

# Advancing Student Wellbeing in 2024 - a 'Students First' Symposium

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## Transcript

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### **Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:00:04]

Good morning, everyone. I want to acknowledge that I am hosting this online conversation from the lands of the Cammeraygal people. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which you will work today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting and First Nations people who join us across New Zealand and Canada. I pay my respects to elders past, present and future and celebrate the diversity of First Nations peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia, New Zealand and across the broad expanses of Canada.

### **Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:00:41]

Today is our third Students First Symposium for 2023. Its focus is on advancing student wellbeing in 2024 and the question that we're focusing on is, how has technological and economic, and political disruption impacted students' engagement, motivation and resilience? And how are Australian and New Zealand universities responding to this to protect students' wellbeing?

### **Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:01:05]

Today we also have a special announcement at the conclusion of this symposium, and I ask you to stay online for 5 minutes when we, after we're finished, will announce the commended and finalists for the Tracey Bretag Prize and the winner for 2023. As most of you here know, this annual prize invites nominations from higher education that show the pursuance of pursuit of academic integrity underpinned by positive student experiences. So the session today is organised in several parts. The first part is the introduction, and that's where we are now. And then I'll ask each member of the panel to introduce themselves in terms of what they bring, in terms of their experience to this symposium. Then I'll ask the members of the panel specific questions and then start scanning the screen to see the panel, the chat and the questions that are developed by members of the the audience. And can I get people to put those in questions rather in the in the appropriate place? And then I'll attempt to bring it all together, the best part.

So this symposium will be recorded for other people to listen to later. So the panel members today are Professor Kylie Readman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice President of Education and Students from UTS. Scott Pearsall, University Registrar, Division of Student Administration and Academic Services at the ANU. But previously, and this is where I have known Scott from. He was he looked after the student experience at University of Canberra, and we had many conversations there when I was interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic. Samantha Urquhart, final year Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of Law student at UTS and president of ActivateUTS. And Kirsten Wachter, speech and language therapy with honours fourth year student from Massey University. So we've got a very diverse group of people. And can I get the students to start first, Just tell us who you are and why you have why I have, and we have invited you to participate in this webinar. So why don't we start with Kirsten?

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:03:22]

Hello. My name is Kirsten and I'm a Bachelor of Speech and Language Therapy student with honours at Massey University in New Zealand. I'm also a student mentor with Massey's Studiosity service, with over 130 students assigned to me as mentees currently.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:03:38]

Wow. Sam.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:03:41]

Thanks, everyone. Good morning. My name is Sammy and I am a fifth year Bachelor of law, Bachelor business student at UTS. I'm also currently the president of ActivateUTS, which is similar to a student union here at UTS. We run all the extracurricular activities on campus from clubs and societies to sports, run the cafes, bars, and we also have a student wellbeing program that's run as part of Activate.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:04:07]

Thanks to you. Thank you, Scott.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:04:12]

Thanks, Judyth, and good morning, everyone in Australia and good afternoon to those of you across the ditch in New Zealand. As Judyth has mentioned, I'm currently registrar at the Australian National University. Prior to that I was Dean of Students and director of Student Life at the University of Canberra, and before that I was an Associate Professor of Law and an Associate Dean of Education in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law, also at the University of Canberra. I've been fortunate over the 30 or so years that I've been in the workforce to have spent almost all of those working in education roles, and I've worked not only in the tertiary sector but also in government and and spent quite a number of years also in schools.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:04:52]

And Kylie.

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:04:53]

Hi everyone, and thank you for inviting me to join this panel, Judyth. I'm, as you said, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students at UTS. But I can also see that there are colleagues on from my previous university, Murdoch University in Western Australia, where I was the DVC Education and Equity, and I've worked at two other universities in Queensland before that. I'm really excited constantly across sort of 30 years to keep the

momentum up around ensuring that student experience, student engagement and student success is front of mind for universities. At UTS, I recently introduced a student experience framework. One component of that is wellbeing. So I'm really keen to hear what other people have to say and and talk through some of the the issues and activities that people are engaged in when it comes to student wellbeing. It's a great topic and I'm really pleased to be here.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:05:48]

Thank you very much. So let's start off with the questions and given that it's students first I'm going to ask the students first. So why don't we start with you, Sammy. What's it like to be a student in 2023?

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:06:01]

It's hard. It's very different to, I think, what a lot of people anticipated coming into university. I started in 2019, so pre-COVID. So my idea of what university was going to be like is very different to what it is like now. How it's played out over the past couple of years and that kind of university experience that is portrayed in movies and film and TV shows isn't exactly what's playing out now. There's a lot of challenges facing students. As you all know, students are working more than ever before, so juggling work-life balance as well as university on top of that and often maintaining full time study loads as well, makes it increasingly difficult. And AI, in throwing that into the mix, makes everything more challenging. There's obviously great benefits from AI, but also challenges trying to navigate what is okay and what isn't okay, which all contribute to a very difficult time in maintaining a balanced wellbeing.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:07:10]

And we'll we'll unpack that during our conversation today. Kirsten, what's it like being a student in New Zealand?

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:07:18]

Yeah, I would say it's a it's a really exciting time. But also that comes with some of those challenges, as mentioned, exciting in regard to changing opportunities and experiences. I think at least in terms of my study, every year has looked different and that's exciting in terms of what comes along and how we engage with those new things and also challenging in regard to our wider world context, things like COVID. I started in 2020, so that was a similar experience engaging with lockdown. But we've also had other world events like inflation and other things that we take on as students and really juggle those things alongside our study.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:08:03]

So we've got two senior people from universities listening to students. Kylie, why don't we start off with you? And so what's, what's UTS and prior to that, what was Murdoch doing? Because I'm sure that there'd be similarities between them. So what have both of your institutions been doing to support student wellbeing?

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:08:26]

Thanks, Judyth. And I think you're right. There's a number of commonalities across all of our universities, some of them are required of us. And I think that the really interesting question that I have is what is the limit of of universities' scope in relation to student wellbeing? Because students, of course, live outside of the university as well. We know from the research that university students were impacted in terms of their mental

wellbeing and mental health over their COVID period at higher rates than other groups, similar groups in the population. So it's certainly a wake up call, I think, for universities and a step change. I note that in the Accord interim report that was released last week, wellbeing is a huge part of that and they actually call out universities "duty of care", which is language I'm used to from my role as a teacher educator and originally as a teacher. But the role that universities have to play in terms of students physical health, their mental health, their safety, the social relationships that they engage in. And if I take safety to mean, you know, students' cultural safety, psychological safety, physical safety and so on, there's a lot of work that universities do do in terms of very practically immediate concerns. And I think one of the good things that came out of COVID from my perspective, is that universities harnessed the resources that they had and made them available to students. So they they actually stepped up. And you remember people who were in university at that time will remember the great impact, which we're still seeing, I guess here. But the immediate impact on students couldn't work, had to change accommodation in some cases, had to go home, had to adjust to online learning, etc., etc., and maintain education. So at Murdoch, where I was at the time we just said the only, you know, the one thing we can do for students is keep them learning. That's what we can offer them in this time of great, you know, where we didn't know anything else that would happen. But I think the financial assistance that universities provided, the social assistance that they provided in a range of amazing and creative ways, is something we shouldn't lose. And I think it's a strength and speaks to the strength of university communities that that was able to be translated in kind of an ad hoc way into the virtual world. And I think what we are seeing as well is that some of those services, some of those activities remain in the virtual world as opposed to the physical campus, even though students have, in the main returned to university campuses if they choose to.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:11:17]

Thanks, Kylie. Scott.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:11:20]

Thanks, Judyth. I think Kylie's made some very, very strong points there. I think the starting point for me is that universities make significant investment in providing a very significant range of support services for students. I think one of the challenges that emerged during particularly the COVID period and I guess subsequently has been it's a system that students need to access. Universities I'm not sure and I know that everyone who's probably here today is amongst the groups that do seek to support and refer people. But universities, I think, are on a on an improvement pathway to be able to actually identify students who aren't travelling well in some courses where students are with the same cohort. I think it's much easier to identify when students are travelling very well. But for many courses they're doing, they see an academic in a in a class for an hour a week. And that's their relationship, that's their point of contact. And so being able to support students and encourage students and build relationships with students, particularly if it's virtual, has become quite difficult. I think there is a cultural, cultural shift that is actually occurring that I think there is a very deep care for students within the university sector. Kylie mentioned the COVID period. I know that at the University of Canberra there was a community response. And I know that there was something - back of the envelope equivalent, but something like 100,000 meals were provided to students during that period, through groceries, through hot meals being delivered to students and so on. And so there was not just financial, it was certainly we wanted to continue with the education, the delivery of the education. We wanted to continue with the

wellbeing support services, whether they were in person or virtual. But there was also a recognition that we needed to do more and that's continued and I guess needs to continue with the current economic environment as well. Kylie made a really interesting point around the Accord, and I've read that as well with much interest, and there is a changing, I think, paradigm within our society around wellbeing. We have had legislation introduced in both Australia and New Zealand in the past few years which has put more requirements around wellbeing more generally. And so in Australia, for example, over the last couple of years we're seeing legislation and Workplace Health and safety regulator regulations, laws put in place around mandating that we need to look after the psychological welfare of staff. I think there's likely to be a formalisation. I think we're in a fairly dynamic period at the moment within the tertiary sector, but I think that's likely to be formalised over the next few years. And having just been through a TEQSA re-registration with the ANU, I imagine that this will be something that will start to be - we'll be expected to not only track and measure, but also demonstrate that we're working very hard in cohort with and in conjunction with our student bodies to try and make sure that we are actually working and being very active in supporting student wellbeing moving forward.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:14:20]

So back to our students again. Any comments or any observations you'd like to make in terms of what you've heard from our two senior academic colleagues? Sammy, do you want to? I'll dub you in first.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:14:37]

Sure, I'm happy to jump in first. I completely agree with everything that's been said, and in particular the community response that was also felt in the student communities throughout COVID was something that was quite special, bounding, that like everyone gathering together and supporting each other remotely. I think coming into 2023 and 2024, where we have this increasing inflationary pressure, it's almost this holistic wellbeing that we all need to be focusing on, and it's the focus on mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing and all these different things that interlink together to help actually make a student feel that they are well and able to succeed in their studies. If one pillar falls then it affects the others, and I think that's something that could definitely be kind of looked into and focussed on throughout the coming years. But I agree with everything that's been said.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:15:36]

Kirsten, from across the ditch, as we say.

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:15:40]

Yeah, I would really agree with that increasing awareness from university staff about student wellbeing and university staff seeking out understanding some of those things. Like for example, in some of my lectures, before we start the learning aspect, they ask, "Hey, how are you guys doing?" Like really checking in. And I think that's really important just to have some of those conversations alongside the study that we do do.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:16:08]

So I'm going to throw the question another question back at the students. So you're getting air time today. So. Three three parts to this question. What do students expect? What do they get and what do they want the university to do to support their wellbeing? Kirsten.

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:16:38]

I'd say students really appreciate that responsiveness when we have events that come up during studies. For example, COVID. Massey University really kicked in advertising, the well being services available, but also those financial support services available. And I think just having that acknowledged is really empowering and impactful for students because they know that they're being supported. And even if they don't access that support, knowing it's there can be really assuring and knowing if something goes wrong with my study, I know where to go to get that support.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:17:14]

And this is what they expect? Are students' expectations higher now than they were when you first started as a student?

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:17:22]

Yeah, I would say so. Higher now, just in having that greater awareness of what can be available. And what if they've engaged with the service. For example, if it was a wellbeing service going forward, maybe that they would have those high expectations of being able to return and access those supports again in the future.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:17:42]

Sammy. What from from your position, What do they expect? What do they get and what do they want?

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:17:47]

Yeah, I think this entirely depends on who we're looking at it as students. There's so many diverse experiences and people coming from different places. So I think students coming directly from high school into an undergraduate course versus potentially postgraduate students might be expecting different things in terms of support from the university. From the simple example of a high school into university student, they may have been experiencing wellbeing services in their own schools or the counsellor at their own school and having wellbeing support that way that they would expect to carry through into university. But I do agree that from students who have been here throughout COVID, there is an increased expectation of more support for wellbeing post-COVID. I think because COVID was a very hard time for students, as is reflected in all the surveys and datas and data, and it is expected that that level of support we received in COVID does continue, not necessarily for any reason other than that we experienced it and we want it to keep going. But in terms of expectations. It depends on the person. I think coming into university, I didn't really think there was going to be too much more other than the basic. There's a counselling service if you need it. There's a few activations on campus and what we get, I think we get that sometimes we get more, but it's really a lot of it is on the student to seek it out. It is sometimes harder to access for students who may not be on campus and involved and aware of the services that are provided and what we want the university to do. I guess there's a lot of really strong foundations in place that are really well built to support students and support students' wellbeing. It's just leveraging those and making it known to the students that they are there and how they can access them.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:19:55]

There's a lot. Yeah, it's a hard it's a very hard question to answer. It really depends on the

student. But I definitely think that the university sector as a whole is on the right track to really improving and enhancing student wellbeing.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:20:11]

Kylie, how do you respond to what you've heard from 2 different students in two different contexts from two different quite different disciplines as well?

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:20:19]

Yeah, absolutely. Thanks, Judyth. I think that at the universities I've worked at that the student leaders have a really important role in keeping universities to account. At UTS, that's been formalised through a Student Partnership Agreement and the Partnership Agreement, which was in place before I arrived, actually speaks a lot to student wellbeing. So there are some things that relate to academic engagement and I think that the point that was made earlier about by Kirsten about the, you know, embedding wellbeing activities and check ins and concern for the whole person in the curriculum by the person who you have a primary relationship with is really important to that. But I also think if we think about whole of institution, it's those student voices and where we pay attention to those and where we have in our student partnership agreement, it talks about respect, mutual engagement, etc.. So students have responsibilities and the university has responsibilities in in meeting that partnership agreement. And I think Sammy's as a student leader has been really powerful in being able to help the university understand those voices, too. I think Scott made a point earlier about how we use data to support students and recognising where students might benefit from additional support. And I think that's that's the kind of thing where AI tools will potentially really help us. We've run through a process this year at at UTS, led by one of my colleagues, and we called it the Deliberative Democracy Process, which was co-designed and delivered with students to actually ask students, "When do you want us to use our data to support, use our data about you to support your learning, and when do you want us to intervene very proactively? When do you need to know that support is available if you want to seek it out?" And to Sammy's point, I think one of the areas where we need to develop as a sector and as a university is not we'll sit behind our desk and wait for you to come to us when you need help, but actually much more in that proactive space that we're working together, that we are that we see wellbeing embedded in everything that we do. And the third point I'd make is that supporting students also means from my where I sit, means supporting staff. So when students experience wellbeing, a big part of that is because the staff experience wellbeing as well. So for staff being in that primary interface where a mental health concern might arise when you know that mental first aid help and programs kick in, etc., which we try and get a lot of our staff and students to do that, that those people also need to be supported and should not expect to deal with counselling and financial impacts and other services. But they need to know how to help students get to those services in a really proactive way. So it's certainly like a matrix response, I would say. And so that, you know, there's a lot we can do and should be doing and a lot we are doing, I guess.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:23:35]

And it has to be joined up. How do you make sure that it's joined up so that every part of the organisation sees this as their responsibility and their core business as opposed to oh, that part of the institution will deal with it. We don't have to deal with that.

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:23:53]

Scott might like to answer, but I would say the approach that we're now taking is really

focused on communities of care. So where we're moving much more from a service orientation to a community focus. I'll say I can say more about it later, but I should let Scott say something.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:24:11]

Look, I think. In part, it's cultural. I think, you know, universities that start to care and, you know, I think that's contagious. And I think that there's been a growth in this from from my personal perspective in recent times. And I think that that's really helpful. I think understanding and I think you need to have clear delineation between roles. And so, yes, everyone in the university, everyone is student focused and needs to work to support students, what their actual role is and how deep they go in terms of that level of support, you know, needs to be clarified. And, you know, I do think that there's a risk with with some staff being expected to do more than perhaps they're capable. And so having that referral point and that understanding of the staff of where to to to refer students to I think some I think is really critical as well. But if I may, Judyth, can I jump into a few points that were raised by my colleagues here?

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:25:13]

Of course.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:25:14]

The question around what do students want at the moment. From my point of view and in talking to students, I think to put it as simply as possible, they want to be respected and understood. And I think that universities need to take the time to do that. And we've heard from, I think, all my colleagues here on the panel that, you know, there is a really important role for a student voice to be heard by universities and senior staff in universities. Again, from my personal perspective, I don't think that students have probably ever had a greater role in university governance than than in previous than in earlier times. And I think that that's really important. And it's an opportunity that both the students and the universities need to seize and to, you know, care for and grow and develop so that we can really make the most of those opportunities to hear student voice and to be able to reflect on on what we're hearing student needs are. Kylie raised the point around and mentioned data and look at universities are great places. There's huge amounts of data and data lakes around student support and student wellbeing. I think that's only going to increase and that's certainly something the ANU's been doing is we're, you know, looking to we've been an early adopter of the QILT, the quality indicators of learning and teaching wellbeing index in some of our transition surveys. And so there's going to be more data that's going to be generated around around the use of and support for students. But I do think there's an interesting and and a bit of a difficult question around sometimes holding student data and wanting to support students and where the boundaries between privacy and respect on one hand exist and on the other hand where, you know, the university needs to intervene and I think sometimes students provide data for a particular context, whether it's, for example, to seek a deferred exam, you know, and how they data is used and what the follow up in terms of student support might be, I think is a really interesting and not easily answered question. I think the way around it and the way we need to move forward is is to work with students to come up with some sort of agreed expectations around how that data is going to be managed and be really clear to all students that expectation management, I think is really critical. And the point around supporting staff who are working with students. I couldn't agree more with that point Kylie I think that that's really important. It's something I'm personally committed to and I have to say, just as an aside, Judyh,



when she was my boss for a short period, was extraordinary. And she took great care of all her staff during that period, including me, when we're dealing with very difficult matters. And so it's something that we can all role model and we can all do. And all check in with each other, realising that the people who are in attendance here today are those that really do a lot of heavy lifting and really care about our students. So, yes, I think that I think that's something we do need to keep at front of mind.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:28:18]

So let me start asking some questions that are coming from the floor, as they say. Felicity Costigan has asked, Can you outline the support the university's offer to Indigenous students in particular? So who would like to start off with that? Would you like to start off with that Kylie?

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:28:35]

Yeah, I can talk a little bit about that. I had the amazing Kulbardi Centre at Murdoch, was part of my broad portfolio there, and I have to say I think that Indigenous Student Centres offer a primary level of support for students and, and that sense of community and home, certainly at that place, the Kulbardi kitchen was a place where you could get something to eat, where you could talk to someone friendly, where you could get academic support, where you could get advice. So in terms of primary support, I feel like that was really important. So important, in fact, that I asked our PVC Indigenous leadership to take carriage of the entire student success model at the university and work with our student success advisors to imbue that level of support and that focus across the university. And that's an ongoing work in progress. And I can see that lots of amazing things have happened since I've left there as well. So empowering and listening to and resourcing those primary Indigenous support centres, student centres is really critical. I think then though, if that's all you do, that's not enough. So and we can see that where we support students to be successful, Indigenous students to be successful, they are. We've got to, in my role, the kinds of things I think about and this is more broadly is how do I get things out of the way so that people are not challenged and do not stumble on things that shouldn't be in their way. And I would say that that's true for all students. So I think that a matrix of support needs to be considered across the university. And I really take Sammy's point from earlier students are not homogenous. Sometimes we talk about them like they are. But their ideas of what success looks like can be very different and and can change over the time that they're engaged. So I think that that primary support, secondary support, whole of institution commitment, which is where I think actually we've been pushed by Indigenous leaders and by others to actually step up to that. And you can see that different universities do that to different levels. But you know, now at UTS, I can see that leadership coming out of the Jumbunna Centre and there's a whole range of other leadership activities there. The other thing I'll call out there at UTS, one of the things I've noticed is a big commitment to employing Indigenous academic leaders. So to make that pathway open to ensure that Indigenous academic leaders working across a range of disciplines have visibility, can work in their discipline as well as where they want to need to and can supporting Indigenous students and being visible and providing leadership to us as a university as well.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:31:37]

Scott.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:31:41]

I'm not sure that I can really add much to to Kylie. I mean, I think the things that Kylie

said would certainly reflect on the ANU, our Tjabal Centre run by Aunty Anne as a tremendous job to support students, as does the Ngunnawal Centre at the University of Canberra. So that I think I agree with Kylie, you know, just having a centre that may be a home and a safe place for Indigenous students is absolutely critical as a starting point, but it's not enough and you do need to do more. And engendering support in other ways. Having Indigenous leadership within universities is of course critical as well. And both the ANU and the University of Canberra and at my previous employment were committed to that as well, but also sharing those opportunities and experiences with and understandings with the rest of our community. I think it's really important understanding our cultural heritage and what what came before European arrival in Australia is, is certainly really critical to, you know, engendering a pathway forward. So look, I think it's, you know, supporting students holistically, having that understanding and respect, which I mentioned before for all students, including our First Nation students, is kind of key to the process of getting it right. And of course, you know, making sure that we're also providing opportunities for students who may not have considered coming to university in the first place I think is really critical as well. And so having, you know, doing work to encourage and doing that aspirational work to encourage students to think about universities and then providing the support, the financial support, the scholarships to get them to universities is critical as well.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:33:23]

I want to direct a question to the students from Simone, and Simone, and I smiled when I read this. Do you feel that you are sometimes inundated with university emails about what we can offer? Is there a better way to communicate how we can support and not make it overwhelming, particularly for first year students coming in? So. Megan, what about if we. Kirsten, What about if we ask you? Do you feel overwhelmed and inundated with emails and think, Oh my God. Or do you just ignore them?

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:34:00]

Yeah, I would say that is a challenge just within the digital context that we live in because we are also receiving emails from other people in other pathways as well. So there's a generally like full inbox. But I would say I think the university - Massey - does really well in managing how frequently they're communicating. I'd say that yeah, I get 1 to 2 emails a week, which I think is manageable myself and having that opportunity to hear what the university is communicating, but also making sure that it's not too much for me on top of what I'm already receiving elsewhere.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:34:43]

Sammy.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:34:46]

Yeah. So I think there's definitely a flood in students' inboxes, but not necessarily all of the same kind of wellbeing focussed initiatives that the university is providing, but more so Canvas notifications or assessments being released. They all contribute to just filling an inbox that can become overwhelming to look through and really find the resources that might really benefit you at that point in time. I think universities, it's really difficult in the context of students being online and a lot of students choosing to attend online courses rather than in-person. But one thing that I do find very effective as a student that does come on campus quite frequently is just having in-person activations. The wellbeing reps at ActivateUTS have done this a couple of times throughout the last semester and it'll be something fun like handing out flowers or writing gratitude notes

on a banana and leaving it for someone else to pick up. But when doing those, they're having really important conversations about what services there are on campus. Did you know we have this? Did you know that you can book an appointment with a counsellor here? How are you? And it's kind of those discrete kind of questions that catch you off-guard that make you really think about. Oh.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:36:08]

It's not as confronting to go and sign up and do something when you're speaking with a person about it, versus if you see an email that says we have wellbeing services here, it's a bit more cold and more difficult to make that first step in the right direction to go and seek out those services. So obviously that's in the context of in-person. But I imagine for online classes, as Kirsten mentioned earlier, if professors mentioned that these supports available, have a couple minutes at the beginning of class just dedicated on what is available for you, I know we're coming into assignments soon. If you get overwhelmed, maybe think about seeking out support here. It's that personal contact that I think is much more effective than digital contact. So yeah, that's what I think is more more effective in my opinion.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:37:08]

So, Kylie, what did you hear? And what what can you take away?

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:37:14]

From Sammy's answer, do you mean?

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:37:17]

Yep, yep.

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:37:19]

I think what I can hear is that there's a lot of and I just was looking at the questions about explaining what an activation is, but it's an on-campus activity where it's student led. I was writing down peer to peer interactions are so valuable, so important that for those students that do want to come on campus and have that fuller experience, that that's a really powerful indicator to students that student life is more than just attending the classes and passing the assessments. And that students can get as much out of it as they have time to put into it. But I also am conscious that the pressures on students are such that, you know, just saying come and do extra stuff is actually not the full answer for some of them. And I know Sammy's completely across this because she's been really pushing the university to address things like financial literacy for students and getting students to to be able to understand what's available to them. I noticed that there was a question about equity and access scholarships in the in the questions as well. So, you know, we have these kind of big picture things and structured things and strategic things, but there's also some very practical things that make a difference to students every day. At UTS, we have two students associations and and one of the things that I note about them is that the biggest category that they spend their SSAF money on, both of them is food for students and and making sure that students have access to that. Recognising though that I mean UTS is probably a pretty on campus institution compared to others so different people would have different responses to this. But we're also, you know, making sure that we have financial plans and financial services access for postgraduate students. We recognise that international students have a particularly particularly bespoke set of requirements, particularly as they transition to living in Australia for the first time. And they are particularly vulnerable to to, you know,

employment scams and other things. So we try and really support them to have good information about what's appropriate and what the rules are and what the laws are in relation to us, to Australia, and try and step in where we can. And that's where I think plethora of emails doesn't necessarily work and, and you can have a thousand flowers blooming. I've been thinking about this quite a lot. You know, at UTS people are so wanting to help, are so looking for ways to support students, but actually we need to bunch up those activities and present them to students in a beautiful bouquet rather than just expect them to walk through a field and figure out what's right for them. So it's a long answer to your question, Judyth, But I think both in what Kirsten said and what Sammy said, there's a lot of richness there.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:40:20]

Scott, do you want to add anything?

**Scott Pearsall** [00:40:22]

Just that I think it's a really it's a really vexed question. The one around communicating with students effectively, we're actually I've just commenced a new project at ANU, it's in its infancy where we're trying to have an email a week, we're trying to synthesise a lot of the- at ANU we have central emails from various teams, that we have from Central comms team, we have them from our colleges and our faculties and they all go out. And when we started to track how many emails students were getting and there was a lot of duplication. So it's a simple starting point. We're trying to synthesise to pull together with our central teams and our colleges to try and have an agreed email, the sort of urgent need to know, and we're going to try and make that separate and identifiable to students. So if there's one email that they're read every week, it's the really critical and the broadcast information that's going to come out. We've got a long way to go. And I'm sure that technology and particularly AI is going to help us really tailor our communications as we go forward. And I think there's a real opportunity there because, you know, we have students in the same courses in the same year doing different courses. And that might mean that there's different messaging. But if we can try and identify and begin to teach and treat students individually through the use of technology and communicate in that way, I think that's when we're going to be really effective not only in wellbeing, but also in promoting student engagement as well.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:41:48]

Before we came online today, a couple of people put together some questions who are participating. So I'd like to just read out the question from Mariam from Waikato University. And Mariam asks, What role do you see emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence or virtual reality playing in, playing in enhancing student engagement? So, Sammy, do you want to have a go at that? And then Kirsten, I'll throw it to you, and then I'll let our other panel members respond as well.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:42:27]

Yeah of course, so I think both Kylie and Scott alluded to data being used by the university to kind of recognise patterns of student behaviour. And I think that is a really kind of great way that AI could be implemented by universities in the future. But not only recognising behaviours of pattern- patterns of behaviour, but also to kind of streamline administrative processes that can really be detrimental to student wellbeing and overwhelming and increase stress. So things like knowing what subjects you need to do next semester, when do you need to enrol into them? When does Census Date come into effect. All these communications that we get, but in a more manageable form, like a

chat bot. So if the university had a chat bot where you could type in, what subjects should I be doing next semester? And it tells you I would prefer classes on Tuesday afternoon. Are there any classes on Tuesday afternoon? And it will tell you and it just takes out all that time that goes towards more administrative matters could be dramatically shortened and made much more practical for students through the use of AI and these incredible emerging technologies. On the more recognising behavioural patterns. I think this is something that we'll need to be delving deeper with students in terms of privacy and what what is okay and what will be a bit confronting. But there is definitely a benefit, I could see in some respects of maybe not the more invasive side of Oh, I see you haven't gone to class, but maybe like polite nudging. Are you okay? Do you want to see someone? Yeah. I think there's a lot of benefit that could come out of emerging technologies, particularly in the administrative space, to help students.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:44:29]

Kirsten, over to you.

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:44:32]

Yeah, yeah, I'd follow on from that. And it's a technology that can really be customised to the student experience and provide those opportunities to enhance the experience that we already have and provide a toolset that really meets students where they're at and kind of bridges some of those gaps that we've been talking about in terms of wellbeing and understanding what's available to access in a way that yeah, really brings all those tools together to benefit the student.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:45:05]

Okay, look, there's a question here from Sherre Roy, and Sherre asks, What aspects of your subjects as structure and organisation contribute to or detract from your wellbeing? Oh, look, I'm having to do the wait thing. Jump in!

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:45:28]

I'm happy to start. I think again, it's very different depending on what type of course you're undertaking, whether you're doing practical, in-person subjects or more for me, a Business and Law student, they're quite similar, the two different degrees. So from that perspective, I found the classes I've enjoyed the most have been the ones that have been more hands on. So for law, I had a Wills & Estates practice class last semester, which I think was the best course undertaken in my degree to date. And we really were hands on drafting wills and working together in-person for a three hour class once a week. Now, I know some students would have absolutely dreaded that and thought it was the worst idea ever to sit in class for 3 hours. But that face to face interaction with my tutor and he made an effort to learn everyone's names and talk to us about our weeks and what are we doing on the weekend really enhanced my wellbeing and being able to go into class. Looking forward to it. It felt more like there was that personal connection with the tutor. I think just little things to especially online classes where it is much more difficult to just humanise the face behind the screen and recognise that your tutor is just a human as well. Your professor is just a human as well and the students are all just human as well. And it really helps build that sense of belonging and community within individual classes. And when that has happened, I have always, always felt more comfortable reaching out if I had any questions about assignments or any queries. So I think building that relationship between professors and students early on in the class is going to be more effective than any kind of structural changes to classes in terms of student wellbeing.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:47:30]

Kirsten.

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:47:33]

Yeah, I'd say there's a shift in the learning environment away from the traditional set up where the lecturers speaking to the students for the whole lecture time and really bringing in that environment where the students are actively engaged in their learning, they can have a voice in the activities that are doing like Samantha mentioned. And yeah, having that time to really engage on a deeper level with the learning rather than hearing the content for a longer period of time. I've had some lectures at the start of the semester ask, Hey, what do you guys want to learn alongside this core curriculum? And for me, that was really impactful because I got to put a voice into what I'm learning. And if there was something I was passionate about that wasn't in the curriculum, I could say, Hey, I'd really be keen to learn this alongside that. And for me, I think that would be an important aspect of the student experience going forward and ensuring the students are being engaged in that way during their learning.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:48:34]

So from what I'm hearing, engagement for students means that they become in some respects, in inverted commas, the co-designers and the co-producers of the learning experience and the curriculum. Is that happening? A lot or just a little some. Some individuals.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:48:56] I think it's individual based, but there is a shift towards it across the university as a whole. And I really do like what Kirsten said; involving the students and what they want to learn is something that's so special and really helps students engage in class and the change from that, lecture style where you sit and take notes and maybe ask questions at the end to a more collaborative. What do you think? How would you describe this topic? It's yeah, it's very effective.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:49:32]

So. Kylie and Scott. Classrooms are very private places. In fact, you know, there are very few other places that aren't as private as your own classroom. How do you break that privacy of the classroom? Open it up so that you create the opportunity for this sort of risk taking, collaborative learning and co-design of curriculum. So, Kylie, I'll ask you first and then Scott, I'll ask you from a sort of a governance point of view, which is one of the things that you're responsible for.

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:50:10]

I think it's not new to thinking about how we prioritise learning. To know that co-learning and involving students and engaging them is what's going to have the biggest impact on their learning. That's been known for a long time. I think what's happened is that we've got caught up in a whole range of other things we've got to deliver, and I think delivery is probably one of the worst words that's come in to university. And because it actually is about engagement, not delivery, because if we're not in conversation. One of my favourite quotes is "when a dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression exists", which is Augusto Boal, the South American theatre director. But you know that idea that in dialogue we can learn so much more and the partnerships aspects of our student experience framework, which I talk about it as the accelerator, so we can work toward student engagement or we can listen to students and accelerate that student engagement. And that's certainly been my experience over several years. I did want to

come back to a couple of things. I think it is possible in the online space and people who work in online would need this as well to develop relationship-rich online environments when that is prioritised. Same as in a classroom: when relationship-rich dialogues are prioritised in the pedagogy, in the curriculum design, in the assessment design, that's when you actually see that shift from transactional to to much richer. And I think that if I listen to that, if I can think about what a student, what students are telling me constantly is, we want to be in relationship with you. And they need to lead that relationship. So for some of them it will be, look, I just need I've got other things happening in my life. I need you to be there when I need you to be there. And for others, it's that deep investment in the culture of the university and leading the university in engaging other students. So a whole range of activities like we've heard from the students today. And that co-learning and as you said, Judyth, the co-design piece, I think if we think about what we do in short forms of learning and executive education, listening to what needs to be learned and then driving that with students is very, very powerful.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:52:34]

Scott.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:52:36]

So, so much to comment on. Judyth, your original question around governance and how do we make this work and encourage risk taking? I think, again, that's very much cultural. I think in some ways it's determined by professional requirements and the own internal university requirements too. So universities, you know, design courses, they they approve them themselves. And within that, sometimes there's a bandwidth to be really creative and great scope to co-design and do some really amazing things in conjunction with students and in other programs, it's much more difficult. So for my own discipline in Law, you know, there's a professional body that regulates that fairly tightly. So yeah, there's absolutely there's opportunities to do things with students, but there's perhaps not the same opportunities within that, within programs like law as there might be within within other disciplines. And but I think part of it is it's about being really clear with expectations. And I think this is one of the I think the really critical things that I learned in my role as Associate Dean of Education. One of the things that I'd see is I'd see all the feedback on all the academics. Then, you know, we've had spent a lot of time talking about personal relationships in the last few minutes. And I can say with great confidence that the data that I saw at that particular point in time was those academics that built relationships with their students, that genuinely cared about their students, that took the time to explain why they were doing things, Why am I doing this assignment, which seems sort of ancillary to the core content? Explain the standards that they're setting. I'm going to mark you hard because you're going to a profession where you're going to be judged, you know, particularly harshly so I've actually got a responsibility to to start to push you and get you up to the standards. They were the they were the courses that were most well attended and that that the academics got the most favourable feedback from students. The programs that the students, the courses the students most enjoyed. And I think that, you know, that's, you know, it's fundamental to human nature in many respects. One of the shifts that we've seen recently, but mentioned it much earlier in the session and Kylie used the word "transactional" and I think that. There has been a shift where some students now coming in, they want their credential. And I think many students and perhaps in my day were allowed to have a much more sort of immersive experience. And Professor Michael Wesley, some of you might be aware of, you know, some of the things he's been writing about the the

changing paradigm within education. But that move to sort of transactional, and students are much more anonymous. And I think we need to work very hard if we're going to prioritise student wellbeing and student experience in getting to know our students and building those relationships and whether that's digital on a digital platform or whether that's in person. I think. Those academics and those staff that do that are the ones that not only probably get the most out of their jobs, but they're also the ones that probably provide the best support to our students.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:55:37]

So this is the last question before we end the the webinar and have the presentation of the Tracey Bretag Award. And it's a question from Anonymous. If you could change one thing about the university, what would it be? So let's start with you Kirsten.

**Kirsten Wachter** [00:55:58]

I think that's a good question. Um. I think for me, having started in 2020, my first two years of university were online. I think that was a big challenge and obviously that was because of some wider world factors that shaped the experience that I had and many other students had during that time. Yeah, I think it would have been nice to have some of those opportunities during that time because when you're on Zoom, you're not in that student community. You don't have those opportunities to engage and meet new people. Like the typical movie experience of being a university student, so I think for me, yeah, that was a challenge and grieving what I lost during those times.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:56:48]

Thank you. Sammy.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:56:52]

That is a very loaded question, a very difficult one to answer.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:56:58]

I think we call it a 'Dorothy Dixier'.

**Samantha Urquhart** [00:56:59]

I think from the discussions we just had about humanising and this relationship building between lecturers and professors and students, it's the one thing that I would change would be almost levelling students with their tutors. That recognition, when you come into university that we're all adults now, it's not that massive power imbalance that you had in high school where high school teachers are practically your parents. But you have that responsibility now as adults, you're on a similar level and you can kind of ask those questions. And it's okay to say that you're not coping and you would like to see this. Or maybe it's not being taught in a way that you can understand. It's okay to speak up and say, I think could benefit from this type of resource instead of this type of resource. So I think that's what I would change. Coming to university, just levelling out that experience between students and professors and tutors and making it more; We're all adults. Let's see what we can achieve together instead of a more top down approach, I suppose.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:58:17]

Scott.

**Scott Pearsall** [00:58:19]

Look, just to take a very different tact and I don't- I wholeheartedly agree with the two



comments that have already been made. I would change the the ability of universities to respond to student needs. I think there's a an issue with timeliness, with many of the things that we do for students. And in a world where you can order food and have it delivered to your house in 20 minutes and then get a bank loan and buy a car and get a date and whatever else very quickly. Universities in some of the administrative processes in particular can be painstaking for students and and complex. There's a lot of work being done to expedite, you know, our response rates to students, whether it's been for an appointment or for change in program or whatever else it might be. But I think that's that's an ambition that would make a great difference to student experience if we could be a more more responsive and able to be more agile and more timely. I think that would really help.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:59:14]

Thank you. Kylie, you're going to have the last word and then we'll flick over to Jack to ...

**Prof Kylie Readman** [00:59:22]

Thank you Judyth. And thank you to everyone. It's been great to be part of this today. If I could wave my magic wand, I would remove the administrative load from teaching staff so that they could spend more time focusing on relationships with students and doing that rich work of learning, teaching and assessment that really is challenging, exciting and engaging.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [00:59:42]

And one of the things that I have to do is just sum it up. There are three words that I am going to use. Relationships are really fundamental, providing appropriate and timely services and students and staff feeling safe. So thank you everybody for really a wonderful conversation today. And if I could ask Evelyn to put on Jack's message about the announcement of the Tracey Bretag Integrity Award. And I wish everybody a great day.

**Jack Goodman** [01:00:13]

Today, I am pleased to formally announce the winner of this year's Tracey Bretag Prize for Academic Integrity. The 2023 prize continues our promise to a world-leading integrity researcher and friend, Professor Tracey Bretag. The purpose of the prize is to advocate for and provide a platform for the pursuit of academic integrity as part of a positive teaching and learning experience. Many of you will know that Tracey was a professor at the University of South Australia. A leading investigator in the field of academic integrity. Tracey was well-travelled and spoke for TEQSA across Australia and New Zealand and worked with the European Network for Academic Integrity and researchers in Canada and the UK and elsewhere. Tracey stressed the importance of universities taking a strong stand around prevention, education and enforcement. In September 2020, the Australian Government had just passed its academic integrity legislation, partly as a result of Tracey's work. I wrote to ask for Tracey's permission to create an annual academic Integrity award named in her honour. She replied with typical humility, expressing her deep gratitude and full support. We were pleased to receive her blessing before Tracey passed away on the 7th of October 2020, leaving an indelible mark on the higher education sector and the sector's own integrity on the world stage. In 2023, any conversation about academic integrity is inextricably also about student experience and success and artificial intelligence. I often wonder what Tracey could have helped uncover to help with the current opportunities and challenges we face today. Generative AI in Education is putting a much needed spotlight on the student experience and evidence

based solutions, something Tracey advocated for. It's also clear that the most successful generative AI applications in higher education will look to the roads paved for by many leading global researchers for academic integrity. It will need to be accessible, formative, promote authentic learning, be inclusive, and be part of a strong students first ecosystem. Now to the 2023 prize. In such an uncertain environment for technology and integrity, it's brave to submit a nomination knowing it must be remarkable, relevant and evidence based. We were pleased to receive 26 nominations from 14 institutions, 12 on the shortlist, three finalists and two commended. Let me begin the announcements.

**Jack Goodman** [01:02:43]

First to the commendeds: from Flinders University Annie Murray and Andrea Morello and from the University of Southern Queensland, Dr. Jasmine Thomas, Dr. Rian Roux and Luke Drury. Now for the finalists. From RMIT, Alex Kootsookos, from Torrens University, Dr. Kristina Nicholls and Jacqui Casey, and from the University of Adelaide, Amy Milka, Claudia Gottwald, Laura Hall, Tavik Morgenstern, Sarah Oakey and Sharon Nitschke. Well done and congratulations to all three finalists. And I know everyone's waiting for this moment to find out who the winner is. And the winner is Dr. Kristina Nicholls and Jacqui Casey From Torrens University. Congratulations, Dr. Nicholls and Ms. Casey And congratulations to Torrens. Their nomination detailed a 33% and 45% reduction of contract cheating breaches and T2 and T3 respectively from their FaceLess crowd immersive exhibition across eight campuses and online. The judges commented that their approach was unique, demonstrated behavioural change, and was, quote, "by students, for students with the clear evidence of positive impact, good reach and is a good example of what is possible". Thank you as always to our panel for your diligence. Professor John Rosenberg, Professor Sally Kift, Professor Chris Tisdell and Professor Judyth Sachs. And finally, let's continue to share and expand conversations around integrity and the impressive work being done. Let's think about how more of these scaled evidence-based practices can be embedded at the policy level to grow an increasingly positive and valuable student experience. Thanks.

**Prof Judyth Sachs** [01:04:38]

And what a way to end our conversation today. A remarkable person. And they are a remarkable people who are carrying on the work of Tracey Bretag. So thank you for everybody that participated today in the conversation and the panel members. You're fabulous. So thank you. And as many people have left because they've got to go to meetings. I'm sure all of you now have to go to meetings. So enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you. Bye.