



The Hive Student Union

Change UWS

An advocacy paper on major issues affecting UWS students and what needs to be done about them

Rank-and-file members of the Student Union have also made anonymous contributions to this paper. This advocacy paper is The Hive Student Union's living document used to advance the interests of UWS students. It began its life towards the end of 2009.

The solutions to the issues:

- Student control of a UWSConnect that is in touch with students
- Improve car parking on campus and alternatives to driving to university
- Shuttle bus services at Hawkesbury and Campbelltown campuses
- Building academic ties with Palestinian universities
- Provision of textbook loans for students
- Podcasts should not replace face-to-face lectures
- E-pay Kiosks in UWS libraries that accept cash, debit and credit cards
- Bank fees-free ATMs at Parramatta and Campbelltown campuses

Student Control of UWSCoconnect

UWSCoconnect Ltd. operates retail outlets on UWS campuses and is wholly owned by UWS. It is governed by a Board of Directors of whom only three are students, out of a total of nine Board positions. The UWSCoconnect Board does not hold democratic elections and students are appointed to the Board rather than elected by their peers.¹ Nominations for student Director positions on the UWSCoconnect Board are inadequately advertised. These are undemocratic and anti-student practices, and is the substantial cause for most problems associated with UWSCoconnect.

Prior to the creation of UWSCoconnect in July 2004, all food outlets, bars and shops were owned by the various students' associations of UWS. When these associations amalgamated to form UWS Student Association Inc., all retail outlets were acquired by UWSCoconnect. Since that time students have experienced an increase in food prices of over 20% and consensus overwhelmingly suggests a decline in the quality of UWSCoconnect food and services in general.

UWS students do not believe they are getting value for money at UWSCoconnect and desire this situation to be remedied.

The Hive Student Union ("The Hive") is of the view that UWSCoconnect is out of touch with UWS students. This, combined with the high food prices, has resulted in students leaving campus during lunch hours in search of cheaper and better food which has an adverse impact on campus life. The Hive is also of the view that all outlets and provision of services to students at UWS should be run by students, or at least have boards with a majority of students on them who are reasonably remunerated.

The following resolution was carried at The Hive Student Union's 11 August 2009 General Meeting:

That the Members resolve that it is the view of UWS students that UWSCoconnect should have a majority of students on its Board. These positions should be subject to general elections and should be open to all students on such basis.

The Hive calls on UWS to modify the Constitution of UWSCoconnect to increase the number of students on the Board of UWSCoconnect to seven (increasing the total number of Board members to thirteen, with six non-students on the Board and seven students).

The Hive calls on UWSCoconnect to review its provision of food and services on all campuses in wide-ranging consultation with students with a view to achieve cost-satisfaction for students.

¹ The Impact of Voluntary Student Unionism Discussion Paper: Submission from the University of Western Sydney [<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/CEDB2B41-2CE9-43C4-9F68-164D9D0BDB90/20771/UniversityofWesternSydney.pdf>]

UTS Union: A Case Study for UWSConnect

UTS Union Ltd. is the University of Technology, Sydney equivalent of UWSConnect. However, unlike UWSConnect, UTS Union does not engage in undemocratic and anti-student practices.

The Board of Directors of UTS Union comprise of thirteen Directors, seven of whom are students. All student Director positions are subject to general elections and are open to all students on such basis. It is clear that UTS Union espouses an inclusive culture on campus where “all students and University staff are encouraged to take an interest in the affairs of the Union”.²

Whatever happened to student democracy in UWSConnect?

It has not been forgotten that during the early days of UWSConnect, the Board of Directors of the non-profit company actually did comprise of seven student Directors elected by their peers, which made up 50% of the Board.³

One can only assume that the organisation went through a silent and unaccounted restructure by abolishing democratic student elections and reducing the student vote on the Board. Questions arising from this restructure have remained unanswered, and The Hive Student Union calls UWSConnect and the University administration to account for this undemocratic and anti-student practice.

Why student democracy?

The best way a community organisation can be held accountable, by its members and patrons in general, is through democratic yearly elections of its Board of Directors. For example, The Hive Student Union, and nearly, if not all, RSL clubs in Australia follow such practice. In fact, in many public companies in Australia, shareholders hold annual general meetings to elect their Board of Directors. In the case of UWSConnect, where the sole shareholder is the University, democratic yearly elections of students, by students, for students, is the alternative.

It only makes sense that the Board of Directors of UWSConnect be held fully accountable for its management of the company by its biggest stakeholders: the students. Full accountability, that is, by means of democratic yearly elections, ensures that they will run the organisation in the interest of their stakeholders. It is only fair that students be able to have control over their own affairs on campus.

² UTS Union: Structure and board [<http://www.utsunion.uts.edu.au/about/board.html>]

³ UWSConnect Submission to Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee: Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Union Fees) Bill 2005 [http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/EET_CTTE/completed_inquiries/2004-07/highed_unionfees/submissions/sub118.pdf]

Major services that are missing from UWSCConnect

UWSCConnect does not have a gym on Parramatta (South) campus, and does not have a bar at Bankstown campus, unlike the other campuses. The Hive Student Union is of the belief that services provided by the University should be distributed as equally as possible amongst all campuses.

Anonymous contributions:

“There should be prices on all items in UWSCConnect, or at least at 'point-of-collection', whether it be food, stationery, or the textbooks that we need.”

“I have only once bought something on campus in the 2 years I have attended UWS. Prices are too high and quality is poor.”

Author's note: Directors of The Hive Student Union very recently held a meeting with the student Directors of UWSCConnect to discuss student control of UWSCConnect. The student Directors agreed at the meeting to take to their Board the idea of them establishing a ‘Student Liaison Committee’ for Directors of The Hive and the student Directors of UWSCConnect to participate in, as a small step forward towards student control of UWSCConnect. The student Directors of UWSCConnect have yet to report to The Hive on the progress of this idea. (07/12/2009)

Improve car parking on campus

Prior to 2006, parking on all UWS campuses was free. In 2006, the University introduced a tiered compulsory parking fee system, despite widespread opposition from students.

The last three years have seen a dramatic decline in the accessibility of parking on campus for students, coupled with rising fees. Students regularly spend a substantial portion of their time looking for parking spots, making them late for class. In addition, many students studying at Parramatta (South) campus sometimes have to resort to parking on the North campus and then catching a shuttle bus to their home campus.

In May 2008, students at Bankstown campus held a demonstration to voice their concerns about the parking situation and the 'Free Parking' campaign gained widespread support on that campus.

So far UWS has not clearly indicated what it plans to do to ameliorate this situation.

The following resolution was carried at The Hive Student Union's 11 August 2009 General Meeting:

That the Members resolve to call on UWS to create a policy, which would see all funds collected from parking fees invested exclusively into building more car parks and related infrastructure on campuses, and improving the car parking situation generally.

The Hive calls on UWS to look seriously at ways to encourage students to catch public transport to campus, including working with outside transport companies, to alleviate the parking situation.

The Hive calls on the NSW State Government to improve public transport outcomes for UWS students.

The Hive calls on UWS to engage in a review of car parking on all UWS campuses in wide-ranging consultation with students.

The Hive calls on UWS to refrain from raising parking fees for the next three years.

Anonymous contributions:

"Parking was free in 2006? Where is all the money for parking going? Are the records of expenditures available?"

"Parking is a big problem, especially at the beginning of session towards the middle. I attend Bankstown campus and live closer to Campbelltown and so have used both. Bankstown - blue parking needs to be reduced and yellow needs to be increased. Campbelltown - parking needs to be increased, it was a stupid idea of UWS to remove a parking area and build a medical school - a new building brings more students, more students - less parking is stupid."

Shuttle bus services at Hawkesbury and Campbelltown campuses

There are currently no University-run shuttle bus services between Hawkesbury campus and East Richmond railway station, and between Campbelltown campus and Macarthur railway station. This issue is two-fold.

Hawkesbury and Campbelltown students who rely on public transport have to trek from the railway station to campus forth and back. Public transport travel already takes up a significant amount of their time, so it is unnecessary for them to take up more of their time walking to campus forth and back. In addition, Hawkesbury and Campbelltown Night students who rely on public transport face safety issues when leaving campus, which is also, in turn, contributed by poor lighting between the campus and the railway station.

It was not long ago that the old Students' Association provided shuttle bus services at those campuses until Voluntary Student Unionism adversely affected the Association's financial viability. The Hive Student Union calls on the University to introduce shuttle bus services for Hawkesbury and Campbelltown students.

Has the Board of Trustees' solution to safety on campus worked?

At the UWS Board of Trustees (BoT) meeting on the 24th of June, 2009, Professor Anne Cusick, Campbelltown Campus Provost, asked the Board that "the shuttle bus on Campbelltown campus be reinstated at least from sunset to the end of classes each day"⁴ as part of the University's provision of safety on campus. Members of the Board suggested other alternatives for improved security, including regular security patrols, a security fence, and students being aware of how to contact Campus Safety and Security in an emergency.

The BoT discussion regarding safety on campus was in response to a night-time attack on a staff member on the pathway between Campbelltown campus and the Macarthur railway station. However, the anonymous contribution on the next page, Annexure A and Annexure B, all demonstrate the necessity of University-run shuttle bus services, between Campbelltown campus and Macarthur railway station, to maintain safety on campus.

⁴ University of Western Sydney Board of Trustees Minutes: 24 June 2009
[http://uws.clients.squiz.net/_designs/uws_main/design_related_content/no_design/simple_edit_helpers/account/?a=83786]

Anonymous contribution:

“I refer to [Annexure A].⁵ This was the second recent assault; a second-year medical student was bashed and robbed on the walkway adjacent to UWS/TAFE Campbelltown to station.

The previous attack was on a UWS Campbelltown residential student a month or two before this. The uni didn't do anything the first time. I think they viewed it as an isolated attack. But yeah, the previous assault resulted in the student being hospitalised with a broken wrist/arm.

Also the signage mentioned in the e-mail got knocked down and graffitied within days, and has not been replaced or cleaned. Also the uni has hired extra guards but it's no help as they cannot leave the uni grounds. They just stand outside the medical school building and are useless since they are not monitoring the pathway beyond the uni gates to the station. We need a shuttle bus run by the residential college, preferably operating Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. till 7 p.m., to drop people off at the station and Macarthur Square.” (25/10/2009)

Author's note: Although the University's Campbelltown shuttle bus trial is welcoming news (see Annexure C), the amount of night-time assaults that have occurred on the notorious walkway this year alone clearly demonstrates that the service trial should become permanent immediately.

In addition, the University should not wait for night-time assaults to start occurring between Hawkesbury campus and East Richmond railway station in order to start considering shuttle bus services for Hawkesbury campus. (03/11/2009)

⁵ See page 10 of this document.

Building academic ties with Palestinian universities

Given that:

- a) Interest in Students For Palestine, an Australian student movement active in solidarity with Palestinians internationally, continues to grow at the national and local (UWS) level; and
- b) There is strong student support for Palestine, especially amongst the relatively high Muslim population, at UWS,

The Hive Student Union is of the view that UWS should start building academic ties with Palestinian universities, and that if it already has academic ties with Palestinian universities, UWS should strengthen that relationship. Such a relationship would include supporting visits to UWS by Palestinian academics and students.

The following resolution was carried at The Hive Student Union's 11 August 2009 General Meeting:

That the Members resolve that whereas Israel's colonial oppression of the Palestinian people, which is based on Zionist ideology, comprises the following:

1. Denial of its responsibility for The Nakba – in particular the waves of ethnic cleansing and dispossession that created the Palestinian refugee problem – and therefore refusal to accept the inalienable rights of the refugees and displaced stipulated in and protected by international law;
2. Military occupation and colonisation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza since 1967, in violation of international law and UN resolutions;
3. The entrenched system of racial discrimination and segregation against the Palestinian citizens of Israel, which resembles the defunct apartheid system in South Africa;

Since Israeli academic institutions (mostly state-controlled) and the vast majority of Israeli intellectuals and academics have either contributed directly to maintaining, defending, or otherwise justifying the above forms of oppression, or have been complicit in them through their silence;

Given that all forms of international intervention have until now failed to force Israel to comply with international law or to end its repression of the Palestinians, which has manifested itself in many forms, including siege, indiscriminate killing, wanton destruction and the racist colonial wall;

In view of the fact that people of conscience in the international community of scholars and intellectuals have historically shouldered the moral responsibility to fight injustice, as exemplified in their struggle to abolish apartheid in South Africa through diverse forms of boycott;

Recognising that the growing international boycott movement against Israel has expressed the need for a Palestinian frame of reference outlining guiding principles; and

In the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to injustice and oppression,

The Hive Student Union shall:

- a) Refrain from participation in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration or joint projects with Israeli institutions;
- b) Advocate a comprehensive boycott of Israeli institutions at the national and international levels, including suspension of all forms of funding and subsidies to these institutions;
- c) Promote divestment and disinvestment from Israel by international academic institutions;
- d) Work toward the condemnation of Israeli policies by pressing for resolutions to be adopted by academic, professional and cultural associations and organisations; and
- e) Support Palestinian academic and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for such support.

Texts on HECS

Anonymous contributions:

“There should be an interest-free payment plan devised so all students can afford to get the textbooks that they need if they can't afford to buy them outright at the beginning of the semester, especially as some books can be so expensive. Alternatively, there should be an option where they can be put onto one's HECS fee account.”

“Textbooks can be very expensive - especially with some units that require up to 8 texts, so a system that allows students to postpone payment would benefit many students.”

Although HECS belongs in the domain of the Federal Government, The Hive Student Union wishes to put forward to the University the following proposed scheme, to be operated by The Hive, for the University to consider funding:

The Hive Student Union wishes to start its own scheme to provide interest-free loans to disadvantaged students at UWS for the purpose of loaning new textbooks. According to the University's website, “textbooks are an expensive purchase”, giving the example that “Law textbooks will cost you a minimum of \$450 for 4 units”.⁶

Therefore, The Hive is of the view that the advancement of the University's value in “equity of access and inclusiveness”⁷ would require, amongst other things, the availability of interest-free textbook loans on campus. The scheme should allow each eligible student to loan up to a maximum of four new prescribed textbooks.

Author's note: UWS Student Welfare Service will be operating a similar scheme (in the form of grants instead) as of Autumn Session, 2010. The Hive Student Union will continue to collaborate with Student Welfare Service to further advance the welfare interests of UWS students. (08/01/2010)

⁶ How much does it cost to study at UWS?

[http://www.uws.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/getting_help/dollars_and_sense_managing_money/how_much_does_it_cost_to_study_at_uws]

⁷ UWS: Mission, Goals and Strategic Plan

[http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/mission_goals_strategic_plan]

Other student issues on campus:

Podcasts should not face-to-face lectures

Anonymous contributions:

“The fact that more units are starting to be offered only via podcasts is a case where students are not getting value for money. Podcasts with lectures and tutorials is a good option, but not instead of getting the human contact and interaction that is necessary for quality education. Furthermore, it puts good teachers out of work. We may as well all go to Dymocks or Angus & Robertsons to buy our textbooks and learn from there. It'd be cheaper for us too. It'd be a scandal if kindergarten, primary or high school kids had to learn via podcasts. I think this podcast-only option should really be contested.”

“Podcasts should be made available to all students for all lectures in addition to live lectures.”

“Podcast lectures - are a great secondary resource - **not** a replacement. My personal participation in podcast units compared to face-to-face lectures is dramatically less.”

Epay Kiosks in UWS libraries

The Epay Kiosks in all of the University libraries, introduced at the beginning of 2009, do not accept cash or credit card from students to transfer funds into their ID cards. This is not customer-friendly, as different students rely on different forms of payment for services. The Hive Student Union calls for these kiosks to accept cash and credit card, just like any retail store would accept cash, debit and credit cards.

Anonymous contribution:

“I do not use UWS computers because I use a Visa card and the current system does not allow credit with a pin to be entered - therefore I am unable to use the UWS systems to load onto my card.”

Author's note: The Hive Student Union is continuously lobbying for a credit card facility for students to use to transfer funds to their library card. (11/01/2010)

ATMs at Parramatta and Campbelltown campuses

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) once existed at Parramatta (South) and Campbelltown campuses, but were removed because they were prone to ram-raids. However, there are still ATMs at Bankstown and Kingswood campuses because they are not located on ground floor. The Hive Student Union calls on the University to re-introduce (bank fees-free) ATMs at Parramatta (South) and Campbelltown campuses and locate them in premises other than ground floor premises.

Author's note: A CBA ATM was very recently installed in Building EA, Parramatta (South) campus. The Hive Student Union will continue to lobby for an ATM at Campbelltown campus. (02/11/2009)

Annexure A: University e-mail sent to Campbelltown students (19/08/2009)

Dear Students,

As a safety alert to staff and students of Campbelltown campus, I would like to make you aware of a security incident which occurred 17 August.

A student was assaulted and robbed as they travelled through the Landcom land area adjacent to the Goldsmith Drive entrance of Campbelltown Campus from Macarthur station at around 2pm. This is the second such incident in recent times.

The University is working with NSW Police and RailCorp to review this incident. To increase the safety of staff and students on this route to the train station, Campus Safety and Security are conducting increased security patrols of the area throughout the day and into the evening.

In addition, Campus Safety and Security staff will be positioned at the entrance to the campus between 5pm and 11pm and will provide escorts to students and staff as they come and go from the campus to Macarthur Railway Station.

The University takes the safety of students and staff very seriously and Capital Works and Facilities commenced a broader program of works to provide further permanent safety measures to this route in July. These works now continue and include:

- Trees and general foliage in the area is being trimmed to create a clear line of sight from Macarthur Railway Station to the School of Medicine (Building 30)
- Lighting is being upgraded to provide increased lighting into the night
- Signage is being installed to identify the land as private property and to provide contact numbers for UWS Security
- A new long range CCTV camera is being installed to monitor the campus exit to Macarthur Railway Station

UWS Campus Safety and Security staff can provide a security escort at any time and be contacted via the following numbers:

- UWS Campbelltown Security (02) 4620 3444
- UWS Security Duty Officer (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) 0414 240 458

Staff, students and visitors are encouraged not to be alarmed but to remain conscious of their safety as they travel to and from Macarthur Railway Station.

Rhonda Hawkins
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Strategy and Services)

Annexure B

From: "Rhonda Hawkins" r.hawkins@uws.edu.au
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Sent: Wed 28/10/09 8:48 PM
Subject: Fwd: [DVC-SS] Urgent information for Campbelltown staff

Dear Students,

Macarthur train station is not able to be accessed from Campbelltown campus via the usual route this evening, Wednesday 28 October 2009, due to an earlier assault.

In order to access the station and to enable staff and students to safely board trains to get home, UWS Campus Safety and Security staff will be providing car escorts.

To access these security escorts, please meet at the Goldsmith Avenue entrance and wait for UWS Security staff to arrive in a pool vehicle. Should there be an emergency situation, Security can be contacted on 0414 240 458.

The University takes the safety of our staff and students very seriously. Safety at Macarthur station has become a concern recently and the University continues to work with Police with regard to this matter. In addition we have taken significant measures to increase safety and security on the route between the University and the train station.

Rhonda Hawkins
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Strategy and Services)

Annexure C

From: "Rhonda Hawkins" r.hawkins@uws.edu.au
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Sent: Tue 03/11/09 1:58 PM
Subject: Fwd: [DVC-CSS] Campbelltown shuttle bus trial

Dear Students,

In response to recent incidents affecting safety and security around Macarthur train station, the University will be offering a free shuttle bus service between the Campbelltown campus and the Campbelltown Railway station.

This service will commence as trial on Tuesday 3 November and will operate until the end of semester. The service will run between the hours of 11am - 10pm, seven days a week, taking students and staff to and from the campus and the station.

To view a map of the shuttle bus route and bus stops, please visit www.uws.edu.au/campbelltownshuttle

The University takes the safety of our staff and students very seriously. Safety at Macarthur station has become a concern recently and this is a further measure alongside extra security patrols to increase safety and security between the University and public transport.

Rhonda Hawkins
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Strategy and Services)