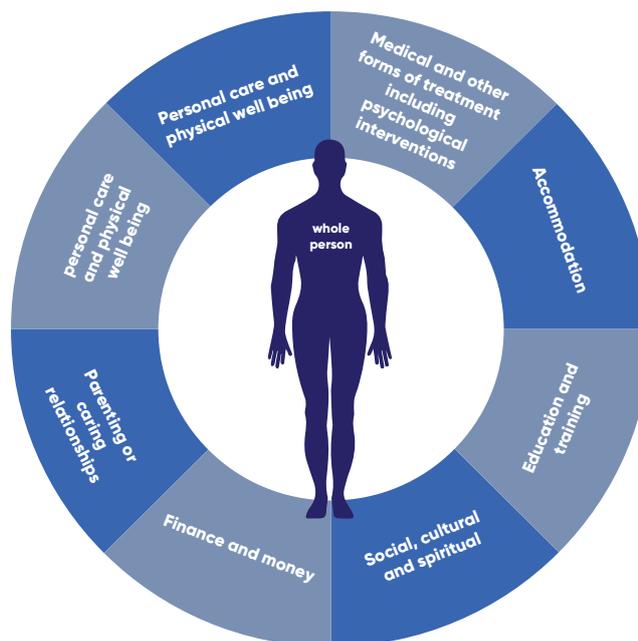




# Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021

University of South Australia  
Student Association

# Introduction



USASA embarked on a new strategic plan in early 2018. Over the past six months various workshops, formal and informal surveys and consultations have taken place with students, USASA and University staff.

The theme of this new strategic plan is **how can we empower students to shape their own journey**. As such the focus has been on:

- Facilitating students as partners in decision making
- Fostering an inclusive community
- Having active, open and critical partnerships
- Developing programs that are research informed, based on the needs of our students

The approach of the plan is focused on our students and asks the question "Who are the students that we want to send out into the world?". To date we have undertaken our largest consultation of both students and University staff to guide us into the future.

We have also undertaken research and analysis in graduate employability and the attributes of successful students. We have then mapped the personal qualities for success in higher education with the Indicators of Graduate Qualities as identified by UniSA. Our goal in this process has been to focus on the whole student – not just the traditional roles of student organisations, but to take a fearless look at the future and ask what the student organisation of tomorrow will do.

One of the common perceptions of student organisations is that they are only involved in the non-academic side of University life. We have attempted to challenge that status quo and, in the process, have found that not only should we be more involved in the academic life of students, we already are at the strategic and policy level; academic board, formal enquiries, student appeals committees, Student Academic Services review, Office of Academic Integrity review, Student Academic Policy Advisory Group and more. The student and staff surveys have

supported this ambition, with both students, academic and professional staff saying that while we should not be involved in the teaching and learning space directly, they would like to see USASA more involved in the academic life of students; meaning all of the things that happen around the classroom and contribute to student success.

USASA's role in the academic side of the University will continue to develop as we focus on a whole person approach to student support that looks at the broader impacts of wellbeing in student success.

## What makes a successful student at University?

- **Leadership**
- **A willingness to take risks**
- **A sense of social responsibility**
- **Initiative and self-awareness**
- **Academic capacity**
- **A commitment to service and team work**
- **Metacognitive capacity, growth mindset and grit**

(Source: College Admission Centre USA)

## What does the UniSA Graduate look like?

- **Operates effectively with and upon a body of knowledge of sufficient depth to begin professional experience**
- **Is prepared for lifelong learning in pursuit of personal development and excellence in professional practice**
- **Is an effective problem solver, capable of applying logical, critical and creative thinking to a range of problems**
- **Can work both autonomously and collaboratively as a professional**
- **Is committed to ethical action and social responsibility as a professional and citizen**
- **Communicates effectively in professional practice and as a member of the community**
- **Demonstrates international perspectives as a professional and a citizen**

(source: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/Student-Life/Teaching-and-Learning/Graduate-qualities/>)

## What our research tells us:

- There is a good understanding of why we exist and the programs and services that we provide and most students and staff think we are doing a good job
- Both students and UniSA staff see us having a stronger role in the Academic life of students in particular around building study and life skills
- There isn't too much we currently do that we shouldn't be doing but students want us to prioritise study and work related activities
- Students value our independence and see us as being there to 'fill the gaps'
- UniSA Staff and students identify a need for USASA to broaden the base of student representation across the University
- There is a continuing need for USASA to build awareness and engagement with both services and opportunities throughout the University
- UniSA Staff would like to know more about what it is that we do and have a closer connection to the Association
- UniSA Staff and students overwhelmingly (97.4%) believe we have a role to play within the future University setting
- There is a shared desire to see continued improvement in engaging students in University decision making

**“USASA allows for the student community to come together and provides activities outside of the Uni classes. I believe that is an important role for balancing out the academic and giving students the opportunity to maintain good mental health throughout their time at University”**

## **Our Mission**

**To empower students to  
shape their own  
University journey**

## **Our Vision for the UniSA Student**

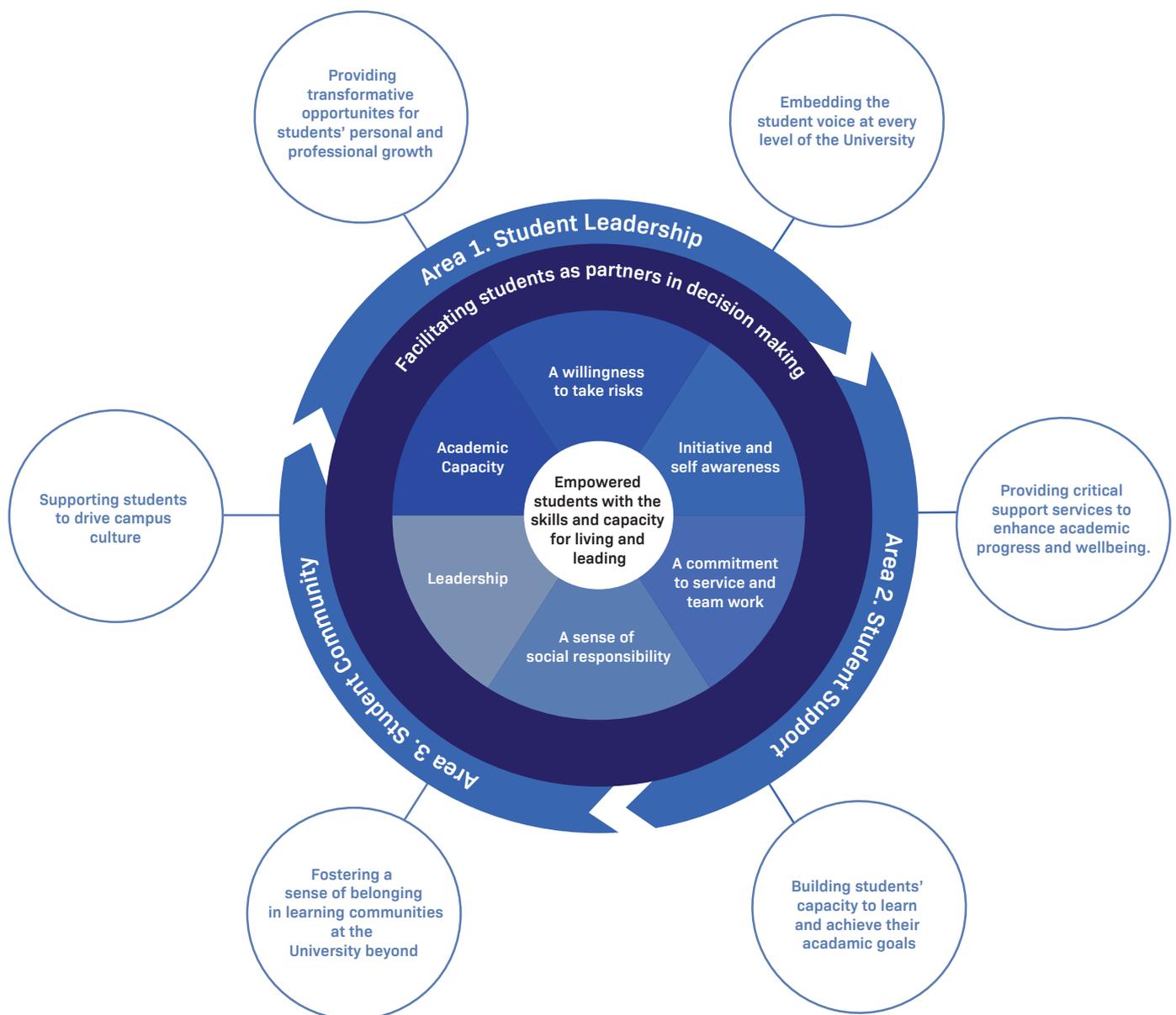
**Someone who is  
empowered with the skills  
and capacity for living  
and leading**

## **Our Strategies**

- **Embedding the student voice at every level of the University**
- **Providing transformative opportunities for students personal and professional growth**
- **Building students capacity to learn and achieve their academic goals**
- **Providing critical support services to enhance academic progress and student wellbeing**
- **Supporting students to drive campus culture**
- **Fostering a sense of belonging in learning communities at the University and beyond**

# Our Focus Areas

- Student Leadership
- Student Support
- Student Community



# Table 1.

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGY	PROGRAM	WHO	WHEN	NEW INITIATIVES/ACTIVITIES
<b>1. Student Leadership</b>	<b>1.1</b> Embedding the student voice at every level of the University	<b>a.</b> Student Representation <b>b.</b> Education Committee <b>c.</b> University-wide ASR program	Board Board GM	Ongoing Monthly By 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting student representation as a leadership opportunity</li> <li>Work with PVC:SEE to establish a University-wide approach to Academic Student Representation by 2021</li> </ul>
	<b>1.1</b> Providing transformative opportunities for students personal and professional growth	<b>a.</b> USASA Board <b>b.</b> Leadership Grants <b>c.</b> Training and support to leaders in clubs	GM GM GM	Ongoing Monthly Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify external leadership opportunities and promote to students</li> <li>Clubs Camp by 2019</li> </ul>
<b>2. Student Support</b>	<b>2.1</b> Providing critical support services to enhance academic progress and student wellbeing	<b>a.</b> Advocacy Program <b>b.</b> Financial Counselling	AM AM	Ongoing Jun 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency Welfare grants by 2019</li> <li>Financially counselling pilot by June 2019</li> <li>Expanded Advocacy Internship program by 2020</li> <li>Additional Advocacy officer by 2020</li> </ul>
	<b>2.2</b> Building students capacity to learn and grow, and achieve their academic goals	<b>a.</b> Enterprise skills programs <b>b.</b> Language support	EM GM	Dec 2020 Dec 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded Sex health education program by 2020</li> <li>'How to Adult' program by 2020</li> <li>Peer mentored language support program by 2020</li> </ul>
<b>3. Student Community</b>	<b>3.1</b> Supporting students to drive campus culture	<b>a.</b> Social & Academic clubs <b>b.</b> Club grants <b>c.</b> Verse magazine <b>d.</b> Art on Campus	EM GM GM GM	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Oct 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Clubs strategic plan years 2 and 3</li> <li>Direct club funding model by 2020</li> </ul>
	<b>3.1</b> Fostering a sense of belonging in the learning community and beyond	<b>a.</b> Events program <b>b.</b> Campus activations <b>c.</b> USASA Student rooms	EM EM GM	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand UniTopia footprint by 2020</li> <li>Indigenous strategy by 2019</li> <li>Activate student space at ML by 2021</li> </ul>

### Legend

GM – General Manager  
AM – Advocacy Manager  
EM – Events & Clubs Manager

# Operationalising the Strategic Plan

## How we can put our aspirations into action

USASA Programs are grouped under three areas:

- 1. Student Leadership**
- 2. Student Support**
- 3. Student Community**

### 1. Student Leadership

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Embedding the student voice at every level of the University
- 1.2 Providing transformative opportunities for students' personal and professional growth

#### Activities

- Student Representation
- Education Committee
- University-wide ASR program
- USASA Board
- Leadership grants
- Training and support to leaders in clubs

#### Student Representation

Over the past two years, USASA has worked progressively closer with the University under a 'students as partners' ethos. While not specifically defined, in practice this has led to USASA recognising that our role is increasingly about facilitating students to engage in University processes beyond just the elected USASA representatives. We have a goal of 'prolific' student representation and have been strongly supported by the University in this goal.

As such USASA is facilitating students to provide meaningful input and make decisions alongside staff as partners in areas including:

- University of South Australia Governing Council
- University of South Australia Council Strategic Planning
- Academic Board
- Various University steering groups, working groups and hiring panels for key staff.
- Office of Academic Integrity and Student Academic Services Reviews
- Sexual Assault Policy group
- Campus Advisory groups
- Formal Inquiries
- Academic Review Meetings
- Student Appeals Committee

USASA's role in formal academic processes is a critical one, with USASA trained and supported students providing a unique student perspective on Formal Inquiry, Academic Review, and Student Appeals Committees. At these committees, the student is often the only person in the room who has received any formal training in the APPM and University academic integrity processes.

### USASA Education Committee

The USASA Education Committee was formed in 2017 with a view to create a stronger connection and provide additional support for Student Representative programs within Divisions. The Committee's purpose as established under its terms of reference are:

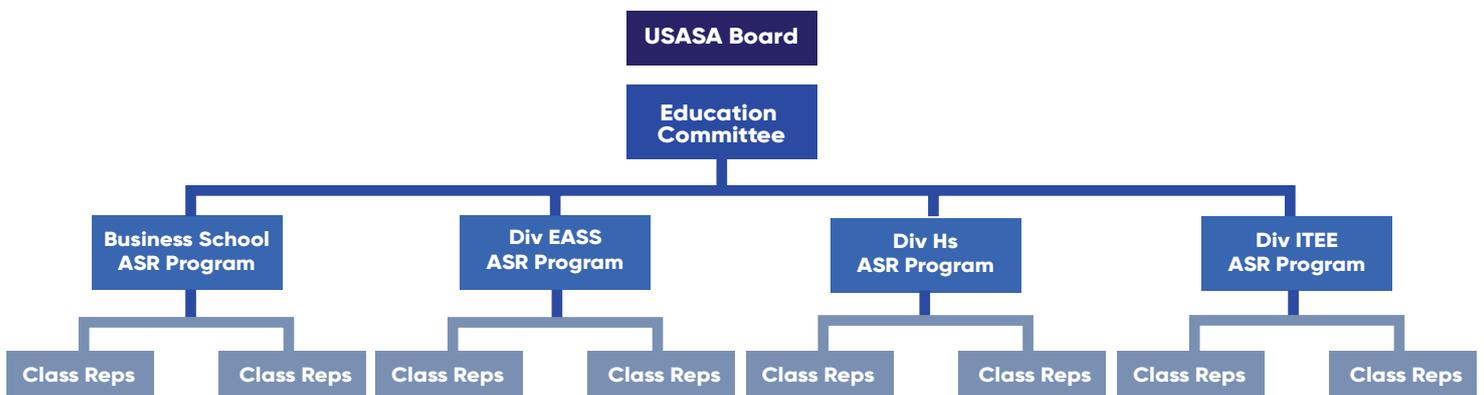
- To work with Academic Representatives and Course Representatives to ensure a partnership with USASA
- To recommend national or local education campaigns for USASA to support
- To collaborate with relevant persons or bodies on issues that may affect the education of UniSA students
- Matters the Board may refer to the Committee from time to time in connection with the organisation's position on education issues

Representatives from all schools are invited to join the Committee. Current membership of the Committee includes Student Representatives from USASA, the School of Nursing & Midwifery, the School of Health Sciences, Art Architecture & Design, Creative Industries, Education, the School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy, the School of Law, the Business School, and the School of Marketing. Through this Committee, USASA is working towards the establishment of academic student representative programs in all schools of the University (see below).

### University-Wide ASR Program

In 2017 a project was commenced by the USASA President to map all student representative programs across UniSA including divisional and school-based programs with a view to establishing a University-wide approach to student representation. In June 2017 a standalone Education committee was established with invitations sent to student leaders working within division and school-based student representative programs across the University.

The Committee noted the variance in the effectiveness of student representative programs across schools and divisions. This variance extends to structure, recruitment, purpose and recognition with no uniform approach across schools and divisions. USASA has a long-term



goal of 'prolific student representation', that is: a student representative in every class, of every program of every school in every division. Our vision is for a tiered structure of student representation where issues can be escalated and information disseminated through a structure aligned with the divisional structure of the University. Each layer in the structure would be managed and supported by USASA staff with training and development opportunities for students similar to those currently provided to the USASA Student Board.

We will continue to work with the University with a goal of establishing a USASA managed University wide ASR structure by 2021

### **USASA Student Board**

The USASA Board is the peak decision-making committee of the organisation, consisting of fourteen Student Representatives elected annually as follows:

- President;
- One Representative for each campus of the University situated in Australia;
- One additional Representative being an Undergraduate Representative for each of the metropolitan Adelaide Campuses;
- One Postgraduate Student Representative;
- One International Student Representative;
- One Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student Representative;
- General Manager ex officio;
- Advisers ex officio:
  - a practising solicitor; and
  - a practising accountant (chartered or CPA)

The Board's function is to be a conduit for the student voice to make recommendations and decisions about the delivery of student-led and student targeted activities and services. It also has an overarching responsibility to manage the conduct of USASA's business and affairs, including the management and control of funds and property. The Board is supported by employed staff to deliver the policy direction they have determined.

All student leaders participate in year-long professional development training and mentoring beginning with a residential retreat at the commencement of their term and supported by participation in the UniSA+ UNITE Program. Student Leaders benefit from professional development in areas including:

- Written and verbal communication
- Culturally diverse interpersonal communication
- Time management
- Public speaking and presenting
- Negotiation and influencing
- Policy interpretation and application
- Resilience
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Debating ideas and producing a consensus
- Conflict resolution
- Problem solving and innovation
- Managing risk
- Accounting and financial analysis

The Student Board's main purpose is to set the strategic direction of the organisation and to make sure that it stays on track. To do this, the Board must make decisions about how the organisation will achieve

its goals, how it carries out its functions, and to ensure that it operates lawfully and within the scope of USASA's Constitution and regulations at all times. In addition to the overarching functions of the Board, it is the mission of individual Student Representatives to be the first point of contact for the University in promoting student partnership and decision-making. Whether it is through sitting on University Council, being part of joint USASA/University project teams, or being a member of University disciplinary committees, this means providing a genuine voice for students in the key areas of University decision-making. The promotion of elections and how we frame the role of students representation is essential to attracting as many students as possible to the role. Initiatives were introduced in 2017 to increase the value of the role to students through increased support and professional development opportunities. We will continue to communicate the critical leadership role that student representatives play at the University setting to both students and staff as we seek to increase participation in both election candidacy and voting.

### **Leadership Grants**

USASA manages a \$20,000 grant pool for student-led leadership opportunities. Both student groups and individuals can apply for small grants through the Leadership Grants Program to support their activities as follows;

- Leadership Grant (\$1,000) – For students to take part in personal development programs and initiatives.
- Activity Grant (\$2,500) – For non-divisional and non-USASA affiliated student groups to run large social and fundraising events or activities.

All students applying for grants are required to meet with the Student Representative Support Officer prior to submission of their application with assistance provide in presenting the best possible application. Common activities funded include attendance at interstate conferences and seminars, overseas volunteering, and participation in structured leadership programs. With all applications, there is a focus on bringing benefits not only to the individual, but also to the broader student community. The experience of the last two years has shown that one of the main barriers to students applying for grants is a lack of knowledge regarding the opportunities that are available. As such from 2019 there will be a greater focus on identifying leadership opportunities in the community and promoting these to students.

### **Providing Training and Support to Leaders in Clubs**

USASA Club executive members, usually consisting of a President, Treasurer and Secretary, are the driving force behind our clubs and their on-campus activities. In addition to the direct support provided by the USASA clubs staff, USASA is developing several programs to increase delivery of professional development opportunities for club executives. One of the challenges in this space is the delivery of programs that can be scaled to reach the 300 plus students in these leadership positions. We will continue to work with UniSA+ over the next two years to investigate opportunities to both deliver students the professional development opportunities they are looking for and gain them credit towards the Unite program.

In 2019 for the first time, USASA will deliver a Club Leaders Camp, a two day residential program for Club Executives to network and gain additional skills in community building, marketing and leadership. Additional staff resources will be allocated to the USASA Clubs program from 2019 to provide increased mentoring and support in event management.

## 2. Student Support

### Strategies

- 2.1 Providing critical support services to enhance academic progress and student wellbeing
- 2.2 Building students' capacity to learn and grow, and achieve their academic goals

### Activities

- Academic Advocacy Service
- Financial Counselling
- Assistance at tax time
- Building Enterprise Skills
- Language support
- Sexual health education

### Academic Advocacy Service

The USASA Advocacy team consists of the Manager: Advocacy Services, two Advocacy Officers, one Advocacy Programs Assistant, and three Advocacy Student Interns. The Manager, : Advocacy Services coordinates the day to day activities of the team. The Advocacy Officers of USASA are responsible for providing University of South Australia students with a wide range of information, advice and services to manage processes towards their academic performance and progress. USASA Advocates work across all campuses of the University including regional campuses, UniSA Online and UniSA College.

Some of the areas in which Advocates assist students include:

- Requests for remarking and resubmissions
- Appeals against allegations of academic misconduct (including plagiarism)
- Advice regarding University policy
- Appeals against final grades
- Appeals against intention to preclude
- Issues with lecturers
- Referral to other services inside and outside of the University

Through the Manager: Advocacy Services, USASA actively participates in Academic Review and provides input to the ongoing development of the APPM through participation in SAPAG. The Advocacy team regularly liaise with the Director SAS and Student Ombudsman on the continuous improvement of University academic processes. USASA Advocacy Student Interns undertake a 14-week program in which each week they must grow different personal, professional and policy understanding

skills through the scope of a pre-designed internship manual. During the internship, the interns sit on advocacy appointments and meetings with permission from clients.

With a 74% increase in cases for the USASA Advocacy service in the last two years, and the recent introduction of UniSA Online, it is expected that staffing for the Advocacy team will need to increase within two years.

### **Financial Counselling**

Research shows that there is a significant link between mental health outcomes and financial pressures. There are currently no services specifically for UniSA students that are targeted towards reducing the causes of financial stress. To improve the efficacy of wellbeing services at the University and support students through financial distress, USASA will deliver a financial counselling service supported by an emergency grants program. The service will heavily utilise and will be complementary to the Blackbullion platform promoting healthy financial wellbeing outcomes introduced in 2018. Under this proposal, USASA will employ a suitably qualified Financial Counsellor for two days a week to provide training and financial counselling to students and to administer the grants program. A separate funding application will be submitted in October for a pilot program in 2019.

### **Assistance at Tax Time**

USASA partners with the Australian Taxation Office to provide a free taxation advisory service to students at UniSA from July to October delivered from City campuses. Supported by online tools, and with a non-English speaking language option, the service is available to all students including International students and includes assistance with applying for a tax file number and completion of a tax return.

### **Building Enterprise Skills**

Enterprise skills encompass a number of things including problem solving, strategic thinking, working independently and showing initiative. Life skills are contributors to building resilience, something that recent research is showing along with mental health as being a major issue for students. USASA will develop a 'how to adult' program for delivery from 2020, designed to help students balance their work, life and studies and adopt strategies to succeed at University and in life.

### **Language Support**

Support for English as a second language students, both international and domestic, was identified by both staff and students as an area for USASA to develop. In line with our mission to empower students to shape their own journey USASA will investigate opportunities to establish a socially based and peer mentored language support program from 2021.

### **Sexual Health Education**

USASA will deliver a month-long initiative in the form of an information campaign to make sexual health information easily accessible to all University of South Australia students.

The campaign, titled "Uncensored: Let's talk about sex" will launch with World Sexual Health Day (4th September) and see the production and distribution of sexual health information via a print and online campaign across all campuses.

The initiative is designed to provide both the knowledge and tools for UniSA students to be more informed about their sexual health and wellbeing. The initiative will be structured to address five key areas of sexual health:

- Consent
- Contraception
- Sexually Transmitted Infection
- Unplanned Pregnancy
- Sexual and gender diversity

The initiative is supported by Shine SA and the UniSA Health Medical .

### 3. Student Community

#### Goal

- 3.1 Supporting students to drive a positive and supportive campus culture
- 3.2 Fostering a sense of belonging in the learning community and beyond

#### Activities

- Social and academic clubs
- Clubs grants
- Verse Magazine
- Events & activations
- Art on Campus
- USASA Student Rooms (Magill & City East)
- Indigenous strategy

#### Social and Academic Clubs

Student-led clubs play a vital role in building a sense of community and culture at the University of South Australia. Research has shown that a strong sense of belonging is a key factor in retention and success at University<sup>1</sup>. USASA has over 90 active social and academic clubs with over 5000 members. Clubs not only provide important personal and professional development outcomes for students, they also have a direct impact on campus culture and vibrancy with over 400 club events delivered by students each year. USASA Clubs are a key enabler of USASA's strategic vision by empowering students at the University to shape their University journey. USASA continues to increase investment in clubs both in terms of financial and staff resources with a dedicated support team and fledgling direct funding program. The 2018 – 2021 Clubs Strategic Plan identified six strategies for development which are supported through this funding application:

- Deliver a framework to manage facilities as a way to support the effective running of club events
- Establish a program of celebration and recognition of clubs
- Establish and communicate a formal policy framework
- Develop a plan that creates financial equity across all clubs
- Provide targeted resourcing for clubs
- Develop a communications plan that engages broader stakeholders

From 2019 USASA will deliver new initiatives in line with these strategies including an increase in networking events for cross-club collaboration,

mid-year social event, an expanded clubs award program, increase in training and professional development support and dedicated staff resourcing to encourage and support on campus activations.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What\\_works\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What_works_final_report.pdf)

### **Clubs Grants**

USASA grant programs aim to support initiatives that enhance the student experience. Successful initiatives provide opportunities for students to develop the non-academic (or extra-curricular) student experience through:

- Enhancing campus vibrancy
- Supporting clubs and societies to run original and engaging events
- Supporting innovative personal development programs

USASA supports monthly grant rounds which are open for all student groups to apply including UniSA Sports clubs. Student clubs can apply for small grants from the Clubs Grant Program to support their activities and purchases;

- Marketing Grant (\$500) – For eligible clubs and societies to make purchases of promotional equipment and marketing materials.
- Small Grant (\$500) – For clubs and societies to make small equipment purchases and/or run small social and fundraising events or activities.
- Activity Grant (\$2,500) – For clubs and societies to make large equipment purchases and/or run larger social and fundraising events or activities.

### **Verse Magazine**

Verse Magazine is the student magazine of the University of South Australia Student Association. Entirely student-run, Verse Mag promotes youth culture and is an effective means of discovering new creative talent amongst UniSA students within the fields of design, art, illustration, photography and writing.

The Verse Magazine student team consists of a Head Editor, Sub Editor and a Graphic Designer. The team publishes six editions of the Magazine per annum with a run of 2000 per edition. Each edition features the work of between 30-40 different UniSA students. The magazine sees a wide range of contributions in the form of articles, poems, art, travel stories, opinion pieces and more. This is on top of regular segments including vox pops, feature artists, graduate interviews, social calendars, and a USASA President's update.

### **Events and Activations**

USASA delivers an annual program of events with a focus on supporting the orientation and transition to University, building communities and fostering wellbeing. The 2019 Events Program will consist of:

- SP2 & SP5 O-Week (In partnership with SEU)
- Campus Fairs (In partnership with SEU)
- SP2 & SP5 UniTopia (large-scale wellbeing/wellness activation)
- Chill Vibes (throughout the year)
- Regular pop-up activations (supporting campus vibrancy)
- Pac Crawl (all campus social activity)
- Art on Campus

Students are involved in all campus activations from conception to delivery. The annual event programming process is led by the Manager: Events & Clubs in collaboration with students and USASA staff, with a focus on the key strategic area of student wellbeing. The Marketing team are a critical enabler of the event program, providing strategic support and creative input into event design and delivery.

It is important that we can be flexible such that we can identify and be responsive to opportunities for innovative events and activities outside the regular event calendar. In particular, USASA is committed to working with the University at every opportunity to collaborate on campus events and activations.

### **USASA Student Rooms**

USASA manage student rooms on the Magill and City East campuses which provide:

- Advice, directions and assistance
- Bookings for Advocacy and other services
- A safe, supportive social space
- Clubs support & e-store
- Free sexual health items
- Free study support items (pens, diaries, wall planners, sticky notes, book binding)

Formerly activated as a combined service and retail space across all metropolitan campuses, in 2019 USASA will move from a program of providing these spaces as a 'one size fits all' to a more nuanced approach which supports the needs of the student community on each campus individually, and as a complement to the University-provided social spaces.

### **Indigenous Strategy**

In 2018 USASA became the first student organisation in South Australia to affiliate with the Union of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students (UATSIS), the peak representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australia. In 2019 USASA will work with UATSIS and UniSA to develop an Indigenous Strategy designed to support the engagement and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at UniSA through the recognition of, and respect for, Indigenous peoples, knowledge and culture. This strategy will include both external measures such as considering event and service design but also internal measures such as hiring and cultural support practices within USASA itself.