

TOP 50 VOICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Kaplan Business School - Gold Coast
Assistant Campus Manager

Passionate about building a strong student community, Shane has motivated and mentored many students from all walks of life, helping them develop employability skills, boost personal confidence, and create lasting memories throughout their student journey.



www.linkedin.com/in/shanetaas

Can you share a bit about your background and the journey that led you to your current role in student engagement?

I began my education career as a Recreation & Community Engagement Officer at Langports, an English Language College on the Gold Coast. For five years, I showcased various activities that engaged students in what the Gold Coast and the rest of Australia have to offer. Working with a monthly calendar, I organized a mix of cultural and engaging events, including Boomerang Painting, International Day, theme park visits, and weekend trips to Moreton Island, Byron Bay, Sydney, and Melbourne, to name a few.

I briefly moved to Melbourne and worked in the student accommodation sector at Deakin University before returning home to do contract work with TAFE Queensland. After COVID, **I landed a role with the Griffith University Student Guild as a Volunteer Coordinator, managing a team of student volunteers to support many student events throughout the year.**

Following a brief stint as the Student Experience Coordinator at Griffith College, where I organized orientation, graduation, and other student events every trimester across the Gold Coast and Mt. Gravatt campuses, I am now an Assistant Campus Manager with Kaplan Business School on the Gold Coast, supporting the Student Experience Team with student-focused events and various administrative duties.



Griffith University Student Guild Volunteers at the Big Amp Music Festival.

What motivates you to continue working in student engagement?

The ability to engage with students from all walks of life and invest in their dreams and success has always motivated me in student engagement. Every student has a story to share when they first arrive, and I treasure those moments when I can introduce myself and provide the knowledge, support, and guidance that every student seeks.

Recently, I visited Switzerland for the sixth time, catching up with many past students who have positively impacted my ongoing work in student engagement. I find the most rewarding part of these visits is seeing where they are in their lives regarding their study progression or career opportunities. **My aim is to continue visiting other countries where I've built amazing connections with these students and have the opportunity to learn more about their part of the world.** I have Vietnam and Cambodia on my itinerary, along with several countries across South America.

“I FIND THE MOST REWARDING PART OF THESE VISITS IS SEEING WHERE THEY ARE IN THEIR LIVES REGARDING THEIR STUDY PROGRESSION OR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES.”

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

When Kaplan Business School opened early this year on the Gold Coast, the team focused on providing an experience where students can express their individuality in a safe community space. During the trimester, our Multicultural Week is a perfect example of how we embrace students' diversity and sense of community through a series of food-sharing events and various cultural activities, including traditional dancing and sing-along sessions. **The experience of being part of their cultural identity reaffirms the importance of building strong student engagement and appreciation for the work we do in the industry.**

I am excited to build on our current Student Ambassador program on the Gold Coast campus. Similar to the work I did as a Volunteer Coordinator, this will be a perfect opportunity to collaborate with other Student Experience representatives in providing mentorship and guidance in running a volunteer program while nurturing a caring student community.



Kaplan Business School Student Ambassadors from Brisbane visit the Gold Coast Campus.



Orientation Day at Griffith College with the Griffith Mates on hand to support new students.

What innovative strategies have you implemented to increase student involvement?

In my prior role as a Volunteer Coordinator at the Student Guild, I implemented the Better Impact Volunteer system, which was user-friendly for student accessibility and volunteer management. We also expanded our reward and recognition initiatives, including a series of professional development sessions throughout the year, an acknowledgment in the student community at the annual Guild Awards, and a weekend leadership camp to enhance and retain student engagement in the volunteer space.

In my first year in this role, the volunteer program surpassed 100 active volunteers, who collectively contributed over 1,617 hours of volunteer time. Volunteer engagement grew by 41% year over year, and we retained over 90% of our student volunteers based on continued enrollments.

Is there a student success story that stands out to you as a highlight of your work?

Throughout my various roles, I have witnessed many student success stories, making it difficult to narrow it down to just one. However, one story that particularly stands out is that of a Brazilian student named Nazaré at Langports. She started in an English Level 2 Elementary class, feeling uncertain about learning a new language. Over 24 weeks, she participated in a mix of programs, including TOEIC and IELTS.

During her final week, she approached the reception desk and asked if she could give the closing speech at her graduation ceremony, to which we happily agreed! On her last day, she arrived with a beaming smile, full of confidence, and shared her incredible journey in front of the entire school about why she chose to study English on the Gold Coast. I still remember the large round of applause she received as she finished her speech, proudly celebrating her achievement as an Upper Intermediate Level 5 English speaker! **She was an exemplary example of putting in the hard work, overcoming all obstacles and reaping in the success and achievements.** It's these student journeys that drive my passion in student engagement!

“THE ABILITY TO ENGAGE WITH STUDENTS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE AND INVEST IN THEIR DREAMS AND SUCCESS HAS ALWAYS MOTIVATED ME IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.”



Nazaré on her graduation day.



A trip to Switzerland to catch up with several of Shane's student groups.