



*Better Leaders,
Better Collegiate Life*

UCA DISCUSSION PAPER

The repositioning and further (professional) resourcing of the Association

Introduction

The Association is in its 55th year, and in the context of its national identity, the UCA Executive Committee has been considering its future and capacity to maximise our impact on the national stage ensuring maximum value and relevance to members who are leaders of scholarly residential communities.

Following on from the extensive work undertaken on the Value Proposition and Strategic Planning, the Association seeks to strengthen its recognition and influence within the university sector to ensure that Australia's colleges and halls of residence remain an exemplar of university educational practice.

Underpinned by our four pillars of National Collegiality, Leadership, Advocacy and Identity, the Association must ensure it has adequate and appropriate resources to achieve these aims.

This paper is presented on behalf of the Executive Committee as an item of General Business, to the membership present at the Annual General Meeting on 20 April 2021 for further consideration.

Background

Having strengthened relationships with key stakeholders and partners, the Association is well positioned to extend its influence more broadly at both the state and commonwealth levels. With a present membership representation of 60 colleges and halls of residence, incorporating over 35,000 students and staff across Australia.

We are entering a post-COVID world with an ever-changing Higher Education Sector and now is the time to improve the structural definition of the Association in a way to maximise our impact and leverage which the recognition by University Vice Chancellors has on the value that colleges and halls add to the student experience.

There is no question that there are significant constraints upon the Association as we seek to pursue our objectives to increase national recognition of, and deliver on its Value Proposition for, colleges and halls. The Association's current executive management structure relies on the contributions of members elected to serve in an honorary capacity to fulfil the changing needs and expectations of our members. Whilst Executive Members provide leading insight and experience, as Heads of their own respective colleges, they simply do not have the necessary time to construct and deliver the programs, resources, professional development, advocacy, representation and influence, which an increasingly ambitious national higher education agenda requires of the peak body for university college Heads in Australia. Moreover, the reliance solely on volunteers severely restricts the capacity and opportunity for influence and advocacy at a national level as a *collective*. A conversation about increasing the professional resourcing for the management of the Association's business has been bubbling away since at least 2017, and the Executive believe that the time is right to take the next step in committing to this important repositioning resource.

The last few years have seen a significant increase in the market share of the student accommodation sector of the for-profit purpose-built student accommodation category (PBSA). There continue to be

distinct differences between the focus on the provision of ‘accommodation’ by PBSA on one hand, and on the added value of an enhanced educational experience as provided by colleges and halls on the other. The Association has an opportunity to further promote and articulate these points of difference, as well as to develop and demonstrate leading practice in university collegiate/college-style residences as a distinctive and differentiating offering within the student accommodation sector.

UCA has been addressing key issues that relate to culture, respectful relationships, sexual violence, alcohol harm minimisation, drugs other than alcohol and mental health, and has engaged key experts from public health and policy sectors as part of a wider strategy to reduce harm in our residences. It is through our members’ commitment and leadership in creating stronger collegiate communities that we continue to bring about positive change in our colleges and halls of residence. The context and consequences of COVID-19 have positioned residences even more to be communities where belonging and safe engagement can in creative and innovative ways complement and enrich the in-person and/or online academic, research and wellbeing programs of the university, around access and equity for disadvantaged and low SES students, indigenous students, rural and international students. Our members have benefitted from UCA’s resources and services during this period, and there is an excellent opportunity for the Association to add value and assist recovery and growth in the post-COVID context.

Focusing on our *shared aspirations* rather than our points of difference, communicating and collaborating on our shared goals will ensure that our collective identity will enhance dialogue and engagement between the various key stakeholders including universities and other peak bodies and membership associations including –

- Universities Australia,
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia,
- Australian Boarding Schools Association,
- National Association of Australian University Colleges,
- Asia-Pacific Student Accommodation Association,
- Collegiate Way International,
- Student Accommodation Association.

The roadmap ahead

As a relatively small (and niche) organisation, we will continue to face a range of challenges, in particular around membership, resourcing and national influence and reach. Moreover, the Association will be unable to continue to attract, retain, diversify/grow its membership, let alone keep members engaged.

It requires further resources, by way of an Executive Manager, who will be responsible for the management, public relations and marketing of the Association’s affairs. Initially at a 0.6FTE, the appointment will provide focused leadership for the Executive Committee and complement (and manage) the existing part-time Executive Officer resource.

Financial implications

The appointment of a more full-time Executive Manager is required to assist the Association better to position itself to have the maximum relevance and impact for colleges and halls in the context of an ever-changing sector. To deliver best value for members and have greater influence on the national platform requires an increase in annual revenue. Financial modelling based on current membership numbers shows that a significant percentage increase of approximately 30% per member in annual membership fees is required to achieve this outcome. Investigating the possibility of sustainable, appropriate alternate revenue sources (partnerships, sponsorships, etc) is an option to be considered in supplementing or offsetting the proposed fee increase.

Next steps

The AGM presents an opportunity to hear from the membership about the future direction and appropriate resourcing of the Association outlined in this discussion paper.

If there is agreement, then the Executive should finalise the Position Description, advertise and appoint a suitably qualified and interested person by September 2021.