Fostering new approaches to student representation at the University of Queensland

Naima Crisp & Dr James Forde, University of Queensland

The University of Queensland’s (UQ) Student-Staff Partnerships program is dedicated to establishing sustainable partnerships between staff and students as part of the University’s everyday work practices. To achieve this, UQ Student-Staff Partnerships (SSP) has three different, but complimentary, sub-programs: Partnerships Projects, Student Voices and Student Representation.

Two central aims of UQ’s Student Representation program have been to provide support mechanisms for student representatives, but also to assist academic and professional divisions to conceptualise and establish platforms for student representation that suit both the needs of staff members and their student cohorts. By working closely with both the students and staff members who sit on governance groups, the program seeks to implement a cultural shift in the ways that staff members and student representatives work and interact with each other – ways that are mutually respectful, beneficial and impactful.

This presentation will outline the work undertaken by the program so far and discuss the lessons learned along the way. It will highlight the processes and support networks implemented by Student-Staff Partnerships and the schools and faculties that have worked in collaboration with the program. Some of these have made an impact on the experiences of student representatives, but a number of challenges remain. Finally, this presentation will shine a light on the experiences of student representatives at the University in the hope of instigating a more general discussion about the importance of student representation in university governance and decision-making, and whether this is often reflected in the support available to students operating in these spaces.

Learning outcomes
- An insight into a university-wide approach to embedding a partnership ethos in every academic and professional division at the institution
- An awareness of the challenges faced by students who contribute to governance groups and decision-making processes at a university
- An overview of practical strategies that universities can employ to prepare staff members and students to work effectively in partnerships within governance groups

Presenters

Naima Crisp, University of Queensland

Naima is a final year Bachelor of Arts (Honours, Psychology) student at The University of Queensland. Throughout her studies she has been engaged as a Student Partner on projects including co-developing a new faculty industry mentoring program and is currently a Student Representative for the HASS faculty. As a Student Representative she has been working in partnership with staff and other student representatives to harmonise and improve the platforms for student voice in the faculty. Over the past two years, Naima has worked as a research assistant at the Queensland University of Technology on multiple education projects related to inclusive education, student voice, and student wellbeing. Naima particularly is interested in how we can improve the educational experiences for all students through multi-disciplinary learning and collaborative initiatives.

Dr James Forde, University of Queensland

James co-leads the Student-Staff Partnerships program at the University of Queensland. In particular, James leads the Student Representation and Student Voice sub-programs as a central formation of UQ’s partnership approach. Prior to this position, James worked as an educator, researcher and practitioner in higher education institutions in Australia and the UK for ten years, and he holds a PhD in Political History from Griffith University. James is passionate about the need for effective democratic systems within higher education institutions and the impact that effective student representation and a partnerships ethos can have on the future direction and impact of all academic and professional divisions within a university setting.