

Information about the proposed to changes to UMSU:

Background:

On Monday July 23 the Board of the MU Student Union Ltd endorsed a number of specific and in principle recommendations that had implications for the scope and structure of both UMSU and the MU Student Union Ltd.

From late 2011, the MU Student Union Ltd has undertaken a strategic planning process that has, in part, examined the appropriate extent of its role in the provision of non-commercial student-facing services or student engagement activities. This process also considered the nature and organisational location of the Communications and Marketing Unit and the Cultural Services department.

A Student Engagement Working Group was formed, with the support of the MU Student Union Ltd Board. The Working Group was open to all interested Staff and Office Bearers, and chaired by Mr Trevor White, CEO of MU Student Union Ltd. It met once to discuss potential changes.

The Working Party agreed that the activities currently undertaken by the MU Student Union Ltd Cultural Services Division were student engagement activities and should be grouped with other student engagement activities undertaken by UMSU.

As a result of this Working Group, Mr White recommended that the Board provide in principle agreement to the transfer of the following responsibilities to UMSU:

- The Rowden White Library
- Union House Theatre
- Arts Programmes (including the operation of the George Paton Gallery)
- The VCE Summer School

The Board and UMSU both noted that in order to proceed with the completion of the full transfer or responsibility for student engagement activities UMSU needs to address two key issues:

A staff structure that provides an efficient model to manage and operate the broader range of services and activities.

The operation of Student Council within a larger organisation and an appropriate model of student representative participation in operational decision making.

On Tuesday October 16, UMSU Students' Council endorsed - for the purposes of development - an overview of an organisational structure for UMSU. That structure forms the basis of this Draft Change Management Plan.

The MU Student Union Ltd Board endorsed the same organisational structure at its meeting on Wednesday October 23.

Objectives:

This paper will detail proposed changes to UMSU structure and governance that would support the transfer of a range of student engagement activities from the MU Student Union Ltd to UMSU.

This is a formal proposal for organisational change and a consultation will be conducted with staff, pursuant to Clause 9 of the MU Student Union Ltd Collective Agreement, with student representatives and with other stakeholders.

Principles:

- The proposed structure is aimed at maximising student engagement with UMSU, its programmes, services and activities. Student engagement with UMSU will be maximised by facilitating a greater role for students and student representative in initiating, participating in and overseeing UMSU activities – UMSU should play an enabling role to facilitate and encourage students to enhance their own experiences. UMSU will preference models that prioritise student-led activity and participation;
- UMSU activities and programmes should be scalable with the aim of increasing participation while controlling variable cost increases. UMSU should enable the efficient use of resources by aligning services programmes and activities. Programmes and services should be grouped on the basis of shared objectives or interests;
- Programmes and services should focus on collaboration with staff and student representatives. All programmes and services to have a defined relationship with student representative bodies. Management of staff clusters is to be “hands on” – no management role is to be purely administrative;

Clusters:

This proposed cluster is based around a range of artistic, cultural and entertainment programmes and engagement opportunities for students. It is anticipated that this grouping will lead to greater internal integration and cooperation; amongst the constituent components of the cluster and more broadly with student representatives and the student body.

This cluster should be focused on:

- Enhancing and supporting student lead participation
- Integration with and support for other UMSU activities

It is likely that the relationship with the University and the Theatre Board will need to be addressed in 2013.

Significant change is proposed to functions and staffing within this cluster. At this stage no title has been determined for this cluster and feedback is sought in relation to this question. For the purpose of consultation a working title of Arts, Library & Entertainment (ALE) is used.

Consistent with the principles outlined above the staff structure is intended to focus this cluster on enhancing and increasing student engagement and participation, collaboration within the cluster and the rest of UMSU to support organisational objectives and programmes.

The staff structure will include a management role. The following recommendations in relation to this position:

Lead the establishment of a new unit, Cultural Services, by combining the Library, Arts and Entertainment operations.

Direct and manage, the multiple services provided by Cultural Services, through emphasising an escalating student participation and impact on the various operations.

Provide appropriate event management to deliver Cultural Services that are attuned to student stipulations and demands.

The current Position Description for the Manager, Cultural Services describes two functions – the management of Cultural Services and the management of UHT. These roles should be separated and it is proposed that the Manager, ALE, is responsible for general oversight of the operations this newly created division, with a particular focus on:

- Refocussing services and programmes to be student-led;
- Developing collaboration between the components of the Division and with other UMSU organisational units;
- Ensuring that relevant ALE activities are undertaken to support defined UMSU objectives and in support of established UMSU activities;
- Facilitating and supporting the relationship between staff and student representatives;
- Acting as Executive Officer to the ALE Student Advisory Group
- Undertaking a review of the Hire Department to establish a sustainable business model that meets UMSU strategic and budgetary objectives
- Support staff in the transition to revised working arrangements

The current Position Description contains little detail in relation to the non-theatre components of Cultural Services and appears to be weighted significantly towards the management of UHT.

The cost and physical location of the Manager, ALE needs to be separated from the constituent departments of the Division. The constituent departments will be subject to local coordination and it is expected that there will be regular meetings and collaboration at the coordinator and management level.

Staff working in this Division will be expected to participate in the development and implementation of a revised venue and booking management system.

Student Theatre

Union House Theatre has a strong history and forms an iconic part of the cultural and artistic opportunities for student participation at the University. Consistent with the principles outlined above it is proposed that there is a shift in the focus of the operations of Student Union Theatre.

Union House Theatre has developed as a student-focused theatre company that is funded largely by the Student Union and uses physical infrastructure provided and maintained by the Student Union. As a theatre company UHT has a focus on supporting student participation and in the provision of a venue for Student Theatre Groups (STGs) and assistance via technical, administrative and artistic advice. This support is provided through staff employed in a number of roles.

There are a changeable number of affiliated STGs who have access to resources and support provided by UHT. STGs tend to be small student groups – some may exist effectively as smaller student theatre companies affiliated to UHT in an ongoing way while other STGs may form around the preparation and performance of a single production.

The current model of STGs provides a level of flexibility that allows students to determine their levels of engagement and participation, and to develop and create new and distinctive STGs.

UHT stages two of its own productions annually.

This model of operations is unique in the Australian context.

At the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales student theatre productions are staged through a single student club or society. There are no staff in the relevant student organisations dedicated to the support for, or production of, student theatre performances. Student organisations provide financial support through the administration of their Clubs and Societies programmes as well as making performance spaces available on or near campus.

Under this model a single large theatre group funds and produces performances each fortnight with the extensive support of club alumni and the local theatre industry.

The Monash Student Association operates Monash University Student Theatre (MUST) and engages an Artistic Director and a Technical Manager to support its operations. “MUST encourages and mentors students to expand their knowledge and enhance their uni experience with the creation of art and performance.”

In considering a proposed direction and structure for the operation of student theatre at the University of Melbourne weight has been given to the following factors:

- The history and significance of UHT;
- The nature of existing STGs and the model of support;
- Prioritising student-led activity.

As a result it is proposed that Student Union Theatre operate to:

- Focus on the provision of support, advice and resources to students engaging in production and performance via STGs or UHT;
- Focus on mentorship and technical and artistic development of students;
- Develop relationships with UHT alumni and industry to facilitate the mentorship and student development;

- Development of a robust model of STGs to support ongoing student participation in Student Theatre.

To fulfil these objectives it is proposed that staffing in Student Union Theatre should be subject to some change.

As identified above the Manager, Cultural Services and Theatre Administrator functions should be separated. The proposed Manager, ALE would be responsible for the overall management and coordination of the division.

The general focus of staff in the proposed Student Union Theatre department will be develop and coordinate relationships that allow students to draw on varied forms of advice and support while encouraging students to take a more significant leadership role in the development and staging of productions. It is proposed that Student Union Theatre shift focus from doing to enabling.

A new role – Coordinator, Student Union Theatre would be created and have the function of overseeing the operations of the department and participating divisional coordination meetings. The Coordinator, Student Union Theatre would have responsibility for:

In conjunction with student representatives and existing STGs developing a model of affiliation, funding and support for STGs;

Developing networks and partnerships with alumni and industry to support mentorship and other support for students engaging student theatre;

Provide expert advice to the Arts Officer(s) and the Arts Committee in relation student theatre-related grant applications;

- Coordinating provision of support to student-led theatre productions;
- Assisting students and STGs in relationships with other UMSU and MU Student Union Ltd organisational units.
- Advice in relation to Artistic Direction

It is proposed that the Administration and Development Officer role be retained and that its role to provide a first point of contact and a range of support to STGs is reinforced.

The proposed shift towards a more student-led model of student theatre means the following positions would be discontinued:

- Artistic Director
- Production Manager
- Head Technician
- Stage Carpenter/Mechanist

There will be a requirement for Student Union Theatre to provide production and technical advice to students, and assistance in coordination of technical mentors and advisers. It is proposed that a new position of Production and Technical Advisor be created to assist students in accessing technical and production support, advice and mentorship. The primary function of the proposed role will not be the direct provision of advice to students engaged in production. Rather it will function as a means

of linking students to industry assistance, training and mentoring. Nevertheless, it is envisaged that, particularly during the transition phase, direct advice and assistance will continue to be provided.

A reduced staffing component for Student Union Theatre will require monitoring and review. The Manager, ALE, will have a significant role in providing support and leading development of new operating models.

It is proposed that funding no longer allocated to salaries will be redirected in two primary ways:

1. To support the day-to-day operations of Student Union Theatre; and
2. To be provided to STGs via a Theatre Grant process administered by the UMSU Arts Committee.

Increased availability of funding for student-led productions via the Arts Committee should act as an enabler to support increased student participation and engagement.

Responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the theatre venues will remain with the MU Student Union Ltd. The Manager, ALE and Student Union Theatre staff will be expected to advise Facilities & Infrastructure on operational requirements and to work with collaboratively to ensure Theatre venues are fit for purpose.

Student Union Theatre staff will remain responsible for the induction , training and guidance of participants in STGs, and for ensuring that STGs comply with relevant OH&S requirements.