

# TOP PROFESSIONAL VOICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



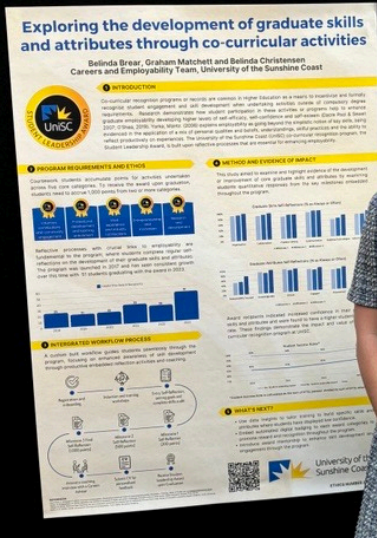
# BELINDA BREAR

**Student Voice Australasia Coordinator  
University of Southern Queensland**

A dedicated student engagement specialist currently leading the Student Voice Australasia Network. Passionate about empowering students and staff, fostering meaningful connections, and creating opportunities to enhance the overall student experience.



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Presenting at the 2024 Student Success Conference.

## How did your personal and professional journey lead you to your current role in student engagement?

I began my career in corporate event management after completing a Business Management degree at The University of Queensland (UQ), organising national education conferences for small businesses and non-profits. While I thrived in the fast pace of events, I wanted to contribute to education on a larger scale, which led me to my first role at UQ as a Student Engagement Officer. Guided by a mentor, I worked on student leadership projects and program development before stepping into the role of Acting Student Engagement Team Leader.

After a short break to start a family — and learning new skills as a mum of two under two — I was ready for a sea change. In 2020, I moved to the Sunshine Coast to become Student Partnerships Coordinator at the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC), leading engagement programs, voice initiatives, and leadership development while seeing their impact on students' confidence and sense of belonging.

This year, I stepped into my current role as National Coordinator of Student Voice Australasia (SVA) at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ), connecting with institutions and students across Australia and New Zealand to embed student voice in governance, teaching, and student life.

## What are the key responsibilities and goals in your role for boosting student engagement and retention at your university?

In my role as National Coordinator of Student Voice Australasia (SVA), hosted by the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ), I oversee the network's governance, membership, projects, training, and cross-institutional connections.

For 2025, my focus is on strengthening cross-institutional learning and celebrating success in student voice. I'm currently planning our flagship events — the Student Summit and Student Voice Symposium — which will also launch the inaugural Student Voice Awards. These gatherings connect students and staff, showcase innovation, and share sector-leading insights.

At the heart of this work, I believe student voice is vital to student success and retention. When students feel heard, informed, and valued, they develop a true sense of belonging — and that belonging helps them thrive.



### A Note from the Founder

From the University of the Sunshine Coast to the Student Voice Australasia Conferences together, delivering workshops for Bel's community has been an honour. Bel's passion for students and resilience through changing times has been an inspiration!

**“AT THE HEART OF THIS WORK, I BELIEVE STUDENT VOICE IS VITAL TO STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION.”**

**Can you share some examples of how your work has positively influenced the lives of university students and enhanced their overall experience?**

My roles in higher education have focused on co-curricular engagement — creating programs that give students the structure, guidance, and opportunities to make the most of their university journey. At UniSC, I managed the Co-Curricular Recognition Program (Leadership Award), which encouraged growth across community service, volunteering, industry connections, professional development, learning enrichment, research, and innovation.

Each semester, I've been fortunate to witness many student success stories. Students often begin eager but nervous and lacking confidence. With scaffolded learning and ongoing support, they gradually build experience, resilience, and self-belief.

What inspires me most is seeing these experiences translate into outcomes — from employment opportunities to lifelong friendships across disciplines. Beyond the skills gained, these connections foster belonging and enrich the overall university experience.



*Promoting volunteer events on campus with students at UniSC.*



*Supporting local food vans on campus - it would be rude not to really.*

**What strategies have you implemented to increase student involvement?**

My strategy to increase student involvement is grounded in a “students as partners” approach — actively engaging students at every stage, from the co-design of initiatives through to their co-delivery. This model fosters a genuine understanding of student needs, enhances their sense of ownership and investment in outcomes, and supports both their personal development and learning.

In my role at Student Voice Australasia, I have the privilege of supporting institutions across Australia and New Zealand to embed this collaborative approach into their everyday practices. By doing so, we cultivate more inclusive, student-centred environments that empower students and enrich the overall educational experience.

It's incredibly rewarding to see the shift when students are not just participants, but partners in shaping their own university journey.