



## Sustainability in Business Law (SiBL) – Students as Partners case study

### *Summary of the initiative*

SiBL is an initiative being run in the Faculty of Business and Law in 2021-2023 with an aim to inspire, promote, and champion sustainability in business through thought leadership, responsible management education and research across the faculty. It was developed to create and maintain a culture of respect and inclusion by incorporating the values of sustainability, responsible management education, gender, equity, diversity, and student equity into all aspects of Faculty operations and everyday business.

SiBL comprises four working groups:

- **Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) Working Group** drives thought leadership on responsible management education and develops responsible decision makers for the future to advance sustainable development. This group aims to develop activities designed to promote and embed ethical, responsible, and sustainable practices.
- **Gender and Diversity Working Group** drives thought leadership and enacts processes to improve gender equity, diversity, and inclusion. This group functions to raise awareness of and promote gender equity across the Faculty, by identifying barriers to gender equity, and facilitating activities that empower, support, and strengthen women and gender minorities at all levels for staff and students.
- **Student Equity Working Group** drives thought leadership and enacts processes to enhance all students' involvement in the learning and student experience. This group consults with representative groups to ensure participation, awareness and coordination of equity initiatives and programs, facilitating capacity and capability building, ensuring that student equity is embedded in the Faculty strategy.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group** ensures the Faculty works inclusively with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in ways that respect culture, traditions, ways of knowing, and ways of working. This group collaborates with industry and community to build and extend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways into higher education ensuring engagement, input and advice is sought from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on all matters relating to learning and teaching, research, and service/leadership.

### *How are students engaged as partners?*

Each working group includes staff and student members. Via an Expression of Interest process, students are elected as representatives to collaborate in partnership with staff on the specific functions of each working group to achieve the group's desired purpose and outcomes. Within the working groups, students collaborate equally with staff to work on and solve shared issues. Chairs ensure the student voice is heard within each of the working groups. Many of the objectives/projects planned within SiBL will benefit students and their experience at Curtin. Having a student perspective has been fundamental in prioritising key initiatives for each working group.

### *What cohorts of students are engaged as partners?*

Each working group includes 1-2 student representatives who are all studying a course in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL). The working groups also have staff representatives from each school/centre within FBL.

### ***What is the impact of engaging students as partners?***

Student Representatives provide insights that are of significant value to all involved, offering a fresh perspective and ideas that would not have been identified by a staff-only Working Group.

For students, there is a lot to gain by being involved as a Student Representative. It connects students with talented and influential academic and professional staff and provides valuable experience as a Committee Member that will equip students with skills for their future careers. SiBL provides opportunities to work on interesting and rewarding projects and connects students with other driven and likeminded students with a shared passion for sustainability.

### **Harry**

*“I have loved being able to see the ‘behind the scenes’ of the university, showcasing just how much the staff care about the student experience”*



Harry Bidewell is a student representative for the SiBL Student Equity Working Group and through exposure to the internal management of businesses, learnt the way working groups are established to find solutions to problems, “it has been an interesting journey, seeing how staff members from all walks of life come together to work and solve a shared issue”, he explains. Harry was able to contribute a student perspective on the challenges faced by equity students at Curtin, as well as proposing solutions of his own. In doing this, he reached out to the student body and attempted to gain extra input on what students feel are relevant issues. Harry raised an idea to extend the New to Curtin Mentor Program to second year equity students. This was very well received by the working group and has made it onto the list of priorities for 2022 for the Student Equity working group.

Harry, throughout his SiBL experience, was able to strengthen his professionalism through exposure to high-profile staff members highlighting the importance of personal presentation in a business setting. He was able to develop his objectivity during meetings after learning the importance of sharing/contributing only relevant points when working under tight time constraints. He felt it was very insightful to see how the meetings were structured, giving him the opportunity to observe ways in which he can structure his own group project meetings to be most productive.

Key initiatives and projects are being planned for the Student Equity working group in 2022 including, an equity toolkit for Unit Coordinators, FBL awareness raising sessions, a mentor program for second year equity students and exploring options for an Equity Support Scheme. Harry's participation and his unique perspective will be integral to ensuring all initiatives are working to support the student equity cohorts in FBL.

## Alex

*“We must think deeper. We must empathise and embrace the notion of climate justice and equitable development. Ask instead “what can I do, how can I help?”*”



Alexander Jayasuria is a student representative for the PRME working group and the overarching SiBL Council, “The opportunity to serve as a student representative on the SiBL council and PRME working group has been thoroughly rewarding and experiencing first-hand, the discussions and structures that facilitate the faculty’s strategic direction, I have been gifted with a tremendous amount of insight”. Alex has formed some valuable connections and has been a sustainability champion on behalf of the student body in FBL, “the academic and professional staff that I’ve had the pleasure of working with have been exceedingly generous – constantly providing advice and pointers for development”. As much as Alex has gained a lot from his involvement in SiBL, the working groups have also gained a lot from him and his strong passion for climate change, sharing insights from his involvement in the UNFCCC COP26 climate change summit with Global Voices and his work assisting a research team in FBL with their project “Business School Actions to Combat Climate Change”, funded by the Australian Business Deans Council. “I have found the experience to be incredibly enriching, and I have done what I can to help contribute to the objectives of the council. I hope that the SiBL council continues to cultivate and promote the student voice in its strategic processes. Only good can come of it”.