

## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2019

Dear Members and Colleagues,

I hope your start to Semester 1 has been positive and I hope, rather than expect, that you haven't experienced too much disruption from having to move, or reorganise at short notice, all of the teaching originally scheduled for the second Monday of semester (now a non-teaching day). The UWA ASA Committee would be grateful if you would share with us any data that has been collected by individuals, Disciplines, or Schools about the nature of the disruption to teaching and scheduling, as well as to research and administration.

I just wanted to update you with a couple of notable items.

### **FREEDOM OF SPEECH ON CAMPUS / UWA ASA FORUM (Save the Date!)**

You will be aware that there has been an ongoing discussion on campus on the topic of freedom of speech, a discussion that seems to be occurring across Australia and the world. UWA tends to feature prominently in media discussions of the issue, especially in light of the Bjorn Lomborg affair and since our Chancellor, the Honourable Robert French, was appointed to undertake a review of freedom of speech on campus. I hope that some of you have managed to contribute to the consultation on freedom of speech at UWA, led by Professor Colin McLeod who, in concert with a small committee selected by the VC, is tasked with the (unenviable) job of producing a consensus position for the University on the issues.

The relationship between freedom of speech and academic freedom is also of significance here. What the University might do, or not do, to protect staff whose teaching requires them to express controversial views is an important question. The UWA ASA Committee members hold a range of views on this, and related questions, and presume our members do too. Hence, we have decided to host a forum entitled **"Trigger warnings....constrained and constraining audiences in the University"** for our members on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April at 4pm** followed by collegial drinks and nibbles. Details of the event will be provided closer to the time, but please save the date!

I have attached an interesting piece on free speech by immediate past President of UWA ASA and current Chair of Academic Board, Professor Ray Da Silva Rosa. Ray hopes to encourage a broad based academic engagement with this question across the University and I fully support him in that hope. I also attach the first chapter of a recent book on free speech by retired UWA Political Scientist David Van Mill, and a link to one of his articles on the topic from The Conversation:

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-free-speech-64797>

Here also is a link to an interesting article from ABC's The Philosopher's Zone on the topic:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-14/free-speech-or-troll-bait-university-campus-provocateurs-right/10895628>

### **STAFF APPRAISAL FEEDBACK**

We are again rapidly approaching the staff appraisal time of year but you may not have noticed that in this week's UWA Forward at the very bottom (where all the important notices are hidden) there was a call for feedback on the system, based on your experiences from last year. Personally, I recollect that the categories and descriptors used for the "Leadership Self Ratings" were amusing in their vacuity, and certainly worthy of some critical scrutiny. Members might disagree. Nonetheless, whatever your views I would encourage you to take the time to provide HR with the requested feedback on their appraisal system. UWA ASA also encourage you to send the details of your feedback to us, so that there can be a broader record of the concerns and opinions of Academic staff.

### **MEMBERS' MORNING TEAS**

Recently, UWA ASA Vice President Debra Judge and I were hosted at a morning tea in the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBMS), organised by one of our new members in SBMS. Many of our colleagues in the Faculty of Medicine have been doing it rather tough of late and it was great to have a chance to meet academics, tell them about our activities and the role of UWA ASA as "the voice of Academics at UWA", and to hear about the difficulties they have been facing. I would like to welcome the new members who joined as a result of that discussion. Proper representation of academic voices in academic decision making at UWA requires that we have strength in numbers. If any members of UWA ASA would like to co-host a morning tea (or, in fact, any other social event) in their area, where UWA ASA reps can talk to Academic members and non-members about the role of the Association, please get in contact.

That's all for now. As usual, please feel free to forward this message on to academics in your School. If you are not a member, I encourage you to join us.

UWA ASA is the "Voice of Academics at UWA", and all our voices need to be heard.

Best regards,  
Nin Kirkham  
President | UWA Academic Staff Association

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The University of Western Australia  
**Academic Staff Association**