



Memorandum

To: Anne-Marie Parsons, Deputy Director Student Experience

From: Lia Lawrie, President USASA; Daniel Randell, General Manager USASA

Date: 18th August 2014

Subject: SSAF Consultation

1. Introduction

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Association to make a submission as a part of the SSAF consultation process.

USASA has sought feedback and recommendations from Students regarding the current and future allocation of SSAF monies. USASA Student Representatives have run focus groups with students over the past week on each campus to speak to students directly about SSAF expenditure. In all, 85 students participated in the research across 5 campuses which included interviews and short survey style questionnaires. We would note that this was an entirely student initiated and led process.

Whilst feedback varied from campus to campus there were a number of areas of commonality in student responses. As such feedback is provided on a by-campus basis.

We note that some of the identified items may already be funded either through the SSAF or through University General expenditure. The responses of students have been collated to identify areas of commonality and provide recommendations.

2. Campus Feedback

CITY EAST

Key areas identified:

- Affordable Housing
- Financial Management
- Student Art

CITY WEST

Key areas identified:

- Food
- Outdoor sports and activities
- Clubs
- Child care
- Legal services*

*Most respondents spoken to were not aware there is already a free legal clinic at the UniSA Law School in City West

- Health and welfare
- Employability and careers
- Taxation advice
- Student spaces
- Art on campus
- Study Skills

MAGILL

Key Areas identified:

- Employability and careers
- Child care
- Taxation advice and budgeting
- Legal advice
- Food and Drink
- Accommodation

WHYALLA

Key areas identified*:

- Health & welfare programs
- Accommodation
- Buildings & Facilities
- Mature aged students

*It is worth noting that general awareness of SSAF is very low at Whyalla. This may be reflective of the SSAF resources that are committed to regional programs

MAWSON LAKES

Key areas identified:

- Employability
- Support for Clubs
- Taxation service
- Yoga/Zumba classes
- Food
- Taxation assistance

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Employment and employability
- Accommodation
- Health and Welfare
- Study Skills
- Language and community

3. Common Themes and recommendations

There was strong support from students through the focus groups for a number of existing activities at the University, including:

- Clubs
- Uni SA Sport
- E-Pals
- O-Week activities
- Counselling

Come and try days and counselling services were singled out for particular commendation and are areas that students would like to see more investment.

Other common themes from the focus groups:

Accommodation

Access to affordable housing was raised as an issue on most campuses. It was noted that often houses that are affordable for students are in areas that are not practical for commuting to the University, or are difficult to identify and secure as accommodation. There is a need for a housing service that can match students' accommodation needs to what is currently available in the market.

Employability and careers

This was an area that received one of the strongest responses from students. Students felt that there was a need for more programs which provide interaction with employers and industry. Some suggestions were mentoring programs, networking functions and work experience programs. It was noted that the majority of existing programs are on during the day which can cause issues for students on placement or with a full study load, and night workshops or online workshops may be helpful.

Sport and recreation

More opportunities for outdoor sport and recreational activities on Mawson and City West campuses such as yoga, jogging, fitness classes were cited.

Child care

Another area where significant work is needed. Both City West and Magill identified with high numbers of mature aged students and students who are parents, with a particular impact on single parents.

Financial Advice

It is clear from the focus groups that there is a need for financial planning and taxation assistance for students. Particular areas identified were around tax time, budgeting and planning. There were suggestions for emergency short term loans being made available as at some other Universities. This is a particular area of interest for USASA and an area that we would like to explore further through the Advocacy program. As part of the SSAF funding arrangements USASA proposes expanding our student assistance role to include financial planners and tax consultants which could either be a permanent fixture of USASA staff or could be on rotation around tax time.

Food

Students felt that the food on campus through Aroma and the Caf was overall of a very low quality and was expensive. They wanted to see cheaper healthy options on campus and much less junk food. Students supported the Brekky Bar concept and suggested that it could happen on more days.

Art on campus

It was noted that street art and mural art is a burgeoning art form many UniSA students are involved in. In order to foster the arts and creativity amongst students, as well as create a greater connection with campus suggestions were made to open up funding for art supplies and the like to create a student art wall at each campus and encourage students to showcase their work.

Mature age students

There were a number of mature aged students involved in the focus groups who identified the need for a stronger focus on mature age students during orientation. It was felt that there is a need for further support for this student cohort in the areas of computer literacy and internet use, transition to study programs and broader study help.

Clubs

Students felt that clubs need more support in terms of professional development for officeholders and organiser and more opportunities to promote themselves. It was felt that there needs to be more promotion generally of the range and availability of clubs at the University and broad support for a club sign up day or clubs day outside O-Week

Health and welfare

Students requested access to GP or nurse on campus. At the minimum it was requested that emergency supplies be available such as bands aids and pain killers.

Facilities

There are a number of campus specific areas identified:

- Students at Mawson Lakes noted a lack of quality equipment in the gym.
- Need for a mass media hub at Whyalla and generally more facilities to align with degrees (prac room for education, additional labs and computer pools for students)
- More quiet areas or reading areas for students at City West, with more flexible opening hours for the library on the weekend.

International student support

Whilst a number of the areas of SSAF funding identified for International Students had an overlap with the campus based focus groups, it is worth noting where there were areas that were specific for International students or where the international student experience is difference.

- Work experience for international students was highlighted and it was suggested that there be a program where they can gain work experience within the University departments similar to a buddy system or an e-pal system to gain relevant skills and contacts for their resume.
- Students noted issues with visa changes and felt that further assistance in providing advice around visa requirements was needed.

- International students felt that there was very little advice or information available on accommodation services. There was also a suggestion to provide information on homestay to students.
- It was noted that under the current provider scheme for international students only information on bulk bill clinics is provided to students with significant wait times. This is leading to students deferring medical help.
- Further assistance with study skills and language assistance, IELTS help and training
- Mentoring and buddy programs for international students where they can connect with domestic students. It was felt that there is a real gap between international and domestic students despite a real desire to create friendships.