Exploring degrees of partnership with students post-2020
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Transcript

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:00:36] Well, good morning everyone. Welcome to our first Studiosity Symposium for 2022. Before we begin, I want to acknowledge that I'm hosting this online conversation from the lands of the Cammeraygal people. I also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which you all work today, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting and First Nations people across other parts of the world. I pay my respects to elders past, present, and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand. I note that there are also one or two Canadians. So welcome. Today's our first symposium for 2022. Its focus is on student engagement and empowerment. We plan to deliver more during the year, but we'll keep you informed. The symposium webinars provide the higher education community with the opportunity to engage in conversations and trigger ideas about challenges and issues facing us all in Higher Education. But in particular, how we can support students to be successful. Over 390 people have actually registered. So welcome to all of those people that have registered and thank you for those who sent in questions beforehand because there are some great questions. So how the session is organised: the five minute introduction, then I'll ask each member of the panel questions that relate to their expertise and experience. And then there will be questions taken from the audience. I'll attempt to bring all of these together at the end, and then we will finish at 12 o'clock. So thank you. The symposium is recorded and others will be able to listen to it later. So if I could ask the panellists to introduce themselves briefly, but in particular in introducing themselves, what is their expertise that they bring to the table today? And so if I may start with our student representative, JB, thank you for participating today from your busy schedule. So if you can introduce yourself. Well, I won't put any words in your mouth.

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:02:52] Thank you, Judyth. So my name is Jean-Baptiste, but JB is fine. As you can hear from the accent or the name, I may or may not be French, but we'll never know. I am a medical student out at Western Sydney University, and amongst other things, I am also chair, the Chair of The National Rural Health Student Network, and I've been a PASS facilitator and mentor for the last couple of years. So very excited to be here to share on this topic.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:03:19] Jennie.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:03:20] Thanks, Judyth. So I'm Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President Academic at the University of Adelaide. And in that role, I oversee all our degree and diploma programmes - that's short courses, micro-credentials, all our teaching and learning partnerships, then a whole lot of other things like University Library, student accommodation. But teaching enhancement, innovation and staff development and excellence is one major part of it. And continuing exec ed for all our undergrad, postgrad students and our alumni. I oversee all aspects of the student experience and the student journey and student support and student success generally. So everything from admissions and scholarships and internships to exams and graduations, and then all the academic, pastoral, disability, and social support. So it's a busy and really great role.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:04:08] Thank you. Theo.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:04:11] Yes, good morning, everyone. I'm a bit like Jennie, so my portfolio is Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Life, University of Wollongong. So like Jennie I'm doing the entire student life cycle of falls under my portfolio. I guess, you know, it's really great to be part of this discussion. So our Vice Chancellor, Professor Trish Davidson, when she joined she brought a real strong commitment to doubling down on our part on working with students as trusted partners. And in December, signed a partnership agreement between the university executive and the Student Advisory Council as part of our commitment to empowering students. And so I think that's why I'm really interested to join this discussion because this is squarely where we're at in terms of what we want to do this coming year and in the years ahead.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:05:00] Thank you Theo. And last but not least, my former colleague and co-author Mitch Parsell.

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:05:06] Thank you, Judyth. So I am Deputy Vice Chancellor, Education at the University of Tasmania, joining you from sunny Lutruwita, the land of the Palawa people, one of the oldest continuing cultures in the world. My remit is curriculum, pedagogy, everything to do with supporting student learning. In my own teaching I've been devoted to a community of enquiry model for a very long time, so a pedagogical approach that's very much built on a sense of cooperation and trust with students and allowing them to drive their own learning through a common purpose. Really looking forward to the conversation today.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:05:41] Thank you very much. So let's start the question. And in fact, the question that I'm going to pose came from a colleague at Monash University who is a senior lecturer, and it's reframed one that we we talked about earlier as a group. So the question is: student belonging and empowerment; do you think universities have learnt things in 2020 and 2021 worth keeping post-COVID? So who'd like to start off with that question?

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:06:10] Well, I can kick in just very briefly, I think one of the things that we did at Adelaide that worked pretty well, was we actually collaborated with the student union, the Adelaide University Union, coming up with support for students. And these were support packages, often really practical emergency assistance for students, especially in 2020, I have to say. But then we collaborated with them around what could we do to support students online and face to face that included funding them a little bit extra to do stuff, but also just really listening to those students and those student leaders

and what they thought would benefit students. So it wasn't so much in the classroom, if you like, but it was that really important part of it around the academic experience.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:06:58] I think what I would add is that, you know, we were thrust in our university, like many others, into uncertainty in 2020. It was a whole new world we found ourselves in because we had to pivot in two weeks flat to online; like everyone else really. And I think for us, that meant that we were incredibly anxious to understand the student perspective, how they were experiencing what was happening. And so we opened up multiple channels, you know, a lot of pulse surveying of students, towards the end they were survey fatigued. Lots of focus group work, lots of consultations and we just haven't really stopped. So this- it really amplified the importance of consulting with the students, understanding their perspectives. So I think it has caused a cultural shift in us understanding that it's vitally important that we both understand the student perspectives, but we evolve even more in how we continue to collectively respond to the challenges we face.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:07:57] JB, do you want to make a comment here, or will you wait a bit....

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:08:01] Absolutely. I think I really like the term of 'digital equity'. I think that's what 2020's really brought in. I think it's good to see technology as our friend, rather than something that's used as a copout or to kind of get away from the requirements. And I think as a medical student, a lot of us don't step foot on campus for the last two or three years of our degree, because we're just in the hospital and my university, particularly has many campuses. So I would have never got involved if it wasn't for COVID into a lot of different things with the university, whether it's online events or, you know, signing up for academic boards or representative kind of things, because I just wouldn't have had the time, I'd spend a lot more time travelling. A lot of things would have been in person and it would have been weird to zoom into a meeting. Well, now it's just so normal that it's really enabled some, like those of us that are outside that kind of like campus-based learning to really kind of be part of the learning, which is great.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:08:59] And Mitch.

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:08:59] So for us Judyth we worked very closely with the unions, but just listening to the student voice. So look, each of us faced different challenges during the pandemic, that's institutions, disciplines, and individuals and really the only effective way of responding to those challenges or meeting those challenges is to empower individuals. And you can't do that unless you start by listening. So we surveyed students, we spoke to students, we had a very close relationship with our student union. And that relationship continues to develop and mature and we're in a really good place because of that relationship.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:09:34] So can we just unpack that idea of that movement from student engagement to student empowerment? And what does that actually look like in practise? And given that you, you made that distinction Mitch, I'm going to throw it to you first.

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:09:48] So engagement can often be seen as something that we do to students. So we engage them with our content, with our learning, with our activities. Whereas empowerment for me is more allowing students to drive their own learning in ways that make sense to them. And for that to happen, you need to begin from a student-

centric position; understanding where they're coming from, what makes sense to them, and what they want to learn. And that kind of co-development of curriculum, co-development of the pedagogy, I think is particularly important in stressful times like a pandemic.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:10:23] Do Jennie or Theo want to add to that, in terms of their thoughts around that shift from engagement to empowerment and what it looks like in your institutions?

Prof Theo Farrell [00:10:33] Yeah, look, I agree with Mitch that's really the direction of traffic. There are obviously tension points that are really obvious to everyone. You know, the shape of curricula are driven by multiple factors. There's heavy legacy rag on curricula that's - we all know that right? But also, there's lots of other positive factors that drive curriculum. There's obviously accreditation considerations. There's increasingly, you know, in the policy settings the importance of industry and business and their involvement in assisting us to produce job-ready, career-ready graduates. So all these factors come into play. It's great that we are focussing more on student choice and empowerment. But obviously, you know, you can't have - it wouldn't necessarily be a good thing, and it's not actually possible to enable students to have total choice. And so it's how do we recruit students to co-design curricula? But being present, obviously to all of the other factors that we have to bear in mind and also work with our staff, our academic staff as subject matter experts. So it's that mix, which is really exciting and interesting, but it's not without challenges.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:11:37] But, you know, I can comment briefly on it. Just by off what Mitch said. I think ... We can change our structures to go from engagement to empowerment. And I think one of the things we started to do before COVID was to put more students on course programme school review panels, so that there was a student, undergrad and post-grad voice. I think that's really important. So we've been changing our formal structures wherever we can to have that student voice present at different layers in the organisation. So not just at the very top on the University Council or the Senate. So I think that's probably the major way that we've tried to do it. And the other way is just changing some of the naming. So we're going through a restructure. Many universities are going through restructures. But we've changed a role that was director, Executive Director, Student Operations to Executive Director, Student Experience. And there is therefore a change in functions and emphasis that's indicated by that name change, but also substantively with what that role now encompasses.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:12:41] So from from what you're saying, and then I'm going to get JB just to react from the student's perspective in terms of, you know, is that his lived experience? But it seems as though that it does require a sort of a cultural shift in an institution, but it also requires learning on the part of students and academics to take on this role of empowerment - and giving up some of the power that they previously had. Am I correct in in that sort of observation?

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:13:11] I think I think that's definitely correct, Judyth. And in fact, probably we're not giving up the power because we never really had that power to begin with. We're just recognising that the power should have been more evenly distributed.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:13:24] Good point.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:13:26] I mean I think... oh let Jean-Baptiste come in...

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:13:30] Oh no I was going to actually go on what you said, which is where, you know, the shift can't go all the way. You kind of got to find that middle. And an interesting example is that when I did PASS in my first year, that was pre-COVID, so it was in person. You know, there was maybe one online session and that kind of thing. So when I signed up for PASS thinking I was going to do it in person and really excited, and then COVID happened. So my whole experience of PASS has been online. And now we're going back in person and now I'm mentoring the new facilitators. And they came in and I was like, "Oh, you guys are going to be in person, it's great." And they were all like, "Oh, no, like, why would we do that?" And so, the mentality has shifted in the students like, it was just like, not even a question. Why would we do something - like, it's comfortable we do it at seven p.m. when everyone's available at home, that kind of thing. And so that mentality shift, I guess, needs to be followed by the institution in a way. And it's hard because even me, I'm a student, I'm a fourth year, and I already can see differences with the first years because of how they went through high school and how they're going through medicine. So it's very interesting.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:14:33] So the next question JB is actually directed to you, and it's some students experience engagement negatively. Non-traditional students experience university culture as foreign or hostile. International students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, students from minority religious groups, LGBTQ+ students, low income, first in family. There's a whole list of them and I apologise if I leave any out. But what - what's your observation in terms of how well universities manage that diversity? And what advice would you give to our three Deputy Vice Chancellors in terms of how to manage diversity and inclusion?

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:15:16] Yeah, that's a really good question and there's so many answers to it. And I think it's good to think that diversity is there, like, I don't know many people that don't tick one of those boxes. And it's like in medicine, you know with the standard male of 70 kilos, that's what we kind of base ourselves on. But that male just doesn't exist. Like everyone's different, everyone's got different things. And so I think when you look at peer programmes, it's great to create the opportunity. Obviously, the students can't engage without the opportunity, but then you've got to think about everything around. It's kind of a 360. You've got things like advertising it right. So, you know, finding the right way to kind of get to the students, especially the students that are, I guess, outside that, you know, standard kind of high school leaver student that everyone just thinks of. Um then you got to get the students' feedback on the programme, like before and after, whether it's the peer or the students participating. And I think that's something that kind of gets forgotten a lot, is the feedback from the university like, you know, we've been doing those things. Because a lot of times we're kind of giving back to university. Oh, we'd love to see that. Oh, we love that programme. And then we don't hear what goes on after that. And so much happens in the university. I've sat on academic boards I've sat on different kind of things. And there's so many discussions and they talk about us all the time, but we don't realise that. Or at least, you know, most students don't realise that. So I think that's something that's really good. Another thing I think is succession planning. So it's also kind of thinking that the peer- we're all there because we're passionate. You know, we're not there for the money, we're not there for the CV, we're there because we really want to give back to our community. And so we really think of, you know, who would be good to kind of take over from me? Or who would be that. So giving that voice to the student to kind of help with that succession planning would actually help a lot. And I think the last point is relatability. So if you look at an international office, a lot of people are former international students or, you know, overseas people themselves. And I think that's just because it's just

more relatable to that student and that applies to like all the different kind of groups. So I think having a university that kind of represents students, with its staff, is also a great way of doing that.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:17:17] If I can add, I mean, I think these practical points that JB is making are absolutely right. I mean, we need to do more and better to communicate back to all of our stakeholders and most importantly, our students what we are doing. And we're seeing that ourselves. We're putting more effort into comms. We had a big campaign last year, which was, you know, "You told us. So we are." To feedback to students how we are responding to their concerns, but also holds ourselves to account, which is really important in terms of the staff and what we're doing. The other is the real practicalities of how do you empower students with the sort of practical stuff? Mentoring is critically important. Secretariat support is important. JB is absolutely right. Succession planning. And you know, we're only just getting our head around this now, actually. So we have a staff student- we call them 'staff student partnership elevation hubs' that work on distinct pieces of work. Just our university education committee just last week looked at a really big piece of work around a handbook to have for student representation in academic governance. There's so much stuff in there that I read that as a member of staff, I was thinking, actually, this handbook will help students, but most of all members of staff have to read it. Because lots of practical considerations around buddying, mentoring, and supporting students so they have the confidence to go in. They have the understanding to go in and give voice and represent the interests of their constituencies. So I think these practical concerns are really important, actually.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:18:42] Jennie?

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:18:44] Well, it's going to say I just was thinking about the point that JB made earlier about digital equity, and I think that is one of the pluses we've found with some of our quiet students, often our students from Asian countries. And again, having lived in Japan for a while myself, I'm very well-aware of a very different model of- if you like, more master-apprentice kind of model, that is the certainly the school model and most universities too. And I think the chat function, as our participants know today, is actually really handy. And quiet students can become very vocal in chat rooms. So I think that's one thing I'd like to keep as we go back to face to face because it's very hard to get those more reticent students to speak up and to hear their views and so if we can keep a way of having the quiet voices come in, that would be terrific.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:19:41] Mitch, do you want to make a comment?

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:19:43] Yes, so at UTAS last year we implemented representatives on each of the college committees. And in fact, beyond the college at each of the discipline areas, so within the schools, and those representatives then spoke to their constituents and would write a report on our, in this case, the response to the pandemic, and that would come to me. And I would make formal recommendations on how the university would change in response to that. So I think it comes back to Theo's point of you're really closing that loop. So we've heard what you said. This is how we're going to change. Let's check back in later on to ensure that we are actually having the impact we want.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:20:20] Keeping with the theme of students and their experience, they're not just undergraduate students, they're not just doing bachelor's degrees, there's also research students. So there's a question here from a research student: "with research

students working remotely and not necessarily ever stepping on campus, how does one assure that they are connected?"

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:20:43] I'd love to pitch in here, Judyth, because that's one of the issues I've been dealing with all last year. So I have a diverse group of HDR students and they're spread all over the country and it has been one of the hardest, hardest things. I had one poor student who spent most of Melbourne - his candidature in Melbourne in lockdown. And I really felt for him. I mean, I think that social interaction that he was able to have with me as a supervisor once a week. I know how valuable he found it because when the borders reopened, he got in the car and drove up from Melbourne to give me a bottle of something as a present and then drove back. So I think just to have that- and this is the thing with universities. Our students are there to learn academic content, but they're also there to mature in their thinking and mature as individuals. And what we're providing for them is a way for them to think critically about their research topics or the topics in the classroom, but also critically about life. Maybe that's my background as a humanist, but I actually feel very strongly that that aspect of university education is in some ways the most critical aspect of education for them. So for our research students who are very much doing it as a lone journey, even at the best of times, I think COVID has been especially hard.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:22:09] Look, there's another question here from somebody from James Cook University, and it relates about inclusiveness and managing the diversity of student bodies. What strategies ensure that students who may not have the cultural capital, that is the mores, the experience to be able to manage university life, are supported to engage in partnership activities? So how do students who might not, who might be first in family learners, they might come from remote areas, they might be Indigenous students. They could be any sort of type of diverse student body. How do we help them navigate and manage the sort of arcane structures and cultures of the university? And JB, let me start with you, because I'd be interested to hear because you've done a number of degrees in a number of universities.

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:23:01] Well yeah, so I had a first go around at university and I can't say I was that successful. There was a lot of different factors. I was young and I was an international student. I was just, I just, you know, there was a lot of things to figure out. So making it successful was probably not on my number one focus. But I think coming back around, it's almost like a cheat code where I kind of, like, figured out a way I can go and where I can get help and who I can talk to and what I can get engaged with. And I really, I think working helped me in a way where I kind of realised that, you know, working full time and being at university is not that different. You're trying to get engaged, talk to people, kind of share things around and the more engaged you are, the better your experience. So obviously, not everyone can do that, but I think it'd be great for the universities to kind of like find ways to just kind of put in place those kind of stepping stones. And I think it's what something Theo mentioned earlier with mentoring and things like that, like not expecting the same engagement from a first year than from a third or fourth or fifth year, that would have had that kind of progression, but enabling it in a way. I know it's hard for to do with everyone, but I think that's really something that that would kind of change, you know, one person's life and kind of snowball from there.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:24:10] So all right. DVCs? Help us out with some interventions that might be possible.

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:24:19] So I think a really practical one, Judyth, is one that JB has already spoken about, and that's PASS power. So they are these really non-threatening environments in which students interact with their peers and can build a community, can really begin to understand the hidden curriculum of a university. Universities from the outside and in fact, internally, you know, are very hierarchical and have very formal structures. It's very difficult for students from underrepresented groups to penetrate those. But if you can do that within a positive, low risk setting like a power PASS class, that's as valuable as any of the content that you'll learn in those classes.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:25:00] I would agree with Mitch, I mean, I think it's partly it's around, as you say, developing the kind of appropriate cultural capital in students so they can really participate and be empowered to participate in university governance, which is what we're talking about. And I agree, Mitch, mean there's all these kind of peer to peer success, very success programmes that we all have. And that's one way that students obviously give back to their own community, but then begin to develop a cultural capital that they feel more confident to voice, have a voice in the process. So I think that's really important in terms of creating a pool of students who then from which would then nominate themselves to go into governance structures. And the other is just to put a lot of support around the governance structures themselves. So I'm sure we all do the same. We do quite a lot of training of students that come into governance roles, supporting them throughout it. So in addition to the mentoring, you got quite formal training and then lots of opportunities for students in governance roles to come together and share experience and for us to celebrate and recognise the contribution that they're making to university life. So I think those kinds of measures are important and we need to continue to do that. The one thing you can't do is suddenly just pluck a student and dump them into a committee and expect that they're going to then have a voice and be able to fully participate. But I reckon we're all basically in the same space in terms of what we're doing.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:26:26] I was going to say, I'll give you a practical example. I think there's also the informal network that students have of communicating how the system works. And I think we underestimate that. A practical example is we did face to face sit down exams for the first time in two years in November. And we found out that not only had examiners forgotten how to invigilators, forgotten how to invigilate face to face, it was a bit like the pilots getting back in the planes in the US and forgetting how to fly properly and do terrible landings. But the students had- didn't know where to go. They didn't know how you conduct yourself in the face to face sit-down exam because it gets passed down from year to year, and we had students who just hadn't had that experience. So one of the things we're funding this year is a welcome back festival that runs all year because we'll be welcoming back students all year and it's an induction programme that goes through all of this stuff. So the formal stuff, but it's the informal stuff about how you get around. It starts off with handing the international students free RATs, you know, all sorts of - not the animals, the tests. But we're helping them out with how you get from the airport to the city, then we're helping them out with accommodation, then we're helping them out with extra English language support, even if they're in third year because they haven't been here for two years. But it's very similar for the domestic students. Our O-Week is not just for first years, it's welcoming back people who are in third year who haven't been on campus.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:27:48] If I just I know Judyth you want to pop onto another question, but I think this is a really interesting point. It's good opportunity to share experience. You know, we are having the exact same. We are having to supercharge and lean in on our welcome activity for students. And I daresay, like all our colleagues, also online as well as in person. So it's interesting how this year, both we have domestic students who haven't

been on campus for a couple of years. We have international students arriving less well-prepared than the past. And so we're having to we're having to put a lot more effort into supporting our students as they transition into their courses.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:28:22] There's a question here, and it's continuing with the theme on the online environment, the digital environment. So can I ask members of the panel to discuss the strategies of overcoming challenges of forming student partnerships in the online learning environment? So given that there's this virtual environment, nobody really sees each other. I mean, I met somebody the other day for the first time face to face, and they were much shorter than I thought they were. So how do you actually build this, this partnership in an online space and then transition to the face to face?

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:29:02] Well, Judyth, I don't - really the techniques in the online space probably aren't that much different to the face to face space. You do need to be more deliberate in your actions there. So the affordances of the online don't come as naturally to us, but I don't believe it's ultimately any more difficult if you pay particular attention to allowing students to make those connections and allowing the space to make those connections. So one of the affordances of the on campus experience is, of course, outside of the curriculum. Students just naturally interact and naturally bump into each other. That doesn't happen to any great extent online, so we need to ensure you do that deliberately and make the space for that to happen. Quite often, that can mean reducing the amount of content at the start of the course, for example, and allowing students to make social connections within the class before delving into the content. And really clear evidence that one of the main reasons fully online students drop out at high rates is that lack of social connection. And it's because we don't deliberately allow them to make it.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:30:09] I was going to say the - I think having those kind of icebreaker activities, a colleague of mine does it very, very well with kahoot quizzes. And I think just having some of those informal things just to get students in a comfortable, relaxed zone, so they can form that kind of connection online is is really important. But also, you can do small workgroup breakout work online, even in very big classes. I think it's the same though as if you're doing it face to face. There are some students who won't be the ones who can be the spokesperson for the group. So I think having a range of different roles for students so that you have again the ones who are less articulate, less outspoken, but really happy to do something behind the scenes, be able to do that and contribute to the group really effectively.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:31:01] Yeah, it's interesting because we've been looking at this too, in terms of how you optimise the online meeting experience, be that if it's in a teaching context or some other context. So we stood up at a student staff partnership innovation hub to look precisely at this. And the key issue we were trying to attack was the issue of the camera on/off issue, you know, because staff have different views about should we require students to have the camera on? And then of course, there's a view around no, you have to obviously respect student choice around this. And the emerging view that's coming from the student staff partnership innovation hub. It's really fascinating, but it's around understanding the various perspectives of staff and students and helping staff and students understand these variety of perspectives. And so it's really about helping people understand where the people are coming from. And the two key principles that we're likely to be taking forward is, is that these interactions should be guided by role diversity, and self-reflection. We all have different roles to play and we all come with different roles in mind, and we just reflect, self-reflect about what we're involved in. And this is, the way we see it is that it's part of helping students develop professional skills for professional

contexts. Because we're going to be working hybrid for the rest of our lives, the mix of online and in-person. But we all recognise and value the importance of diversity in our teams. We all understand that diversity is the key strength a team can have. And so it's this role diversity and self-reflection is critical to developing and valuing diversity in teams. So that's the kind of direction that we're taking with this.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:32:38] International students are now, Jennie mentioned that international students were coming back on campus, and they're returning to other parts of Australia. What special considerations do we need to make for international students so that they - often they come from a culture where a sense of empowerment is totally alien to their whole lived experience as a student. So how do we socialise students into this sense of empowerment? How do we educate them to be effective and competent independent learners so that they get the most out of their experience and they fulfil the aspirations that we have for our universities? And JB do you want to; you've been an international student and you've had those challenges of having to learn another culture working in a language that was not your first language. So give us some insights into what it was like for you and what it still is like for you.

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:33:36] Yeah, I think the first thing is that it takes time. So like, that's not something that's going to magically happen. There's no easy solution to it, but I think there's a lot of factors that can play, I think, and it's, you know, not applicable for every international student, but a lot of international students will live on campus or close to campus. So I think the focus has to be campus learning, as I was saying earlier, medical students a bit different. But really, you've got to integrate that living activity with the studying because they're really 24/7 part of that university environment. And not recognising it or not, kind of, you know, like there's things that are done where, you know, accommodations are done by private providers or things like that, and that's not a commentary on that. But I'm just saying it is really the university has to take into account that the student is there 24/7. And I think bringing peer programmes again is the main way to do it. You've got to relatability. You've got international students that have achieved this or that and, you know, like, understood this and they will share that. And I think that's something that other people can't really share unless they've gone through it. So I think those things really should be taken into consideration.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:34:45] Any comments from....

Prof Theo Farrell [00:34:50] I agree with JB, it's really - interaction is really important, and we know from feedback from international students that they really, really value they're coming for that interaction with domestic students. They're looking for that. One of the challenges, of course, with COVID is that we haven't really been able to provide that because it's through the on-campus experience that you really get those opportunities. But just to say, with regards to ourselves and I daresay many other universities with our accommodation facilities, we intentionally mix it up. So we intentionally ensure there's diversity in terms of who's going into which accommodations. And then we hold a whole bunch of events that bring people together. So accommodation, our campus accommodation is a great opportunity for us to give those opportunities to international students. Of course, many international students wouldn't live on campus, but I think that's one of the virtues of having portfolios like myself and I heard Jennie say likewise for her in hers, where we can look across the entire student life cycle and see how we can optimise what we how we support students and we can really ensure they have the best possible experience.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:35:51] And just on that point, Theo and JB your point about the accommodation. So most of the students at our university live in accommodation that the university does not own. We do have some, particularly on our more remote campus at Roseworthy, but I actually meet monthly with the college and residential hall heads and we've got a really great relationship because we've all got a common aim of making sure the students succeed. And these are colleges that have students from across the universities in South Australia. But there's a common aim with making sure that we're all on the same page that we're trying to deal with issues and problems as they come up together. And it's about that sense of cohort experience and belonging for the students. One of the things I've found is very sad is actually having the international students is a two way street. Our domestic students benefit from having international students like they benefit from having an international staff and for the first time ever in its history, one of our affiliated colleges will have no residential international students. And I actually think that's very damaging for the student experience for the domestic students.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:36:57] So, Jennie, I want to pose a question to you specifically, then the others can come in. And in doing some research for this topic, I did a quick literature review and the literature suggests that when students become alienated and isolated, they lose their sense of belonging and their performance suffers. What initiatives has your university put in place first to identify students at risk? And second, to build an inclusive experience to foster success?

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:37:26] Yeah. Well, I think the key is actually early identification of the students at risk, and we have various stages in that. But the very first one is if they don't hand in the very first assessment task or they do it very poorly. So that triggers a phone call from our 'Succeed at Adelaide', which is a peer phone call, before it gets too serious, but just a kind of a wellbeing check in. And then we push the lots of one-to-one support that we have. The PASS programme that JB and others have mentioned is fabulous, but we also encourage them to talk to course coordinators to look at counselling, disability support, Studiosity, we get them to use that of course. Our writing Centre is fantastic. For maths students, we actually do a multi-pronged approach where we say "Use the maths learning centre, use our PASS classes in maths, go for the first year maths support." There's a great first year support programme in place in the maths department and I think we stress that from day one. I mean, the Vice Chancellor in his opening address for O-Week, was also saying "This is the most important thing you can do is ask for help." And we do just keep saying please ask for help. It's the ones who don't come for help till too late where we run into all those problems. Then we've got the specialist help. So we have a lot of Indigenous students. We have a specialised Indigenous support unit and we also have a dedicated international student support team. So we've already mentioned all the colleges and accommodation structures. So I think we actually do that pretty well. And you can see it's a combination of professional and skilled support staff, peer support, specialist academic support. And certainly we ramped that up through COVID. It became really important to do that even more so online than face to face. The second part I think you mentioned was around building a sense of belonging and making it inclusive and feeling connected. Again, it's really hard to do that well, and I've come to the finding after a few years at a few different universities. I think you have to approach it again with multiple options for students and the option is important. Students have to be able to choose what they decide to do to make them feel connected and belonging. If you force a single path on them, they won't do it. So it's around student choice and agency and finding something that works for them. And for some students, it might be a judo club. For others, it's going weekly to the Writing Centre. For others, it's a social activity at the end of the week with a group of friends. It's a not one size fits all approach, so you have to

present as many choices as you can possibly manage, afford and run well, I think. So, we do certainly work very closely to push things like the social clubs and the sporting clubs and the union clubs, and we do a lot of that activity face to face and online. But I would also say we waste no opportunity, and one of the ones we did last year that was really successful was around academic integrity. So the student leaders asked us to educate students on academic integrity, it was a big issue last year and the year before with online exams. So we did online modules that we asked students to take, and the take up was well over 90 per cent, which is fabulous. But what we also did was set a whole lot of really fun quizzes around academic integrity in the student hubs for the students who were on campus and provided doughnuts, free food. You know, food always works with students. And actually they were really, really popular. So that actually was us providing a service that students had asked us to do. It was doing it in a way that was fun, but also saying, actually, you know, this is really important. You need to know this stuff. So that's just an example, but it's an example where you can tie the academic and the social aspects together and do it well. But it came out of a student request that we do this.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:41:11] And I think also if I can say this, there's as a student empowerment piece here too, because we're likewise using learning analytics and we have automated responses. So depending on what students don't do certain things, it automatically triggers a response. But the empowerment side comes into encouraging students to use learning analytics themselves. So it's encouraging student take up of learning analytics, and that involves then having to work in partnership with students to find out how it can work best for them. And likewise, also what's really important is, of course, we're gathering student data and using student data, so we have to put a wrapper around working in partnership with students to build stakeholder confidence and trust in the use of their data. So it's a really complex piece here, but it's quite exciting. Learning analytics is really critically important as we all become more data-enabled. And as we also begin to automate more stuff and leverage A.I., it's really important we work with students as partners to put in place a framework that all of our stakeholders have trust and confidence in because that's an issue we face in our everyday daily lives, of course. So it's a quite exciting space.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:42:14] Look, there's a comment made in the chat, that I'd just like to talk to you about it. It's a colleague that invokes Faucault, and talking about having students reimagine themselves in this new environment of empowerment. So what will this new student look like, how will they be more reformed, more assertive, and more engaged and have a deepened sense of belonging and be more successful? Mitch, can I throw that one at you?

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:42:44] Yes. You certainly can Judyth so thank you very much. That is a colleague from Macquarie University who has asked that question, so thank you Marios. A tricky one. Look, an academic community and academic discipline that is made up of, you know, constructive creative tensions and the way that an academic community advances is through disciplined, critical thinking. And I think if we introduce students into that community very early in their academic career, they will not only benefit in their in their own particular disciplines, but will be able to become the kind of lifelong learners that we will need going into the future. And this is really about empowering students and making them recognise that it's as much the process of enquiry is important as the actual content, that they will learn through their academic disciplines. But a philosopher would say that Judyth.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:43:43] What we were talking about earlier, particularly Jennie, in terms of what was happening in Adelaide, but also what you were saying at Wollongong, Theo, is with returning to campus and it's a constant challenge for people at universities is having the sticky campus. So how what can you do to actually encourage this sticky campus? And by having a sticky campus, you will get students to be connected. They'll feel, they'll get that sense of belonging. They'll be part of a learning community. But how can you get them on campus in the first place?

Prof Theo Farrell [00:44:19] Well, just for ourselves, I think we're like everyone else, we're throwing a massive party. So we have, you know, we've invested a lot more effort into a very attractive offer to students. But just going back to what Mitch was saying previously, and I completely agree with what he said around obviously what we offer students in terms of the ability to expand their intellectual horizons, it seems to me the challenge is how can we work with students so they can empower us? They're the next generation. And oh my god, you know, this pace of technological and social change is so fast. And what I think is really exciting we've seen the last few years is the empowerment of young people. You think about the climate change movement and so forth, young people having voice looking at things in different ways, communication in ways that our generation - not speaking for JB because he's a different generation, but our generation are, you know, we've still got our heads around this. But my gosh, they're moving so fast. So I think there's a really interesting piece around how students can empower us actually, because the challenge for universities is how we transform - like the sticky campus thing is really interesting. But you know what..

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:45:26] Do you want to define "sticky campus" because a number of people have asked if what a sticky campus is.

Prof Theo Farrell [00:45:31] That is like, all so so last century, that's not the way to think actually, OK, everything's going to be hybrid going forward. So the challenge is how you build community in a hybrid environment. So we still have to work on sticky campuses because our business models are currently built around them and our everything is our logistics are. It's a legacy that we all are tied to. But in so many service sectors, they have moved to hybrid and online. And so how do we develop and nurture community in a hybrid context? And we don't have- there's no easy answer here. But that's actually where we need to go.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:46:07] If I could just add to that, I think Theo, you're right about the hybrid context, but depending on what universe you're at, it's getting the balance right. So my previous university was predominately online. In that case, a sticky campus is less important. But if I'm talking about my current campus, we're in the middle of a vibrant city in the middle of a fringe festival about to launch into a whole series of festivals in the festival state. And we want students and we want our staff, in fact, I think we're going to have more trouble getting our staff back on campus than the students. And I'm hoping the staff will learn from the students this week and see that we have thousands of students on our campus behaving safely, having a great time, and that the staff will want to come back for that social interaction that they have been missing. So I think there are ways to learn from this. But yes, we've actually been talking very actively about how much we do want students and staff back on campus because, you know, you can think from a we saved an awful lot of money with electricity bills by closing buildings, for instance. But you know, that was at a cost to the social interaction and learning of a lot of our staff and our students.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:47:15] And I just that partnership between academics and students and investigate that a little bit more. Workload, competing demands, and sometimes priorities of academic staff means that they are not accessible in the way that students want to be accessible. How can you encourage staff to see as part of their workload, supporting students to belong, to engage with students in ways that actually expand both each other's horizons?

Prof Theo Farrell [00:47:49] I mean, just speaking for my colleagues, I personally find it speaking for the UOW colleagues. Academics don't need any encouragement to make time for students and support students. I mean, that's so evident that the culture is so strong in terms of valuing a support part of the mission. The issue is around how do we help staff and students optimise the time they spend on these interactions? And there, to be honest, we need to leverage automation and big data. We need to simplify our processes. We need to strip out anything that is really time wasting so that people can spend time on what really matters, which are interactions. And that's what we all want, and that's what's really valuable. So I think for academics, I strongly suspect, what's irritation are the kind of minor bureaucratic things that it really is time wasting and we need to do a better job of improving our processes and our systems so that they won't have to do that. For students, by the way, and this goes back to the sticky campus point. Everyone wants to be on campus, but they want to be, they want a flexibility. Students are really busy. They all - most of them have jobs or care responsibilities. They want to be able to come on campus, do a whole pile of stuff on campus, but be able to have time off doing other things. And that's what so it's all around: improve processes, leveraging data, giving, enabling choice for students and staff, and most of all, enabling people to focus on what matters, which is interaction, as well as the other things academics are doing, not waste time on pointless admin and bureaucracy, which is just due to us having poor processes and poor systems.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:49:27] So, Mitch, can I throw a question at you? It's not a curly one. How do you measure the outcomes of an effective student experience?

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:49:35] Not a curly one, Judyth? Look, this is something that I think about constantly, and I really do believe that we need to try and triangulate at least three data sources here, and this is probably generally across learning and teaching. So we need to think carefully about student preferences. We need to look carefully at student behaviour and then we need to map that to performance. So obviously start by asking what the students want. And beyond that, how satisfied they are with what we actually offer. But that's not enough. Students have very complicated lives now. The world's a very complicated place, and there's any number of factors that can get in the way of what a student wants and what they can actually use. So as institutions, it's our responsibility to make sure that we adapt and respond to the actual behaviour of students. And all of that, of course, needs to be in the service of performance. And usually we're talking about student learning outcomes and beyond that how positively what students learn impacts both them and their communities. So really interesting example from UTAS is lectures, and I always use this one because it's provocative. So during the peak of the pandemic, two years ago now, we asked our students what they missed most about being on campus. Very clear message: they missed the sense of community. They missed active learning and they missed social learning. What they did not miss was didactic lectures. That was their second least missed activity, and this aligns with their actual behaviour. So, you know, a decade of research at least has demonstrated that attendance during lectures drops off to pretty terrible levels throughout the semester. But those small group activities, tutorials, practicals, they stay really strong throughout the semester, so there's no drop off.

And of course, the student behaviour here has been vindicated by the empirical literature. So at least a decade, probably more, has been pointing away from didactic delivery to active social forms of learning. So that's just an example, really. The central message here: start by listening to students, but map that onto how they actually behave, always thinking about what the ultimate goal is, which almost always is going to be student learning and the transformation that learning can have both on them as individuals and on the communities in which they live.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:51:50] And that leads in very much with the idea of data analytics that Theo was talking about, using the information and the data that you have, but interrogating it in a way that has purposeful outcomes. All right. Any comments from any other members of the panel regarding that question about how do we know we've been successful?

Jean-Baptiste (JB) Philibert [00:52:13] I was definitely going to say nobody ever misses lectures, but that's fine. But we do have flipped classroom, though that suddenly becomes a lot more interesting because people are engaged. It's just it's like magic. So absolutely. And something else I was going to say, and I think it's actually like a big thing for, you know, getting students on campus, getting students engaged, that kind of thing is harnessing the power of social media. Because if you look at us, as you know, as customers like, what do we do when go to restaurant or where we want to go to a restaurant that we like or enough experience, we go and follow it on social media because we want to be part of that community or celebrity or other things. But a lot of the social media are done by universities, is marketing-led. So I follow, you know, Western Sydney University and it's all just like it doesn't speak to me. So I don't really want to be on that social media. Of course, that there's other, you know, pages and things like that. But I think it needs to be peer-led, like student-led in a way because we know like you want to give that FOMO experience, you know, like, "Oh, this is what's happening on campus now" or this is what's going to be happening. And if you don't have that way of communication and going back on with something Jennie said, she said there's that programme where someone gets a call from someone, but a lot of students now there's like phone anxiety is a thing, a lot of people don't like picking up the phone. So you got to reach out to them in a way that's not maybe directed, but in a way that reaches out to them. And I think social media is a good way of doing that.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:53:37] Theo can I throw back a question to you about something that you brought up a bit earlier, and it's about participation in institutional governance. And it is an element of student engagement and empowerment. From your experience, what are the best levels for students to have a voice and how do you recruit students who can make effective contributions?

Prof Theo Farrell [00:53:59] Yeah, I mean, the short answer is all levels, and I think one of the fellow panelists made the point earlier that traditionally we've had a few student reps on some of the really superior governance or bodies of the university. But in fact, what you need is at all levels. And that actually extends to when I was, so I arrived from London, about four and a half years ago in Australia, and it's wonderful to be here. And but previously I was at King's College London and just as I was leaving, we were beginning to have students on our appointment panels, academic appointment panels, so that gives you an idea of where it can go. And to be honest they just bought - It wasn't perfect and there was lots, lots of ways we could have improved it. But they brought new perspective. The challenge, of course, is that you're taking students away from their studies, they're not paid members of staff. You're asking them effectively to provide free labour to one extent.

So it's making the balance right, of course, because if you're talking about having student reps across at all levels, that's a lot of students, actually. So, you know, you can you have all the usual mechanisms around UI, training, mentoring. But before you know it, you're standing up hundreds of students to be reps. So I think we need to think carefully about how we proceed with this. There are other things you can do, of course, which is like, and this is something that our new Vice Chancellor has championed, is she has a governance fellow, a student governance fellow on her staff supporting the development of policy, bringing in a completely new perspective, very talented individual. We're looking at having student communications interns in our communications teams, coming to the point that JB was making around the optimum way, not just the kind of channels that you communicate with students, what they want to hear, but also just get their perspective. And I think, by the way, this larger piece here around value alignment. And again, you know, universities have always prided themselves, I think, on being progressive institutions, but actually value alignment is more complex than that. And students are complex in terms of community, it's a complex set of values there. How do we give voice to those values? How do we align those values and the values institution? Is an ongoing piece of work. Again, interestingly enough in the private sector and business that's been happening for many years. You know, many companies now are not just selling products and services to their customers, they're selling values and value propositions core to brand and ironically, although we are progressive institutions, I mean, we've been in this game for ages arguably, but actually we have a lot to learn about how we can understand the values of our whole community, in their language, "customer base" in our language, our student, part of our community, and how we can align our mission with the values of the next generation of people who are coming along.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:56:42] Look, and this will be the last question, and this is from one of our Canadian participants from Yorkville University. Can the panel discuss the role of self-assessment, peer review, collaborative group assignments, in student engagement and student empowerment? Jennie.

Prof Jennie Shaw [00:57:03] I was going to say, Oh, that's a huge topic. Look, again, I actually think it's actually a really important way to empower students as part of the assessment process. And I do have some colleagues who actually at the beginning of every semester, have a discussion with the students and come up with a collaborative way to assess because I think allowing students to have a choice right at the beginning is really important. If you're able to do that within your systems and again, keeping in mind some courses with accreditation, there's no room to do that. But I think it's finding spaces, whether it's in formal learning or informal learning for students to exercise their expertise. And the example that came to mind, which isn't completely on topic and I apologise for that questioner, is actually, you know, there's an area that sits under me we all call LEI, it's Learning Enhancement and Innovation. I think that's the first time I've got it right. But we actually have Learning Enhancement Officers who are students, and these are students in paid roles who sit down online or face to face and give our academics at-elbow support to help build their courses, revise their courses, develop the technology in their courses. So it's not about so much the assessment, but it's finding roles where the students are the experts. And we saw that during COVID with our education, our teaching students who were far better at the technology than teachers out at schools. And that was one of those areas in which those students were absolutely invaluable. And they went from being the passive placement teacher to the expert in the classroom, teaching the more seasoned teachers about the learning technologies. So again, slightly off topic. But I think they're the examples that came to mind about empowering students through that assessment process and taking that further, if you like to the workplace.

Prof Mitch Parsell [00:58:52] So I might jump in with a really concrete one if that's okay, Judyth. When I was teaching, which has been a couple of years now, I would always allow the students to develop their own assessment rubric. So we'd do that as a community. And that's a just an amazing way of demonstrating the purpose of the assessment task, but empowering the students there. The critical point here is I stole this idea off my partner, who's a primary school teacher. And if you want to see good engagement and good peer engagement, go to a primary school classroom.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:59:20] And on that very positive note, can I thank all the people that have been participating in today's symposium for their insightful comments and their thoughtful responses to the issue at hand. And in particular, I just have been absolutely enchanted with the comments, the discussion that's been happening in the chat session as well. So look, thank you everyone for your time today. Three points. I think listening from both parties is really important, collaboration, but also an openness to try and test new ideas. And I think that we had examples of that today. So thank you and everybody have a safe day. And those of us that are living in Sydney, keep dry. So see you for our next symposium and we'll let you know when that is. Thanks very much.