



SYDNEY UNIVERSITY LAW SOCIETY INC.
ABN 49 844 560 526

Minutes of Executive Meeting held on 4 October 2021
Chair: Felix Wood
Minute taker: Alison Chen

Meeting opened: 9:06pm

Present:

Wendy Hu	President
Sinem Kirk	Vice President (Education)
Cameron Jordan	Vice President (Careers)
Sophia Semmler	Vice President (Social Justice)
Alison Chen	Secretary
Gretel Wilson	Sponsorship Director
Felix Wood	Competitions Director
Caroline Xu	Competitions Director
Georgia Watson	Socials Director
Sofia Mendes	Campus Director
Calvin Kwong	Sports Director
Justin Lai	Publications Director
Sissi Xi Chen	International Student Officer
Eden McSheffrey	Equity Officer
Nora Takriti	Women's Officer
Bru Hammer	Queer Officer
Mahmoud Al Rifai	Ethnocultural Officer
Arasa Hardie	Design Director

Absent:

Nathan Allen	First Nations Officer
Sarah Purvis	Marketing Director

Apologies:

Tiana Dumonovsky	Treasurer
Onor Nottle	Socials Director



MINUTES

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and delivered an acknowledgement of country. Apologies were received from Tiana and Onor.

2 Procedural matters

Motion: That the minutes from 20 September 2021 be approved.

Moved: Felix Wood

Seconded: Alison Chen

The motion was carried unanimously with zero abstentions.

3 Last week updates/shoutouts

- Wendy for helping Competitions find Witex judges
- Justin for Law in Society journal
- Sofia and Sissi for early careers panel
- Felix for the Modern Advocacy journal callouts

4 What's on this week

Mon:

Tues: Corporate Pathways Panel

Wed: Government, Arts and Think Tanks Panel, Subject Selection Panel

Thurs:

Fri: Rainbow Client Interviewing Finals, Out Loud and Proud Queer Careers Panel

Mon:

5 Constitutional Review points of discussion

An ad-hoc SULLS Constitutional Review Committee was appointed at the beginning of Semester 2. The Committee has presented the following preliminary suggestions for the Executive to consider.

Presidential Expression of Interest (EOI) system

Wendy believed that the current system did not provide people with the opportunity to make an informed judgment about whether they would like to run. A Committee member suggested that the presidential EOIs are kept at a week but presidential EOIs are updated on a daily basis and the presidential candidates can form tickets as soon as their nomination is released.

Felix was concerned that it may intimidate some people from submitting a presidential EOI as they may see other people who are more well-known in the law school. Wendy stated that she believed that this new proposed system would bring provide more benefits than the harms it may create.

Elected position EOI system



The Committee proposed that the Constitution be amended to allow non-binding EOIs for all elected Executive positions, not just the Senior Executive (Vice President roles, Secretary, Treasurer, Sponsorship Director). This would create more transparency and put the onus on presidential candidates to contact a wider range of people.

Sofia raised that not all students check their emails and that it could be more beneficial to publish the EOIs in a centralised area such as the website to reduce the number of mail-outs. She also noted that having access to previous years EOIs would likely encourage younger members to submit an EOI as they have examples to base theirs off.

Justin agreed with the proposal and noted that it could improve JD students' participation in SULS and its elections, and Eden commented that the proposal would add a level of accessibility to the election process.

Affirmative action for International Student Officer and Equity Officer

Mahmoud felt that it was important to impose affirmative action requirements for both of these portfolios. In particular, he believed that applicants for the Equity Officer role should come from a minority background or have experienced to increase the accessibility of the Equity portfolio.

Alison was concerned that the proposed Constitutional drafting for the affirmative action criteria for Equity Officer would create conflation with the Disability Officer role. Felix agreed to an extent but also thought it was important to include those criteria in a different form.

Failure to attend Executive meetings (cl 29)

The Committee suggested that this clause be amended to change the operation of the clause so that it is automatically triggered after an Executive fails to attend three Executive meetings in a row without excuse rather than a discretionary trigger as it currently stands, which means that Executives are reticent to take action on habitual non-attendance.

Felix suggested that attendance patterns should be mandated as an item of discussion should the criteria be met. Wendy suggested that a supermajority should be required to dismiss an Executive member. Alison asked what a suitable threshold for the supermajority would be, especially in light of the proposed introduction of the Disability Officer which would increase the number of Executive members from 21 to 22.

Online voting

The Committee suggested that all future elections should be changed to online voting, rather than in-person paper ballots, given the precedent of three online elections in 2019, 2020 and 2021 and to increase the accessibility of elections. The Executive agreed with this proposal.

Felix raised that in-person campaigning should still be permitted for the sake of practicality. Alison asked whether a campaign exclusionary zone would still be maintained around areas such as the SULS Office where it may be inappropriate to campaign.

SULS' relationship with the SRC and USU



The Committee raised concerns about potential conflicts of interests from SRC Councillors and USU Board Members and their ability to commit the time required for a SULLS Executive position, given the society's size and reach.

Felix suggested that there is a direct conflict with the USU as their board can have a significant impact on SULLS and the USU provides approvals for SULLS Events and Constitutional amendments. However, the SRC does not have any control over SULLS and its operations.

Alison asked whether any other large faculty societies of a similar scale have this ban in place. Justin replied that a member of the Debates Committee had to step down due to their election to the USU Board. However Sofia stated that this was because the Debating Society is integrated within the USU and so the nature of their relationship with the USU is different to that of SULLS. Eden noted that we are a registered charity and an incorporated association and so aren't as aligned or reliant on the USU as other clubs and societies are.

Alison asked what would occur in a situation where the president was conflicted from holding a SULLS Executive position after they had assumed the presidency. This issue will be presented to the Committee to discuss.

Felix noted that there is not necessarily a significant conflict between the USU and the SULLS Executive's operations. However, he argued that it would still be poor governance to allow someone to be on both the regulating body and the regulated body in question, and that students could delay their run for the USU Board for a year if they were keen to hold both positions. Sofia stated that USU Board positions have a tenure of two years. Justin noted that many candidates seek to demonstrate their experience on the Executive team of an USU club or society before running for the USU Board. Sofia noted that the timing of the election may pose an issue, as the USU Board Elections are held in May whereas the SULLS Elections are held over September and October. Bru agreed with Felix's point and noted that USU positions are paid, whereas SULLS positions are not. She also suggested that some USU Board members may use their position as a financial support system and that this condition could impose a financial barrier on students wanting to run for the SULLS Executive, as it is a volunteer position with a significant time commitment.

Eden asked whether the USU Board has any discretionary power which could impact SULLS' operations, especially as it appears that other clubs do not impose this condition on their Executive. Felix noted that the USU has the power to approve our events and the board has some discretionary powers. Sofia asked whether the USU would approve of this proposed Constitutional change. Alison noted that the USU Board does have discretion over Constitutional amendments, as recently demonstrated by the USU Board's discussion of the rejected constitutional amendments by the Civil Engineering Society in the Board's September meeting.

Sissi suggested that there should be accountability standards in place to ensure that someone is taking on both roles in good faith. She also suggested that SULLS could introduce practical barriers rather than having an explicit ban on a member concurrently holding positions on the SULLS Executive and on the SRC and/or the USU. Wendy asked for suggestions for compliance



measures, such as procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest. Sissi also suggested that these conflicts should ideally be declared at the election stage.

Wendy noted that there is a general desire to maintain SULLS' non-political nature. Mahmoud stated that during his recent campaign for SRC council, he personally found it difficult to post in the SULLS Ethnocultural Group while displaying a Switch filter on his personal profile due to his respect for SULLS and its members. He also believed that the Executive owed a duty to members to not make elections more awkward than necessary, particularly when an Executive member asks for votes from the committee members they oversee. Felix believed that SULLS should take its own stance regarding the integrity of the Executive and argued that due to the nature of our advocacy work, SULLS should aim to avoid student factionalism. Wendy noted that other faculty societies may not impose the same requirements as the ones currently under consideration by the Committee and the SULLS Executive as SULLS has a very high level of engagement with its members which other faculty societies may not. Justin also agreed that it is difficult to advocate for a depoliticised SULLS as political considerations are evident in a substantial portion of SULLS' work. Mahmoud clarified that he was not arguing for a depoliticised SULLS but rather better clarification and oversight over how Executive members campaign to committee members, as these interactions can be awkward.

6 GM and SGM dates

Wendy notified the Executive that a General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 October 6:30pm to pass constitutional amendments relating to the introduction of the Disabilities Officer position to the Executive, and that the Special General Meeting confirming the results of the election and presenting and passing the recommendations of the ad-hoc Constitutional Reform Committee will be held on Thursday 11 November or Friday 12 November.

7 In-person graduation

Some students have raised concerns about cancellation of graduation ceremonies, despite the re-opening plan presented by the NSW Government. Wendy noted that these concerns have been raised with Faculty.

8 Movember

Wendy noted that there has been some interest from another faculty society to do a combined Movember campaign with SULLS. Alison noted that the USYD Movember Ambassadors had reached out to SULLS already and responsibility for organising the event has been delegated to the Marketing portfolio.

9 By-law amendments

Mahmoud notified the Executive that a SULLS member has raised concerns about the SULLS By-Laws surrounding the reimbursement criteria for Equity Grants, and suggested that it should be at the discretion of the Equity Officer. Specifically, this would require amending clauses 41, 42 and potentially 45-49 of the By-Laws to remove the stipulated maximum reimbursement figures.

Eden noted that the caps reflect what SULLS thought was an appropriate threshold for these grants when they were originally drafted in the bylaws, and are by no means fixed. He noted



some caps still have a distinct purpose, for example, the cap on the textbook grants is relatively low to incentivise people to use the SULLS Equity Textbook Loan Scheme, thereby ensuring money is spent with the most utility. He noted that it is difficult to predict how many people will require equity grants as circumstances can change dramatically, such as recent COVID related financial hardship etc. He also noted that the Walter Reid Memorial Fund is required to be spent on textbooks and that the caps in the By-Laws have some level of arbitrariness and that he has often exercised discretion regarding equity grants.

Felix emphasised the importance of maintaining the financial sustainability of SULLS so that such programs could be provided, and that guidelines are required to ensure that money is spent in a sustainable way. Eden clarified that the By-Laws already allow the Equity Officer to exercise discretion over the amount of money granted. Felix suggested that there may be more clarification required over the way the guidelines and requirements are imposed to prevent future Equity Officers from feeling constrained by the current guideline figures.

Wendy suggested that the By-Laws should be amended to codifying existing practice, as it is desirable that as many people as possible access it. She suggested that internal budgeting mechanisms may be required to manage spending and that the purpose of the proposed investment project is mainly to support the Equity Portfolio.

Mahmoud raised concerns about the relationship between the Treasury portfolio and the Equity Officer and the potential that the Treasurer may restrict the Equity Officer's discretion in an undesirable manner. He argued that the Equity Officer should have enough independence from the Treasurer and to implement a culture where there is no surplus in Equity. Furthermore, he suggested that the Constitution should be amended to be reflective of the practice done today.

Eden clarified that the Equity portfolio currently runs at a surplus as there are not enough applicants to use up all the money allocated to Equity. Eden also suggested that more grounds could be added to equity grants, such as for disability adjustments.

Alison clarified that under the current arrangements where equity grants are transferred from the SULLS bank account to the member's bank account, the President, Treasurer and/or Secretary or other authorised signatory to the SULLS bank account could theoretically block any Equity grant as all transfers from the SULLS account require dual authorisation.

Mahmoud asked Eden whether applicants need to reapply every semester for the Equity Textbook Loan Scheme. Eden confirmed that applicants do need to reapply every semester as they need to demonstrate financial hardship to be eligible for the grants. Mahmoud asked whether the application could be changed to be on a yearly basis rather than semesterly, and Eden noted that this was something that could be considered but the Equity portfolio needed to exercise due diligence on the applications received before approving the grants or loans.

Meeting closed: 10:46pm