

National Union of Students – Ethno-Cultural Officer’s Report

Executive Meeting 2: Sat 4th April

Good Afternoon to the NUS National Executive and Observers.

I have used February and March as a launching pad for the Conferences, Campaigns, Communication and Calm foci in the Ethno-Cultural Office for 2009.

Conferences

- On the weekend of March 21st and 22nd I travelled to Sydney and met with Aaron Chan and Celeste White, Ethno-Cultural Officers at UNSW. We discussed the booking of an area for 2009 Ethno-Cultural Conference (Culture Jam 09) and resolved to formalise a booking in conjunction with Charishma Kaliyanda, President of the ARC Student Representative Council.
- Met with the NUS Research Officer to confirm her involvement and assistance in running the Ethno-Cultural Conference in October 2009.
- Contacted NUS Indigenous Officer Carla McGrath to get an update on Indigenous Conference

Campaigns

- Launched the Cultural Diversity campaign on February 7th at Uni SA. I met with Rehan Qureshi (de facto President of PakSA - the UniSA Pakistan Students Association) and Laurane Lim (President of MySA - the UniSA Malaysian Students Association). PakSA mainly includes post grad students, whereas MySA is mainly a social club for undergrad students -- and this meant a range of international and CALD student issues were discussed. Key points included: the cost of student accommodation at UniSA, in particular with monopoly owned accommodation; English language standards amongst international students and ease of initiation into local culture for new students.

(From left to right) Myself, Laurane Lim and Rehan Qureshi

- Travelled to JCU Cairns during its O-Week as part of the Cultural Diversity campaign. This trip included:
 - Meeting with staff at the International Students Service
 - Meeting with mentoring representatives to discuss grievance issues
 - Talking to a lecture room of new international students - giving them contact details for JCU Cairns international students rep and potential JCU international students' officer - Abdullah Kasreh
 - Myself at the JCU Cairns Market Day
 - Promoting NUS’ Demand a Better Future Campaign at the JCU Cairns Market Day
 - Speaking at the Aboriginal & Torres St Islander lunch at JCU Cairns.
 - Meeting and exchanging contact details with Jordan Wymarra - a man interested

in the position of Aboriginal & Torres St Islander Rep at JCU Cairns
Management Committee

- Endorsed the anti-racism campaign organised by the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, entitled S.A.R.A.H. (Students Against Racism and Hatred). A special note must be given to Glen Falkenstein, AUJS Political Affairs Director, for his proactive involvement in running the campaign. The support of the National Union of Students for this S.A.R.A.H. was reaffirmed when I met with Glen and other AUJS representatives at UTS in Sydney on March 22nd.

Communication

- Established contacts in NSW, VIC, QLD and SA University cultural clubs and organisations – laying the groundwork for well publicised Conferences run by the Ethno-Cultural Office this year
- In conjunction with the NUS Research Office, drafted and published the Diversity, Equity, Advocacy webpage. This webpage provides students from every University in Australia with access to their relevant documents for the complaints, grievance and harassment/discrimination policy and procedures. The webpage also has links to the Student Union websites at NUS Affiliated Universities. <http://is.gd/oDDx>
- Spoke with the Secretary of the Muslim Students Association of Australia and contacted the President of the Muslim Students Association of Victoria to establish harmony and cooperation between broader representatives of Muslim students and the NUS.
- On Feb 25th I visited Monash Clayton to exchange details with cultural and spiritual groups and introduce myself to the International Students Service. I met with E-Thing Gee, President of Monash Uni International Students Service.
- At Monash Clayton, I also met with representatives from the Korean Students Association, the Islamic Society, AUJS, the Bangladesh Student Club, the Christian Union, the Overseas Christian Fellowship, Monash Italian Club, Hellenic Students Society, the Monash Buddhist Society, the German Club, ASEAN club, Indian & Sri Lankan Club, Monash French Society and Discover Church.

Calm

- Spoke with the University of Melbourne Education (Public) Officers to affirm an emphasis on security and the wellbeing of the student population during times of potential ethno-cultural conflict on campus
- Spoke with the University of Western Sydney International Students Officer Guy Gillor in Bankstown. We discussed the potential implications for threatening student welfare arising from UWSSA's passing a resolution in December 2008 to affiliate to the "Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel". The call to boycott was sent by "Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)" and was adopted in full.
 - After noting the unstable current status of UWSSA, and of elections of a New Student Organisation at the end of April 2009, I was satisfied that potential implications threatening student welfare arising from the motion did not merit further response from the NUS Ethno-Cultural Office at this stage.

Next Steps

Conferences

- Book conference rooms and begin billing sheets for Ethno-Cultural Conference 2009

- Meet with representatives from Vic University to discuss bookings for Peace Summit 2009
- Confirm travel dates to and from Sydney for assisting with the 2009 Indigenous conference.

Campaigns

- Further assist with promoting Diversity, Equity, Advocacy webpage
- Continue engaging students at Universities from areas frequently underrepresented by NUS
- Begin assisting with International Student campaigns and increase support for lobbying networks and campaigns for International student welfare and provisions

Communication

- Continue with establishing networks at Universities across Australia in preparation for Ethno-Cultural Conference 2009, and also for establishing a foundation of communication for future Ethno-Cultural Officers

Calm

- Continue to advise Student Councils, SRCs and Committees on ensuring that, when advocating for contentious and potentially de-harmonising policy, that student welfare is emphasised first and foremost as the main object of preservation and promotion for student representative bodies