Let’s Agree to Disagree – When partnership is in conflict

New ways of working in partnership, Oral

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Abstract:

Clubs, societies and associations play a vital role in tertiary institutions by contributing to an engaging experience, leading student voice and creating a sense of identity and belonging across communities in a diverse university. Like many institutions, the University of Auckland highly values working in partnership with these groups. As research tells us, a sense of belonging is critical to student retention and success and engaging in extracurricular activities aids in the development of leadership skills. Student groups are varied, covering sport, hobbies, causes, politics, faith and academic pursuits. They are usually self-determining, altruistic, run on a volunteer basis, and have a clear connection to the university or student body.

This session explores the methodologies the University of Auckland has developed to manage the ever-evolving and complex space of university/club relationships. It will cover establishing acceptable levels of behaviour and activities, trust, the power-struggle, responding to complaints and managing media attention. Case studies will be used to examine disagreements between different student groups, with the University and wider student body as well as how those experiences affected working in partnership. We’ll also look at the factors and challenges that accompany managing student groups in a large and complex institution and the kind of leadership required when working through contentious issues. Finally we will identify practical steps the University is taking, or planning, to further strengthen our partnership with students, even when in disagreement.

Biography:

Gemma Skipper began as a Student Representations Coordinator at a student association before moving on to working with clubs at Charles Sturt University’s Wagga campus. She is now the Student Group Coordinator at the University of Auckland and is responsible for managing over 200 clubs, societies and associations alongside a small team.