

A STUDENT SOCIETY PRESIDENT'S PLAYBOOK

Insights from former Presidents
Vol. 2



CampusConsultancy

**"Connecting and developing the most influential
leaders across Australia"**

Disclaimer:

As the saying goes, "Good judgement comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgement." Student society Presidents rise to a position of leadership, often without any formal training. Like all of us, they make mistakes and the best learn from them. For new Presidents to not waste time repeating common mistakes, we must be open and share the learnings from the past so others don't have to in the future. Enclosed in this eBook are the lessons learned by student society Presidents, humble enough to share so others can learn. They have expressed their own opinions that worked in their own unique circumstances. These insights are reflective in nature, and are not to be taken as individual advice.

The Student society President contributors (the companies/organizations they are currently employed with and the universities at which they studied), author and collator do not assume any responsibilities whatsoever under any condition if this information is applied out of context. No opinions expressed by student society Presidents within represent the universities or independent organizations mentioned nor the management of Campus Consultancy.

If in doubt of your specific university/student-union protocols, legalities and/or if you're going to really just make a mess, ask for help.

How to use this eBook

This publication marks the first collective piece of work by University student society Presidents representing ten universities across four states of Australia as founding members of the [Campus Presidents Network Australia](#). The insights contained in this publication come from volunteer contributors who experienced the same unease, the same overwhelm, the same, 'I'm actually responsible for all of this going to plan?' that every new President experiences.

As such, they don't want you to suffer the same growing pains and offer their insights in a, "I wish someone had told me to keep an eye out for X," format.

Think about your society. Think about the challenges that you, and perhaps the previous few Presidents, have faced from growing membership and event attendance, to engaging a diverse pool of students, developing your team or just not burning out, and look for someone here who has been through the same.

If you want to reach out to any of the contributors, you can find them all in the largest collective group of current and former student society Presidents in Australia at the [Campus Presidents Network Australia](#) on LinkedIn or directly through their profiles as listed.

Think about the lessons that others learned. How might you grow to better serve your team and community? Be part of our movement for the best possible student leadership by connecting with fellow leaders across Australia.

Campus Challenges

At the end of these profiles are **Campus Challenges** designed as an example of how you, a current student society President, could take action to add more value to your students, your team, your stakeholders and your broader community. Let us know what you found most helpful and if you want to contribute to Volume II, please reach out.

A Few Special People

These lessons learned come from some of the most successful student society Presidents in Australia and would not be possible without the generous contributions of 8 young leaders highlighted here. Thank you to Aaron Teo, Bramantha Patra, Candy Tong, Emily Sun, Heidi Wright, Netania Lim, Nikita Lean and Winson Tan.

Further thanks goes to the thought leaders who shared many ideas, insights, and personal experiences through the [Campus Presidents Network Australia](#) where over 180+ current and former Presidents have formed the largest independent network of student society Presidents in Australia that is not restricted to a single university.

We live in an age of abundant information, but what good is information if it is not shared and not easy accessible?

What would happen if it was?

We bring the most committed student leaders together in a single network to offer insights (like in this eBook), to share best practice (like at the [Campus UNLEASHED conferences](#)) and to engage in mentoring (through the [Campus Presidents Network Australia](#) group).

We are already seeing the benefits.

We are already seeing the connections being formed and barriers broken down.

Enjoy this eBook and be sure to get involved in the near future!

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Contributions collated and challenges created by Josh Farr.

Contents

<i>Disclaimer:</i>	2
<i>How to use this eBook</i>	2
Campus Challenges.....	3
A Few Special People.....	3
<i>Aaron Teo</i>	7
President of the University of Tasmania Malaysian Students' Society	7
<i>Bramantha Patra</i>	9
President of RMIT University Indonesian Student Association	9
<i>Candy Tong</i>	11
President of the Australian Federation of International Students .	11
<i>Emily Sun</i>	12
Co-Founder & President of the Melbourne University Biomedical Students' Orchestra.....	12
<i>Heidi Wright</i>	13
President of the UNSW Judo Club	13
<i>Netania Lim</i>	14
President of Monash Rotaract.....	14
<i>Nikita Lean</i>	15
Founder & President of the UTS Biohacking Society.....	15

<i>Winson Tan</i>	17
President of the RMIT University Malaysian Association	17
<i>Final Thoughts</i>	20
Opportunities for Involvement.....	21
Contact	21
Thank You	21

Aaron Teo

President of the University of Tasmania

Malaysian Students' Society

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“I would highly recommend networking with university staff or other student leaders as they would be key players in helping turn things around for your society.”

Insight #1 – “Communication is key...”

Communication is key when working on a team. If a President is unable to get his message clearly to the team, how are they going to convey their intentions to the entire society or external stakeholders? I would highly recommend networking with university staff or other student leaders as they would be key players in helping turn things around for your society, especially the university higher-ups such as the Director of Student Experience, whom till this day, I keep in contact with! Don't be afraid to approach them during networking or university events. They are more than happy to talk to fellow student leaders to see what the university can provide. (Proven in Insight #3)

Insight #2 – Take the risk!

A President should not spend so much time on thinking IF we should do it, but actually DOING IT. Why waste so much time on thinking and deliberating on carrying something out, when it is better to take the risk and do something at a university level where it is easier to recover and learn from mistakes.

Insight #3 – Bumps along the road

One of the unexpected challenges which popped up for me during my time as President was obtaining National Park passes for our first ever off-campus trip (which we took a risk doing it and it turned out to be successful with a waiting list of over 40 students!). The day before our trip, we received word from the National Park's ranger stating we required park passes to bring a bus in which would set us back roughly AUD700. I managed to get in touch with a university colleague whom I work closely with daily as part of my other job on-campus and met through networking. It so happens that she was in-charge of the Student Services Amenities Fund and they sponsored our park passes right on the spot!

Insight #4 – Building a time machine?

If I could start all over again, I would definitely spend more time with my team members who have done such a fantastic job in 2017. To me, connecting and forming a family with your team is what makes a committee run smoothly. They would see tasks given out to them as something they would enjoy rather than perceiving them as obligations. I managed to build a family with my committee last year, and we received compliments and praises from higher-ups at UTAS, such as the former Director of Student Experience and current Director of Student Living, for engaging with the community like no other society has.

Campus Challenge

Invite three university staff members for coffee.

Will you make the time to involve your stakeholders? You never know what advice, guidance, and assistance they will provide in the long-term.

Bramantha Patra

President of RMIT University Indonesian Student
Association

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bramantha-patra/>

“Maximize the use of social media platforms.”

Insight #1 – Be a role model

Some people confuse leadership. Good leaders will get something done together as a team and will not ask their people to do things they don't want to do. Good leaders will also act as the 'servant' of their people and organisations. Don't restrict your workloads, you can also offer help to your team when necessary. This will put distance between you and your team.

Insight #2 – Appreciate your team

Make sure your team know that you care. Try to recognize and appreciate your team's unique strengths. Give them the support they need, although it may seem so little to you. By doing these things, your team will know that you still care about them and they will have a sense of belonging. They will treat your organizations as their second home and you can earn the respect of your team. These will likely keep your team together and increase productivity.

Insight #3 – Be adaptable to changes

Having good plans are important but if the plans are not adaptable to changes, it can be disastrous. You will encounter some unexpected

situations along the way and giving some room for changes will be your plan's life saver. Moreover, having some back-up plans are also recommended. Being flexible also encourages creative and innovative thinking. Unexpected situations will push you to think outside the box in order to solve the issues you might never previously encounter.

Insight #4 - Maximize the use of social media platforms

Social media platforms are so powerful when it comes to exposing your organisation. Social media platforms are now widely used by people of different age groups and a bunch of major companies have switched to online advertising since it is proven to be highly effective and reaches more audiences. Online advertising also requires less cost and resources than the conventional printed materials. Furthermore, it also allows us to select our own specific target markets which are suitable for their products.

Campus Challenge

Learn about social media marketing.

If you haven't already, listen to the [TED talk by Adam Alter on social media](#). Notice that 75%+ of our non-work/essential time is spent in front of screens (as of 2017). Utilising your own social media skills to recruit more members, share events and gain insight from your community is invaluable. My tip, would be to invest in a \$5 professional logo (www.fiverr.com), a free banner (www.canva.com) and regularly post relevant content on your Facebook page so your community sees you providing free value. When a first year student clicks on your page, and they see that it's professional and immediately valuable, why wouldn't they join?

Candy Tong

President of the Australian Federation of International Students ('16-'17)

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/candytong/>

“Presidents should always be willing to... serve the most.”

Insight #1 - Be humble

Presidents should always be willing to work the hardest and to serve the most, i.e. be humble. By being humble, the leader will be able to understand the team and make full use of the diverse talents within the team. Humble actions:

- Listen and understand camps of ideas;
- Know your end goal and prioritise it;
- Appreciate your own effort but maximise those made by your team and anyone who was involved in making the project successful.

Campus Challenge

How to develop humility.

For 2 weeks, challenge yourself to everyday write down 3 things that you are grateful for. In the words of Anthony Robbins, “It is impossible to be angry/fearful and grateful simultaneously.” Acknowledging the little things will help you realise the opportunity you have, and inspire you to continue serving your community, even when the work is hard.

Emily Sun

Co-Founder & President of the Melbourne University
Biomedicine Students' Orchestra

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-sun-98a10a45/>

“A symphonic combination of music and community spirit.”

Insight #1

Endeavour to make a positive impact in the community through your club. As for any club, there are always highs and lows. A highlight this year has been MUBSO's charity performances at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, a symphonic combination of music and community spirit.

Campus Challenge

Combine your work with contribution.

Do you already have an event that if you asked for \$5 on the door you could turn it into a fundraiser? Trial this approach with a big event and ask for support from your stakeholders.

1. Let your corporate sponsors know you're running the event as a fundraiser and ask if they'd match the total.
2. Collaborate with another society and then cross-promote.
3. Document the process through images/video and share the content to show your community what you're doing.
4. Follow-up with the cause you're supporting and share where the funds went to and how you can grow this partnership in years to come.

Heidi Wright

President of the UNSW Judo Club

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/heidi-wright/>

“Keep grounded.”

Insight #1

Don't expect everything to change overnight. There is always going to be some sort of political landscape. Keep grounded. Just because you have a goal, don't forget that there are other people invested as well.

Insight #2

I had to have a knee reconstruction at the start of 2017 and I just started organizing little things, e.g. Beginner Sessions with a 3-week trial and then decide if they want to stay on.

So I organized drinks after sessions. Having black-belts on the mat it can be intimidating but starting with a few drinks, inviting people out to BBQs, having house-parties and inviting the beginner's to come along (made it better). We achieved a higher retention rate than in previous years.

Campus Challenge

Throw a party for your community.

This sounds simple but can be overlooked. Celebrate your community and let them see that it's not always serious. Relax and watch friendships develop naturally.

Netania Lim

President of Monash Rotaract

LI: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/netanialim/>

“I really believe in our club's ability to serve our community.”

Insight #1

Remind yourself of why you do what you do. Being President isn't an easy job but if you keep your purpose and passion at the forefront, it will make it easier.

I want to make a difference, to bring our club members together, and to be in a position to inspire and motivate. I really believe in our club's ability to serve our community.

Campus Challenge

Write out your values.

Take 10 minutes. Stop reading the e-book and take out a white page of paper. Spend the first 5 minutes thinking about 3-5 words, sentences or phrases that describe who you are at the core. You can Google “Discover your values” for prompting videos or methods if you like. Then spend the second 5 minutes writing them down. These values are yours alone, and while everyone has different values, they will guide your actions. If what you are doing with the club aligns with your values, you will find the experience fulfilling.

Nikita Lean

Founder & President of the UTS Biohacking Society

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“Odds are, someone has done it before.”

Insight #1

I started the society last year which really tested my leadership skills. I had to convince people to join my exec team when they didn't even know what our society was about. Although, I managed to find people through friends of friends at uni and slowly build up our brand. It has definitely been very challenging as we didn't have a lot of support from the uni at first and weren't trained in what to do to organize events. But I found that once you've run an event it's super easy to do it again.

Insight #2

I struggled at first to get my exec team to help out with things, rather than me doing all the work, but I realized that that was a reflection on my leadership and not them. I called a meeting and talked to everyone, outlining exactly what their roles are and what they should be doing.

Insight #3

If I could pass on any advice it'd be to talk to other society execs and gauge how they run events and what works, rather than trying to do it all yourself because odds are, someone has done it before. Try to use other people's knowledge and build on it or work with them! Being an exec is so rewarding, it's such a great environment to meet people and make friends plus you get to spread your passion.

Campus Challenge

Build your network.

LinkedIn is your friend here.

1. Go to the home page and click in the search bar.
2. Type the word 'President.'
3. Click on the 'All Filters' tab.
4. In the Location box, type in your City.
5. In the School box, type in your University.
6. In the Title box, type in 'President.'
7. Hit 'Apply.'

You now have a list of all of the student society Presidents that have publically listed their positions online, who go to or went to the same university as you, who live in the same city and likely have been through a similar experience.

You are *not* trying to sell these contacts anything, but you *are* looking for advice on how to do the best job. If you reach out, either by commenting on their posts/articles (after you 'Follow' them) or by connecting a requesting and briefly explaining that you're looking for guidance, you'll be amazed how open and willing to help people are.

Reach out to 10-20 leaders in and around your community and ask them for their tips. Alternatively, go through the [Campus Presidents Network Australia](#) and find other Presidents living near you.

Winson Tan

President of the RMIT University Malaysian Association

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“I went back on the stage for the fourth time to give a speech for assistant activity director and I finally got it.”

An exposé: RUMA, Your Home Away From Home.

Leading 29 Committees and over 620 Malaysian members within the club, we won the most growing Malaysian association in the whole of Australia 2017 – the MASA Excellent Award.

Hello, first of all please pardon my English, because English is my third, fourth language and I’m trying my best to improve!

When I came to Australia back in 2015, I joined Malaysian association because is not easy for an overseas student to survive in foreign country.

When I first joined RMIT University Malaysian Association, their slogan was we are your home away from home.

‘Rumah’ means home in Malay (FYI).

When I was a member in RUMA about 3 months, I joined a few of their events. I didn’t feel the feeling of home away from home and I feel like there’s a need to change!

So I attended the RUMA annual general meeting, I was running for external Vice President, and got nominated for internal Vice President.

However, I didn't get any of these, and I went back on the stage for the fourth time to give a speech for assistant activity director and I finally got it.

I told myself, "It's okay to fail." If I want to be the president of RUMA, I need to gain trust from the public as well as from the committees. After the AGM, I applied for a few other position in different Malaysian events such as fiesta Malaysia 2016 Down Under Camp, Grand Malaysia, Merdeka Festival and more in 2016 to get more experiences!

During 2016 RUMA AGM, I was running for president for RUMA and I was competition with my former activity director. Fortunately, I won the election and successfully took over RUMA in 2016-2017.

I thought I had a wonderful Exec team with my former activity director as VP and another 2 amazing executive committees as treasurer and secretary. However, my Vice President decided to resign due to personal reason and I have to carry on and finish the journey where I started.

When I took over, I asked 29 of my committee members, "Why are we saying your home away from home just for the sick of saying it?"

I don't feel home when I joined RUMA back in 2015-16. I told my committees, if you want to make RUMA a home away from home, first you have to be more friendly, outgoing to our members whenever they join our activities. Talk to them, add them on Facebook and stay connected. This is why you give them a sense of belonging and we called it home away from home.

When I handover to the new RUMA president and Vice President, we have been awarded “most growing Malaysian student organisation in Australia.”

Our membership increased from 320 to 641.

Our sponsorship and partners increased from 24 to 41.

As well as a new website, new logo, new branding and most importantly we attract Malaysian students from other universities ranging from Monash, University of Melbourne, Deakin, Swinburne and more.

It was a memorable journey, but I believe learning doesn't stop here.

Campus Challenge

Tell your story.

Are you interested in sharing your story about working with a club or society? At Campus Consultancy, we'd love to hear from you. You can post on our LinkedIn group or contact us directly by email at josh@campusconsultancy.org

Final Thoughts

The last thing a new President needs is more work. Our hope, is that these tips will serve as valuable insights for incoming Presidents and form a foundation to build from to save time and increase output over the year. Without any guidance, Presidents across Australia start with very little. The risk is too high to be left to chance.

Imagine starting a new job, and not receiving any training, simply hoping, that your previous experience was sufficient.

Australia has more than 3800 student run clubs and societies. At the head of each of these, is the President.

Presidents often rise to a position of leadership without receiving any formal training in project, financial or team management, in a sector with nearly 100% annual turnover. Once in an office bearing position, these Presidents are responsible for leading a team to provide value for vast numbers of students while overseeing a portfolio up to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

At Campus Consultancy, our mission, is to connect and develop student society Presidents across Australia to unleash their full potential.

How we do this is by delivering a training program that builds the skills and knowledge necessary for Presidents to deliver maximum value to their communities. They learn to increase student engagement, diversify a portfolio of sponsors/stakeholders and build a high-achieving team around them.

After completing the training, Presidents are inducted into a network for ongoing mentoring. 71% of Fortune 500 companies engaged young leaders in mentoring programs throughout 2017, so in 2018, we are providing Presidents with access to over 180 current/former Presidents to learn from, and work with.

Opportunities for Involvement

We have announced our first opportunities to undergo this training for February 2018. Visit www.campusconsultancy.org to see more. If you are interested in getting involved we are currently looking for:

- (1) Former Presidents to join the networking group ([*Campus Presidents Network Australia*](#)), be available as mentors and contribute to future editions of this publication;
- (2) Current Presidents interested in undergoing the training and participating in the mentoring experience;
- (3) Contacts at universities across Australia to speak with about implementing the training on their campuses;

Contact

Please contact Josh Farr via email at josh@campusconsultancy.org with any questions or opportunities for involvement.

Thank You

Thank you for reading this eBook. Please pass it on so others can benefit. If you notice any errors, please make them known and they will be corrected as soon as is feasibly possible. If you have any feedback we'd welcome it, at the same email address as above. This is now Volume 2, so stay tuned for future editions.

WITH THANKS - JOSH FARR, FOUNDER OF CAMPUS CONSULTANCY
www.campusconsultancy.org