

As for all of us, the last few months at UWA ASA have been busy, so we just wanted to bring you up to date on a few things and let you know about a number of events and issues that lie on the horizon. We hope you find this a helpful summary of issues that are important to, and impact upon, the academics of UWA.

## **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

Firstly, let me welcome our new members to the UWA Academic Staff Association. It is wonderful to have some recently arrived academics join our association. UWA ASA strives to represent the voice of academics on campus. The stronger our membership, the stronger our voice! With this in mind, I hope all of our members continue to invite new and continuing academics to join our association. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to your colleagues.

## **STAFF APPRAISALS**

You will likely have been notified that the new staff appraisal process begins this month for all staff at UWA. The new system was piloted early in 2017 and according to the website, the pilot provided "valuable feedback" which allowed the developers to "enhance the process and system", though we have no detail of what "enhancements" were made. Feedback received by UWA ASA about the pilot suggested that both the process and the system needed something rather more than "enhancement", for instance, a radical rethinking and redesign, possibly an abandonment. There are good arguments that question the usefulness of formal annual staff appraisal processes such as these, and mounting evidence that many leading organisations around the world are abandoning them in favour of more frequent and less formal feedback processes. UWA ASA would be very interested in hearing about your views on this (especially any of our colleagues in the Business School who might have particular expertise in this area). We would also be grateful if you share with us your experiences of the new process, both positive and negative, so that we can provide HR with further feedback.

## **CHANGES TO THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK – ACADEMIC BOARD**

Those of you who are members of Academic Board may be aware that the University Secretariat is undertaking a project to review and update the University's current [statutes](#) and [regulations](#), required as a result of amendments to the University of Western Australia [University of Western Australia Act 1911 \(WA\)](#) (UWA Act) by the Western Australian government in 2016. Details of the project can be found here: <http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/lr/2018-uwa-legislative-review>

The governance arrangements for Academic Board are currently under review and board members will have received an invitation to attend feedback workshops. We urge all members of the Board to actively contribute to this process to ensure that the important function of the Academic Board, so that the principal means by which major academic matters are debated and decided, is not diminished in any way. Details of the role of Academic Board are outlined in Statute 19 but, broadly speaking, the role of the Academic Board is to advise the Senate on academic matters. UWA ASA would like to encourage any members who are also members of the AB to please take the time to attend these workshops and ensure that the new governance structure of the University retains and reinforces the ability of academics to debate, and ultimately determine, decisions on academic matters.

UWA ASA members have at times been dismayed about the functioning of the Board, and its relationship to the Academic Council. For instance, in response to the circulation of the Academic Council Agenda of Wednesday 4th of April which included an item entitled "CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT - Changes to Curriculum Development and Approval Process effective from July 2018" (a proposal to make a significant change to the Curriculum Development and Approval Process, one that shifted the primary responsibility for determining what curriculum is allowed to be developed to the Planning and Resources Committee and the DVC(E)) the UWAASA President sent to the Chair of Academic Board a letter, signed by 17 members of the Academic Board, requesting that the item be moved from Council to Board. While the Chair is not obligated in such circumstances to move an item, the Chair does have the power to refer any matter to Academic Board for decision. We found it surprising that, given such a clear interest from members of the Board to have the matter debated and decided by the Board, that the Chair of the Board

would choose not to exercise this power, particularly in light of the fact that 17 signatories is far more than the number required to have a matter referred to Board as a “special matter”, once the Council minutes are distributed.

We are also concerned about the increasing ratio of executive members to non-executive members on both Board and Council. This has an historical explanation, it tracks the gradual increase in numbers of DVCs, PVCs and etc. However, we believe that both the Board and the Council would function more effectively if there was a larger representation of academics, as well as of professional staff. This is because, while it may be the province of the executive arm of the University to make changes to policy, the academic and professional staff are the ones that actually have to implement and maintain the changes. Having a broad representation of academic and professional staff can provide invaluable insight into the potential pitfalls and positives of proposed policy change. (Full marks for alliteration in that sentence!)

## **LMS LECTURE CAPTURE POLICY**

You may remember that late last year proposed changes to the LMS Lecture Capture Policy were taken to Academic Board (from Academic Council), discussed and amended. We advised that the outcome was that permission to take down lectures, or to not record them **would not be required** by an academic, but instead the academic must notify (rather than ask permission from) their Faculty’s Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning. This would provide the Associate Dean with the information necessary to respond to complaints they may receive that are not channelled back to the unit coordinator in the first instance.

Interestingly, given that the issue raised against the original version of the revised policy was that academics felt that they should have the freedom to delete, or choose not to enable, captured lectures without needing permission (whether for pedagogical reasons or reasons of sensitivity/intellectual property etc) several academic staff members have contacted us to inform us that they have been required to defend their choice as meeting the 'exceptional circumstances' requirement in the final version of the policy.

So, even though the issue was discussed at length and agreed on by Academic Board, those of you who may have sound pedagogical reasons for limiting access to recorded lectures can still be required to petition your Associate Dean T&L for permission on the (rather absurd) grounds that your pedagogical practice is an exceptional circumstance.

The various iterations of the policy are below for your reference. Please let us know if this policy change has impacted your pedagogical practice and we can pursue it through the Academic Consultative Committee.

*1.2.6 Teaching staff can delete captured lectures post processing, or choose not to enable captured lectures within the LMS. (Original policy) to:*

*1.2.6 Under exceptional circumstances and with approval from the relevant faculty Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), teaching staff may delete captured lectures post processing, or choose not to enable captured lectures within the LMS. (proposed revision, prior to Academic Board)*

*"1.9 Under exceptional circumstances, teaching staff may delete captured lectures post processing, or choose not to enable captured lectures within the LMS, provided these exceptional circumstances are clearly and explicitly expressed in the LMS, and communicated to the Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning). (Final Policy approved by Academic Board)*

## **STRATEGIC VISION**

Many of you will have attended the recent All Staff Forum to launch the Strategic Vision 2030 . As the Vice Chancellor made clear, the staff consultation process provides opportunities "for contributing to the content and focus of the future strategy". UWA ASA would like to encourage all our members to take up this opportunity. The voice of academic staff in helping to develop a realistic and viable strategic plan will be invaluable. I must say that I was heartened to hear the Vice Chancellor point out that the draft Strategic Vision doesn't so far say anything about 'Top 50 in 2050'. If we could avoid committing to any further unrealistic goals, particularly ones that are subject to the whims of unreliable league tables, this would be a good thing.

## **OUR NEW CHANCELLOR**

It is worth again mentioning the appointment of our new Chancellor of UWA, the Hon Robert French AC. The UWAASA Committee was very pleased to have the Chancellor attend our November meeting last year. We were also pleased to note that, in the address he read at his Installation on the 1st of February this year, the Chancellor took the time to mention our meeting saying: "Late last year I attended the final meeting for the year of the committee of the Academic Staff Association which has an important role in bringing to bear the perspectives and concerns of the academic staff of the University upon those responsible for its governance and administration. We had a useful and informative exchange". The full text of the Chancellor's Installation address is available on the UWA ASA website.

### **UWA ASA DISCUSSION AND DRINKS: "Is there a downside to students as customers?" Open forum on May 17 at 4pm in Arts LR 6.**

You will have received the note below from UWAASA about our upcoming open discussion. Please feel free to bring along non-members. The event will be an informal chance to meet and connect with colleagues from around the university and to share your views and experiences.

*The change from "students at" to "customers of" the university started gradually but seems to have accelerated in recent years. Has this now gone too far? How has your teaching experience changed? We would like the input from a wide range of academics to better understand the intended and unintended effects of this conceptual shift in the relationships of students to the University.*

*Please join us at this open discussion on Thursday 17 May at 4pm in Arts Lecture Room 6, and afterwards for drinks at the University Club. If you are unable to attend, please be part of the discussion by emailing your thoughts to [uwaasa@uwa.edu.au](mailto:uwaasa@uwa.edu.au)*

If you have read this far, we are grateful. Please contact us if you have any academic issues that you wish to highlight. We are here to give a voice to Academics on campus!

With best regards,

The UWA ASA Committee