

SHOULD LAW STUDENTS CARE ABOUT UMSU?

4/4/2017

TIMOTHY SARDER

Vol 11, Issue 6

“UMSU’s power comes from the fact that we represent all students. In the past, we’ve been more focused on undergraduate students. It wasn’t a deliberate decision, it was just something that happened,” Yan Zhuang assures me, stating “The LSS and the GSA clearly play an active role in representing law students, though I believe in the whole principle that these organisations working together are able to achieve more than if they were completely apart.”

Yan is 2017’s University of Melbourne Student Union President, and she, along with Yasmine Luu, UMSU’s General Secretary, were kind enough to give up their time for an interview with De Minimis. They aren’t law students – Yan, finishing her Bachelor of Arts jokes that law is “probably a little too competitive” for her, while Yasmine is completing her Masters of Social Work and is looking forward to working within that field.



Search

ARCHIVES

[June 2020](#)

[May 2020](#)

[April 2020](#)

[March 2020](#)

[February](#)

[2020](#)

[October 2019](#)

[September](#)

[2019](#)

[August 2019](#)

[July 2019](#)

[May 2019](#)

[April 2019](#)

[March 2019](#)

[February](#)

[2019](#)

[October 2018](#)

[September](#)

[2018](#)

[August 2018](#)

the relationship we have we can work towards organising something for law students.”

Both of them have kept an ear to the ground about an issue important to many law students – recorded lectures; which has recently had limited implementation in the form of recordings for single-streams of limited selections of only compulsory subjects and only for students who provide grounds for ongoing need.

Yasmine is clear on her position: “UMSU’s stance is that all lectures should be recorded, because students have a whole variety of circumstances which shouldn’t be reduced down to ‘sorry, you can’t learn because you couldn’t attend’.” Yan takes a similar view, pointing out that there are “a number of reasons students sometimes can’t attend lectures. I don’t think the law school should be exempt from obligations to allow students to get the most out of their degree.”

When I ask them about what their roles entail, Yan says her position as President involves being the spokesperson for UMSU and leading the direction of the student union, while Yasmine tells me the role of General Secretary is to organise the student councils and involves policy-making. But, in the interview, they not only spoke in their personal capacity and in their roles in UMSU but also as representatives of the ticket they ran on, MORE!. I tell them my understanding is that a key part of MORE!’s success is from links with campus societies, and neither deny

February

2018

October 2017

September

2017

August 2017

July 2017

June 2017

May 2017

April 2017

March 2017

February

2017

November

2016

October 2016

September

2016

August 2016

July 2016

May 2016

April 2016

March 2016

February

2016

December

2015

October 2015

September

2015

August 2015

May 2015

April 2015

August 2014

July 2014

May 2014

April 2014

My experience with the law school has been that LSS elections are far less overtly politicised than the UMSU elections, where the various tickets often have alleged associations with federal/state political parties. I ask Yasmine and Yan about the fact that I've heard commentary that MORE! was a Labor-oriented party.

Yan responds, "If you look around Australia the type of people who get involved in student politics are often members of the Labor party, and I think our association is actually less than other groups. The majority of our office bearers are not members of the Labor party, though of course we have some." Yasmine agrees that many student unions calling themselves progressive would have members from the Labor party, but also is quick to point out that MORE! has members "from the Greens, the Sex Party, and independents" such as herself.

It's clear from our conversation that they both have a strong belief in their roles, with Yan stating that she envisages "UMSU to be the heart of student life" at university and Yasmine excitedly talking about the range of support services the student union offers to account for different types of students. But, when I press them on the point of whether law students should care about and vote in elections that happen across Grattan St, Yan suggests "the onus isn't on law students to connect with UMSU but for us to connect with law students. That's something we're pushing to do more of." Yasmine chimes in with a

Comments are closed.

More articles by this author:

- [What Does it Mean to be a Postgraduate Student](#)
- [What the Fair Work Penalty Rates Decision Means for Melbourne Law School](#)
- [The 'Normal' Finishing Time](#)
- [Mental Illnesses Aren't \\$10 Words](#)

The rest of this issue

- [Youth Crime: The Children of Our Future](#)
- [Equity Uncle - Typed Exams](#)
- [Pruning the Root of All Evil](#)
- [\(Not So\) Fresh Off the Boat](#)



Like 4

Tweet