

FedUni Student Senate

Annual Report 2018

The Senate has now been in continuous operation for 7 years, building a wealth of resources and increasingly standardised process and practice for each years' new membership. 2018 saw the Student Senate tackle significant challenges and champion diverse changes across many areas of the University.

The Senate met formally six times in 2018 and each member conducted two student forums across the year. At the meetings members debated key issues, formed working groups, and voted on resolutions. These debates and decisions were often based on extensive consulting with the student body at the forums and informally.

There was a significant membership turnover in 2018. In addition, the introductory training offered to representatives was undergoing a process of renewal and required further work, and the Senate Executive Officer changed three times across the year. These compounding challenges hindered the Senate at times in delivering on their objectives.

Elections to the Senate have traditionally been undertaken in an online and paper ballot format. This system was identified by staff and students as clunky and a deterrent to voters. In 2018 there was a transition to a fully online election system resulting in a significantly high proportion of voting in the 2019 elections.

In September 2018 several senate members traveled to Horsham to promote awareness of their work, opportunities to nominate, and wider student support services. A notable success arising from this trip was the recruitment of a Horsham Senate representative, a position that had fallen vacant in 2018.

Message from the Chair

This year we re-launched the staff – student communications protocol to lukewarm staff applause and provided feedback into the graduate attributes discussion among others. I raised concerns on behalf of the students in Visual Arts.

One issue which I encountered, and was expressed by other members, is one of job knowledge and training. Some members were unsure of the specific requirements of their position or how to best go about it. In my own case, this involves what goes into the ideal Academic Board report as well as how to be good at running student fora. To remedy this, members need to be confident in asking for guidance and I have endeavored to promote teamwork and modelling. We have also looked into mini professional development among senate members.

Many members of the senate dropped out during their term. A large reason for this seems to be high stress or over-commitment, amplified by uncertainty about the role requirements. Though I will note that there are many other circumstantial or personal reasons people dropped out.

The level of collaboration in 2018 wasn't as hoped, as can be seen by the low performance of the portfolio system - in some cases portfolio meetings didn't happen because members couldn't organize times. It was more common, and more successful, that members would form *ad hoc* partnerships in dealing with issues or projects and these partnerships were formed on a casual or social basis or based on physical proximity.

Student Forums occurred successfully on a number of occasions and locations, and members would generally report useful feedback. I would like to look further into how this information gets used and passed on. I know that some issues raised were followed up, but in general it is not obvious. These discussions also had the benefits of raising the Senate's profile among the student body.

*Student Senate Chair (Sept – Dec)
& Academic Board Representative,
Daniel Gommans*

Message from the Senate Advisors

During the 2018 year, the senate has been actively engaged across the University, including at our new Berwick campus. Participation in committees such as the Academic Board, Learning and Teaching, Respect Now Always and the Social Inclusion Committee to name a few benefited greatly from listening to, and hearing the student voice. The Senate members actively sought student feedback, through forums held during the year, on a range of important issues that affect students across the University.

Senate meetings were well attended by the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor and other University representatives, demonstrating the importance that the University places on the role and function of the senate and the contribution the Senate makes to university life.

As an indication of the increasing recognition of the Senate as an effective Consultative Body to the Vice Chancellor, there has been an increasing number of requests for Senate representation on committees and working parties across the University.

The Senate was supported by the Senate Executive Officer, Anya Kelly for the first half of 2018 and Claire Morrissey and Tom Hodgson in the second half of 2018. The Senate Executive Officer provides support to the Executive, coordinate the secretariat functions of the Student Senate including, but not limited to receipt and preparation of agenda items, meeting organisation and distribution of agenda materials, minutes, procedural updates and communications relevant to board members. They also coordinate training of Senate members and ongoing personal and professional development opportunities to support a well-informed representative body and good governance practices.

In closing, the work of the Senate this year, and the leadership shown by its executive, has contributed much to ensuring that the student's voice is heard by the University, and ensures that the University continues to meet student expectations and needs.

*Director Student Connect,
Jerry Van Delft*

&

*Deputy Vice Chancellor
Student Support Services,
Darren Holland*

Key Achievements

➤ **Gender neutral toilets**

The Senate identified a lack of awareness around the availability and location of gender neutral toilets on our campuses as an issue early in the year. Working with Facilities, this led to the establishment of a gender neutral toilet on Gippsland in line with those available on other campuses. The Senate reviewed how these were promoted to students, settling on discrete messaging, including marking on campus maps.

➤ **Assistance and support of student clubs & societies**

The Stone Soup club formed in 2018 off the back of Senate discussions into Gippsland students reporting struggling to prepare healthy food on a budget. The club offers weekly events where students collaborate to cook healthy group lunches. The success of this group in Gippsland led the Senate to consider expanding into other campuses.

Senate members worked closely with the University's badminton club to assist them during a period of financial uncertainty. The club restructured and has been able to continue providing recreational sporting opportunities for students.

➤ **Environmentally sustainability**

Our Sustainability representative Lucas Wise worked closely with Campus Life to reduce the University's reliance on single-use plastic in its hospitality venues, such as student cafeterias. As of mid-2018 the Senate and the University were proud to announce that biodegradable bamboo cutlery had now replaced all single-use plastic cutlery. This change will have a lasting impact on the university's environmental sustainability.

Lucas also worked with University staff to develop a composting program on FedUni's Ballarat residences. After a trial on the Victoria St residence, this popular initiative is expanding across other Ballarat residences.

➤ **Staff – Student Communications Protocol**

The Student Senate, in collaboration with the Academic Board and Learning & Teaching Committee, worked to establish an academic communications response protocol. This protocol details the expectations on staff and students in the timeliness of their communications. For example, that staff should respond to students within three days for coursework related enquires and 14 days for assessment related enquiries. Clarifying the ambiguity in this area is helping both staff and students to improve communication.

➤ **English – Mandarin corner**

Mount Helen Higher Education representative, Xi Cao, and International representative, Lili Yuan, worked across the year to maintain and support the fledgling English Corner. English Corner offers a casual drop-in space for students seeking to practice their English or Chinese. Increasing engagement between international and domestic students was a key aim for these representatives, and they were proud to see their drop-in space provide many opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and deeper connections formed between these two groups.

2018 Student Senate Representatives

Elected Position	Representative
Postgraduate	Ankita Mishra
International	Lili Yuan
Clubs & Societies	Amos Bannister
Camp St – Performing Arts	Marcus Gadd
Camp St – Visual Arts	Brittany Brayshaw
Mt Helen – Higher Education	Xi Cao
Mt Helen – Higher Education	Peter Li
Gippsland Campus	Abbethia Rene
Gippsland Campus	Francis Licciardi
Berwick Campus	Nick Mann
Sports	Timothy Welsh
Equity, Diversity and Social Inclusion Advocate	Ernina Sasongko
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	Nicola Ingram
Dual Committee/Co-opted Position	Representative
Learning & Teaching Committee	James Rickard
Academic Board	Daniel Gommans
Sustainability Committee	Lucas Wise
Appeals Committee	Haydn Taela
Business Faculty Board	Daria Soldatenko

2019 Student Senate Representatives

Note: a 3rd round of elections will be held in March 2019. Vacant positions may be filled at this time.

Elected Position	Representative
Berwick Campus	Christian Vasquez
Berwick Campus	Sandra Boinett
Clubs & Societies	Sheena Buchhorn
Equity, Diversity and Social Inclusion	Isaac Moses
Gippsland Campus	Sonya Mentha
Gippsland Campus	Zachary Helyar
Horsham – Higher Education	Sam Flaherty
International	Samriti Sood
Mt Helen – Higher Education	Britney Jeffries
Mt Helen – Higher Education	Jagmeet Singh
Postgraduate	Beste Genc
SMB Campus	Elizabeth Tongway
Dual Committee/Co-opted Position	Representative
Academic Board	Daniel Gommans
Business School Board	Melanie Luft
Learning & Teaching Committee	David Falconer
School of Nursing & Healthcare Board	Sam Sherrard
Sustainability Committee	Francis Licciardi