine where they can reduce staffing.

Operational agility has been good, eg chefs doing landscaping. Everyone is working as a team to make it happen.

JC Staff numbers will be reduced. No fixed term contract renewals.

PC All Guild staff are back on campus and supported by JobKeeper.

TM All Union staff are on 60%.

TAG There is a looming gap between the projected end of JobKeeper in September and a full return of students to campus in early 2021, which will financially test members dependent on commercial revenues

SSAF

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.

MT All three La Trobe student associations have had their SSAF reduced by 50%, backdated to the start of the year. No SSAF collected from students in S1, and SSAF charges in S2 have been halved. This results in the university only collecting 25% SSAF this year.

EB SSAF fee has not been impacted. Their low dependence on international students should mean that SSAF will remain intact for S2.

LD SSAF projections will be better than the originally anticipated 57%, despite reduction in S1 fees charged to students. This is driven by an anticipated increase in domestic students in S2, and a return to full SSAF fees in S2.

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

- DJ** SSAF has reduced due to decrease in student numbers. Reduction in on-campus activity and the associated cost savings will mean that the Union should be okay for now, but funding for 2021 is an unknown.
- PC** Approaching university for an increase to SSAF for 2021, to mitigate the financial damage of COVID.

Student Support

- ER** Providing an Emergency Support Service that gives out between \$100-\$250 grants to students who don't qualify for Centrelink or the Monash Hardship program. Also handing out free meals supplied by Second Bite to students in need every Tuesday on campus.

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.

- MT** Diversifying delivery of services. E.g. their usual SwotVac trolley that provides food to students in the library during SwotVac was replaced by 20 study hampers that were given to 20 students via an online application process.

BSA is assisting with providing students with increased emergency food relief packs via partnership with Bendigo Food Share and allocating increased Woolworths food vouchers. Have also allocated 30 uber eats and menu log vouchers. Have taken over administration of emergency relief grants on behalf of the University from a local donor and will hopefully soon have allocated the first 50 x \$300 grants with another 100 to administer in the coming weeks.

Continuing to provide advocacy and support to students.

- SJ** Food pantry for international and residential students has been a great success.

University has provided 80,000 meals since COVID, with UCX providing 75% of those. This has kept them in the good books of the university.

- EB** \$8.5M support package for students who are ineligible for government support, or who are enduring hardship.

Providing Coles voucher each week for students in need.

Tavern kitchen has been retooled to cook free “Heat and Eat” meals for students in need, using free produce from Oz Harvest accessed through WACOSS (WA Council of Social Service).

LD Guild Student Assist has experienced a significant increase in appeals. Looking to increase staff hours in this area, and engage an extra GSA on temporary contract, to deal with the extra workload.

Partnered with Foodbank WA to provide food hampers to some students through an application process. Looking to move to a longer term 3-month support where students collect their boxes from Foodbank themselves with a card for identification.

MH Upscaling food, hygiene and baby crisis care packs for students ineligible for govt assistance because they can’t give out cash.

PC Weekly \$25 grocery vouchers being distributed to students in need.

Collaborating with local churches in delivering 65-70 food hampers to students each week.

DJ Issues with the manner in which the university is dealing with matters has led to an increase in online campaigns on behalf of students, e.g. the distribution of Emergency Support Funds that has been ineffective to date with students having applied but still waiting to receive notification or support, as well as the manner in which the university is holding exams. This has resulted in the Union moving more into an advocacy space, as this is where students are really needing support, and is where the students are most engaging the Union.

Launching campaign regarding the newly announced fee increases.

TAG The degree fee increases is very likely going to become the new student battleground.

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