

# TOP 50 VOICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Campus Consultancy



# JOANNA FOO

**Swinburne University**

**Team Leader - Leadership & Volunteering at Student Life**

Passionate about the student experience, Joanna facilitates extra-curricular programs to support students in building connections, developing essential skills, and gaining confidence in the lifecycle of their education journey.



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

I graduated with a Bachelor of Health Sciences, majoring in Anatomy & Physiology, from La Trobe University in 2015. Initially, I planned to work for a while before pursuing a postgraduate degree in healthcare. However, I landed my first full-time job as a Student Success Advisor for an online education company and discovered a passion for working with students and supporting them in their tertiary education journey outside the classroom.

I've remained in the student engagement and retention space for the past eight years, working in partnership with universities including Southern Cross University, Monash University, and The University of Adelaide.

I am now part of the Leadership & Volunteering team at Swinburne University of Technology, where **I facilitate extracurricular programs to help students make connections, develop skills, and gain confidence throughout their educational journey.**

Although my career path in student engagement wasn't part of my original plan, it has become a fulfilling and integral part of my professional life.

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

One standout success story involves Ming, a second-year student in our volunteering program. At the beginning of this year, Ming had low self-esteem and lacked confidence, but he was determined to improve. Recognizing his potential, I believed in him and encouraged him to continue pursuing his personal and professional development. Ming took proactive steps by attending leadership and student engagement workshops at Swinburne, joining external programs to broaden his network, and eagerly signing up for various volunteering roles. I guided him towards additional opportunities and connected him with a fourth-year student for peer advice.

Initially shy and introverted, Ming pushed himself beyond his comfort zone. Within just four months, he transformed into a study group leader, a student ambassador, and an ATO-trained tax help volunteer – all while balancing part-time work and full-time studies.

Ming's transformation was truly remarkable. **Witnessing his growth and seeing how he has since paid it forward by helping other students embark on their volunteering journeys has been incredibly fulfilling.**



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**What motivates you to continue working in student engagement?**

What motivates me in student engagement is the opportunity to play a role, no matter how big or small, in students’ personal and professional development. **I find great fulfilment in helping students make connections, build leadership skills, gain confidence, and uncover their hidden potential.** When students are proactive and willing to step outside their comfort zones, I am eager to support them on their journey. Seeing them grow, overcome challenges, and achieve their goals is extremely rewarding.

This process of transformation—where students evolve into their best selves and realize their ambitions—is what drives my passion for this field. **Being part of a student’s journey and witnessing their success is deeply satisfying and reinforces my commitment to student engagement.**



**Do favourite quotes that inspire you and the work that you do?**

One of my favourite quotes is based on an African proverb: *“If you want to travel fast, travel alone; if you want to travel far, travel as a team.”*

**Check out how Joanna and her team at Swinburne Student Life support students.**

