STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY DECISION-MAKING AND GOVERNANCE - TOWARDS A MORE SYSTEMICALLY INCLUSIVE STUDENT VOICE - AN OLT STRATEGIC COMMISSIONED PRIORITY PROJECT

Professor Sally Varnham
Faculty of Law
University of Technology Sydney
2015-2016 AIMS TO:

1. Draw on the research and experience in the UK, Europe and New Zealand to begin a conversation in the Australian sector;

2. Reference group consisting of a range of Australian universities and student leaders: city, rural and regional, GO8, ATN, multi-campus and international - underway;

3. Surveys and focus groups involving Australian universities and student leaders;

4. Case studies and piloting of ideas in reference group and other universities;

5. Report and disseminate through regular forums, and a national symposium (5 September 2016); and publication of Good Practice Guide …
THEMES FROM PRACTICE OVERSEAS AND AUSTRALIA THUS FAR:

Institutional commitment to and respect for student voice essential

- Training for student representatives
- Ongoing briefing and support
- Starting culture of student representation from the bottom rather than the top – Course Representatives
- Information provided for both Course Representatives and Academics/Course Co-ordinators
- Information about possibilities for student representative roles from the very beginning – from induction
- Representation from all cohorts: international, indigenous, off-shore, part time/full time, mature …
- Representative roles on national bodies eg QAA in the UK
Students are not consumers of higher education, but significant components within it. Consumers are not involved in the management of process, but students are co-responsible for higher education management, as higher education is developed for students. Students are the main beneficiaries of increasing the quality of [higher education]. Students should have more impact in decision-making and governance of higher education, which must be a community of students and professors who are equally responsible for its quality.

[Budapest Declaration: Governance and Student Participation. 21st European Student Convention – February 2011]
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: HOW DOES YOUR INSTITUTION SEE STUDENT PARTICIPATION?

1. Should students be partners working with the university to enhance quality and standards, design courses and curriculum, improve the student experience?
2. The role of student leaders – how do they see themselves?
3. Training/coaching/support – whose responsibility?
4. Incentives?
5. Proof of success?
6. A Student Engagement Partnership (UK - Chapter B5 QAA Code)?; a Student Participation Framework? (eg Scotland – Sparqs) – policy implications?
We hope you will join us in continuing the Student Voice Conversation via our Facebook page: Student Voice in university decision-making and follow our activities via our web page: studentvoice.uts.edu.au

Or contact me: sally.varnham@uts.edu.au or our Project Manager: ann.cahill@uts.edu.au

Thank you!