STUDENT VOICE AUSTRALIA *SYMPOSIUM 2022*

Presenter Abstracts
Stories from the field

Preparing students for student partnership: Revisiting the potential of a Partnership Mindset

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For the last 2-3 years at WSU, we have been wrestling with the question of how we ourselves might have been better prepared for our roles as 21C Student Curriculum Partners. Many of us applied for a role that sounded interesting; the description contained words we recognised, but the work itself is initially hard to grasp. There have been multiple challenges we have confronted as students: learning what the work of curriculum is (it is its own field of study), the institutional systems that support it, figuring out what we can add to it, understanding how and why we co-create curriculum in partnership with staff, external partners, and the University, and describing the work we do to others, especially our student peers. For many of them, the student curriculum partnership work remains a mystery even though they appreciate our involvement in it. What might be at the heart of this communicative puzzle?

On the one hand, there is a straightforward communications job to do and to plug away at. On the other, many of us have experienced a transition in the move from being a student, to the role of a student partner. It's a transition that students don't often see or feel immediately, and it's a transition that's underestimated in much of the student-staff partnership literature, unhelped by the conflation between student experience and expertise. Experience in and of itself, does not confer or imply expertise necessarily. In our work, an agentic expansion happens. We see ourselves as students differently, in a partnership with staff rather than being told (or expecting to be told) by staff. We have become curious, more engaged, take on more responsibility, seek opportunities to negotiate learning, ask better questions, have more empathy, and in general, we have slowly begun to see the university as a place that we are capable of shaping. Even though the extent of expansion is uneven among us and still jars in our different interactions with the university, we have come to understand this expansion as part of cultivating a Partnership Mindset. In this presentation, we describe a Curiosity Pod (Student-Staff Partnership: Co-creating change) a piece of curriculum we initiated, developed, and led as the first component in inviting WSU students to take up a Partnership Mindset. For us, the Curiosity

Pod is part of a larger strategy that helps to prepare, engage and sustain our student-staff partnership landscape.

An argument to align student voice activities into a connected framework, from dialogue to partnership

Tom Lowe, University of Portsmouth (UK)

Student voice, representation and partnership agendas are growing worldwide, where all levels of higher education providers are now experimenting in student engagement for development of their area of education. From structured course-level student academic representative systems, to university-wide surveys, and student presidents on governance boards, student voice is now happening *en masse*. Although, as each practice is initiated with the best of intentions, many of these student voice activities are occurring in silos, on different levels, and more than often, are not connected. The need to draw together these different sources of student voice grows as institutions are increasingly self-creating several avenues of student feedback. This presentation argues for the need to align our student voice activities and consider the student perspective on the feedback pathways we have created. Students have available a great variety of student engagement opportunities, yet how these opportunities connect is not clear and requires reflection, which this presentation will address.

Student–Staff partnerships as a vehicle for enhancing students' sense of belonging to university: A case study from a multi-year student–staff partnership program at the University of Queensland

Elizabeth Krenske, The University of Queensland

At the University of Queensland, a team of chemistry academics have recently utilised student–staff partnership projects to enhance the development of new learning activities and student engagement initiatives. This presentation will share our team's experiences, including not only the direct outcomes of our projects but also the lessons we have learned about engaging successfully in student–staff partnerships that encompass diverse objectives. A key theme in many of our projects has been the aim of introducing measures to enhance students' sense of belonging to university, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This presentation will explore the ways in which student–staff partnerships have delivered benefits to both the student partners themselves and the broader cohorts they serve.

Elevating the 'Student Voice' across a National Student Community: A case study from Torrens University Australia

Sarah Molden, Josephine Ocampo, Simon Hallgath-Jolly, Jin-oh Choi, Evan Karras, Chloe Hilaire, Lam Ho, & Jessica Delos Reyes, Torrens University Australia.

With campuses established across the country, Torrens University Australia (TUA) offers a dynamic national network of staff, student representatives and cohorts. Hear from our Student Ambassadors and SRC Presidents as they reflect on how we approach the development of a National Student Community and work towards the authentic contribution of students to co-curate their university experience through: establishing student communications through platforms such as social media, a student newsletter and student podcast; aligning events and activities across our cohorts such as National Day Trips, Fun & Socials and Sports; facilitating internal collaboration between students and staff through initiatives like the National SRC Summit and VC Meetings; promoting student and campus safety through our Safer Communities Framework; and, student representation in Academic Governance.

Engaging a Citizen's Assembly: Asking Western Sydney University students how they should have their voices heard

Grant Murray, Western Sydney University

Contributing to student voice via student politics can often be 'restricted to the cohort of politically active and ambitious students' (Western Sydney University students' panel, 2022). This can disengage the broader student population from student politics and participation in student life. At Western Sydney University, our aim was to advance the voices of students not involved in student politics (Reed, 1994).

Student representation broadly is an application of democratic values and practices in the context of an educational institution. In our context, a higher education institution located in the Western Sydney region, a generally low SES region intersected by and with marginalised communities ranging from migrant and refugee, Indigenous, and lower rates of education completion among several others. The driver for engaging a citizen's assembly, in partnership with non-for-profit *The new Democracy Foundation* (https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/), was to ensure that a group of non-involved students deconstructed issues facing student voice and were supported by expertise and quality facilitation to theorise and negotiate realistic solutions to the problems (Farrell, O'Malley, & Suiter, 2012; Gollagher, & Hartz-Karp, 2013; Western Sydney University students' panel, 2022).

We collected a random sample of approximately 20% of currently enrolled students and invited them join the citizen's assembly (Frey & Steiner, 2014). The respondents were stratified to ensure that the randomly selected group were a just representation of the diversity of the

student population (Kao & Couzin, 2014). The participants selected were notified and invited to attend four workshops to assist them to craft meaningful feedback to the University, and directly hand it to the Vice-Chancellor (Western Sydney University, 2022). Over the second half of 2022, meaningful responses to each recommendation will be prepared by the University and publicised. In 2023, we will continue to engage key areas to prioritise the delivery or action of the recommendations.

Western Sydney University has been the first university in Australia to conduct a student citizen's assembly to respond to a broad and complex subject matter (Weekes, 2022; Western Sydney University students' panel, 2022), which this presentation will explore.

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First Nations student-staff partnership: Effective co-design of health research in partnership with First Nations communities

Kealey W Griffiths & Keane W Wheeler, The University of Queensland

Through the University of Queensland's Global Change Youth Research Program, post-graduate student Kealey Griffiths, a Yuggera woman, has been working in partnership with Dr Keane Wheeler, a Ngarabal man and Accredited Exercise Scientist (ESSA), on the project: 'Effective co-design of health research in partnership with First Nations communities: A systematic review to assess key methods and processes' (Griffiths, Hall & Wheeler, 2022). Co-design is seen as an increasingly important research method when working in partnership with First Nations peoples. Co-design is derived from Participatory Action Research (PAR) and is grounded in the researchers promoting ownership of the research process and outcomes to participants. Effective co-design is particularly important in meeting the high aspirations and expectations of First Nations peoples when conducting research in partnership to promote self-determination and excellence. As a team, they have effectively 'co-designed' the systematic review and identified 492 records for possible inclusion. Of these, 15 studies were included and assessed against a four-criteria rubric, which was developed from three pre-existing frameworks: AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS, 2020), Experience Based Co-Design Toolkit (AHHA, 2017), and the NIHR's guide on co-producing a research project (Hickey et al., 2018). The aim of the study is to determine how co-design can promote, embed and achieve each of the four criteria: First Nations self-determination, First Nations leadership and data sovereignty, impact and value for First Nations' communities, and sustainability and accountability, through First Nations governance. It is hypothesised that co-design research embedded with First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing can enhance the research methodology and outcomes in partnership with First Nations peoples. To demonstrate the extraordinary engagement and transformational results possible through co-design, Kealey and Keane will grade their partnership against the co-design rubric, scoring themselves and their research as if it were an included study.

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The University as an Activist Space: Co-creating a Festival of Action to facilitate student and staff participation in climate justice

Thilakshi Mallawa Arachchi, Jenna Condie and James Gourley, Western Sydney University

In this talk, we reflect on our commitment to an activist university that supports the realisation of just and equitable worlds within and beyond the university. The Future Thinkers Challenge is one of five challenges from a university-wide transforming curriculum initiative called the 21C Project at Western Sydney University. For over three years, we co-designed two new transdisciplinary minors, one in Equitable Technologies and one in Climate Justice in partnership with students, staff and external partners. We approached our curriculum making practices as everyday activism given the 'intersecting crises' (Ang, 2021) shaping contemporary students' lives (Swist, et al., under review).

This commitment to a collective 'we' led us to co-organise the first 'Festival of Action', which took place on our Parramatta South Campus in July this year. The Festival was a one-day event that brought together like-minded students, staff and external partners who co-developed and delivered stalls with interactive exhibits to foster important conversations and opportunities for people to get involved in local forms of climate action. The focus of the Festival was collective action, and was advertised under the rubric: 'Find your people. Find your cause. Find your purpose.' The Festival called for critical and creative thinking about the possibilities for and challenges of co-creating agency – the power to act – within the university. Although some academics and students did not necessarily identify as 'activist' or see their curriculum making as 'activism', their contributions to the Festival can be understood as such, especially where they sought to challenge and/or disrupt the neoliberal university.

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Academic subversion: Harnessing student agency to create change

Aidan Cornelius-Bell, University of South Australia

Higher education is a site of immense social privilege in the contemporary anglosphere (Brown, 2015). By elevating students into positions of 'better work', the university's fundamental purpose – shifted from its roots in the 'public good' – now stands to produce 'job ready graduates' who conform to dominant social norms and expectations (Brett, 2021; Marginson, 2011; Norton, 2020). With higher education as a significant site of sociocultural (re)production, there is also enormous possibility in subverting norms and transforming hegemonic culture, beyond 'becoming', towards a true activist citizenry to catalyse social change (Cornelius-Bell, 2021b, 2022; Gramsci, 2007). Unfortunately, contemporary conceptualisation of students by institutions, governments and others in the political ruling class often constrain and define the role of student agency in shaping and transforming their higher education. Amidst corporate narratives (Bonnell, 2016), abundant neoliberalism (Giroux, 2002), rising managerialism (Anderson, 2008; Castiello-Gutiérrez et al., 2020), narcissism and forced competition, higher education has substantially lost its way as a tool for the public good (Cornelius-Bell, 2021a).

This presentation challenges the role of the student in the higher education apparatus. It offers an alternative view of solidarity and collective action to enable '*the average student*' to enact radical social change from *inside* their education. Acknowledging that there are conditioning frameworks, legislations and governance bodies and policies, the presentation asks participants to consider their role in gradual 'nudging' from below, through to dragging their lecturers, support staff and broader community on an educational journey which repurposes pedagogical tools *for* real change.

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Improving policy and strategic plans: A case study from disabled students at the University of Adelaide

Shona Edwards, The University of Adelaide

At the University of Adelaide, the Disability Illness and Divergence Association (DIDA), a student club and advocacy group, has been reading our University's policies, procedures and strategic plans. We have been working with staff to identify gaps and issues relevant to disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent students. DIDA's student leaders have identified significant issues in the collection and analysis of student data which means that the needs and concerns of disabled students are going unseen and unaddressed. There is an urgent need for university staff to improve their consultation procedures with students from various equity groups to ensure that giving student feedback is an accessible process, and that the feedback is of adequate quality and appropriate quantity. This presentation offers a case study of issues DIDA identified in the University's previous Student Retention and Success Plan and ways that student-staff partnerships are working and must continue to work to address those issues.

More than a check box: A pilot program to embed the voice of student survivors in policy and decision-making processes at the University of Newcastle

Adriana Haro, Newcastle University

In Australia, one in twenty university students have experienced sexual assault, including one in six experiencing sexual harassment since starting university (Heywood, 2022). Despite numerous reports, campaigns and recommendations, sexual based violence is still happening at Australian Universities. Here, I focus on the lack of trust and transparency in universities as these issues have been identified as contributing to this culture (AHRC, 2017, 2021; EROC, 2017). This paper introduces two key recommendations to help embed the voices of student survivors into the policy and governance processes at the University of Newcastle. This will be through establishing an independent body that will be trained in university policy and governance with support of two frameworks. This body will include voices of victim/survivors. These recommendations build from previous reports and studies about sexual harassment and assault in higher education and the workplace in the Australian context. Sexual violence has been an ongoing issue for decades at universities and support should include survivors' voices in their response, prevention and procedures moving forward.

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Enacting a Student Partnership Agreement at UTS

Kurt Cheng, University of Technology Sydney

The University of Technology Sydney recently signed its first Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) into effect (UTS News, 2022). Inspired by the work of Professor Sally Varnham and the

resources of Student Voice Australia, the UTS SPA details a collaborative approach to student engagement and collaborative priorities the University has agreed to work on with student leaders. The UTS SPA sets out a mutual commitment by student leaders and staff, working together to enrich the student experience.

As the sector begins a transformative process adapting to new ways of working, there is an opportunity to reimagine the relationship of students as partners. A SPA seeks to engage the wider student community, empower elected student leaders and deliver on mutual obligations between staff and students. At UTS, thirteen collaborative priorities were agreed to covering areas of teaching and learning, student services and response to topical issues within the sector such as sexual assault and harassment.

There is momentum across the sector for greater partnerships and reimagining the relationship of staff and students. In this presentation, Kurt will discuss the development of the UTS SPA and how institutions can lead in their own SPA development.

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It's not about me... Or is it?
Bailey Wemyss, The University of the Sunshine Coast

Dealing with university life is hard, and combining higher education academics with life as a student leader can be additionally challenging. For most student leaders, the position description of 'representative' is simple: talk to the student body and collate that information to take to whichever meeting is requiring the information. However, student representatives with disability face a different challenge, as I found out when I started UniSC's Disability and Inclusion Leadership Group (DISG).

The DISG was formed last year, after I noticed that students with disability had no specific Students as Partners representation on campus. Kearney et al. (2018) speak to considering a collectivist perspective when considering minority student behaviours, and although students with disability were not one of the minorities mentioned, this approach is useful for the students with disability community. Until 2021, students with disability representation was seen by UniSC to be appropriately done through individuals participating in more generalised groups with Students as Partners. Students with disability, however, due in part to their unique and individual concerns, require a more collectivist perspective. Instead of one student individually fighting for what can be huge change within a university context, a group is far more likely to ensure change happens.

Still, there remains a question when representing students with disability, and it is informed by this collectivist perspective. The question any student with disability must ask themselves is: is this about me, or the community? Am I adding a lived experience point of view, or am I speaking for the students with disability community?

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