

Getting Social

[00:00:12] Sid

G'day, welcome to Western Sydney University. I'm Sid Sharma and I've got things every student should know. You might be at that point in the semester where you're feeling on top of your classes and you know your way around campus, but there's just one thing missing, a group of friends to hang out with. In this episode, you're going to hear about five places you can go to meet new people. And it turns out I've got some mates to help you out. Let me introduce you to Charbel, Jordan, Michael and Claire.

[00:00:39] Claire

Hi, my name is Claire. I'm the president of the Western Sydney Debating Union.

[00:00:44] Jordan

Hi, I'm Jordan. I'm the secretary of the Western Sydney Kendo club.

[00:00:47] Michael

I'm Michael. I'm the president of the Western Sydney Kendo Club.

[00:00:52] Charbel

Hi, I'm Charbel. I'm a fourth-year Medical Science student, and I'm here to talk about Out and About.

[00:01:00] Sid

Number one. Places to hang out on campus.

[00:01:04] Claire

So Parramatta City Campus. I really love level 3. I don't know just the greenness of it. There's a few cool places that you can hang out because it's like different types of chairs and stuff and we normally just like study or chill there

[00:01:15] Sid

And it's like, you know centrally located as well. So you can always duck down and get food.

[00:01:20] Claire

Yeah, yeah, so it's just like on level 3 in Parramatta City Campus. So you just can go downstairs and get the new Sharetea that's opened up, which is great.

[00:01:28] Sid

Woo!

[00:01:29] Jordan

I used to study at Bankstown and Liverpool campus. So at Bankstown campus, our favorite facility to hang out was the pool tables. It was just outside the cafeteria. So strategically placed so you can have your hot chips and play pool at the same time. Liverpool - when I moved to Liverpool, it's a bit different. Liverpool on campus, there's still the library which I find quite nice. The study rooms is quite nice because on each floor, there's some place to study and you can have a, you know city wide view but mostly because of the locality of Liverpool campus because the slap-bang right in the city. [00:02:00] You can go to Westfield's next door. You can get Gong Cha, Sharetea all the types of teas you want.

[00:02:05] Sid

Everyone loves bubble tea here!

[00:02:07] Claire

Yeah, it's great!

[00:02:08] Jordan

And, you know, we have like other hobbies nearby, there's parks and playgrounds and you get the whole city wide experience that you would find say City Campus or any other sort of University.

[00:02:19] Michael

My main campus is Parra South. I think my favourite place would be the Library actually just directly to the left of the entrance where you've got all the bean bags and the chairs and the stuff you can just lie there, have a talk or with your friends or just plug in some earphones.

[00:02:35] Charbel

For me, so I'm based at Campbelltown. We've got a lot of ponds around, around the campus. So I enjoy just going out there just sitting on one of the stalls there and just enjoy it. Take some fresh air.

[00:02:45] Sid

One of the things I love about the Western campus, especially the Parramatta ones is that it's right next to the river. So there's so much green space so you can just go and have a lie down in the sun between a class and chill out, right, what would you say is one of the or what would you say are the kind of buzzing lively areas of the different campuses that you guys are at? Like if you're looking to just bump into someone or make a new friend, where would you go?

[00:03:09] Charbel

So at Campbelltown will definitely be the Learning Commons. So you got like pool tables. You've got like little chill areas that you can just sit down and a lot of students just go there to just play pool, I guess and just chat and have like their little club meetings. So it's pretty cool. You definitely bump into someone there.

[00:03:22] Claire

So we have ping-pong tables at level one in Parramatta City. We just kind of randomly verse each other, just like randoms. I'm just like I want to play with someone. Hey random person studying. Do wanna have a break?

[00:03:35] Sid

That's such a good idea. That is such a good idea to make new friends! Challenge them to ping pong.

[00:03:39] Claire

I suck at it but, so they're winning. So it's all good.

[00:03:42] Sid

Well, you got a new friend out of it. So you both win.

[00:03:49] Sid

Number two. Clubs and societies. Claire, what is the weirdest club that you've come across at your time at Western?

[00:03:57] Claire

Well, I think all the clubs are a little bit weird, [00:04:01] especially say would debating would be but I think like one of the best clubs is Nerdfighters. They're a bit weird. They have like movie nights, we did a debate of Harry Potter with them. So we collaborated and we just debated about Harry Potter which is kind of weird, but cool. I like it!

[00:04:16] Sid

What do they do, Nerdfighters?

[00:04:18] Claire

So Nerdfighters are an awesome club on campus. What they do is they combine for their love of nerdy things and they like have movie nights. They have like game nights, they have D&D sometimes, so it's like a really cool variety club for all that little nerd inside you.

[00:04:36] Sid

And what about you Charbel? What's your favorite weird club?

[00:04:39] Charbel

I would have to go with Nerdfighters as well. I've attended their 24-hour marathon. So it was like a, it's a twenty-four-hour marathon, gaming marathon for like a charity and I just went there and just game the entire night. Like that was my first time experiencing D&D and I just played the entire night. I would not stop.

[00:04:57] Sid

And that's again a really really great way to make new friends, right?

[00:05:01] Charbel

Yeah, like a lot of new friends.

[00:05:03] Sid

And I mean, there's always the one really big club that everyone seems to be a part of or everyone seems to know about it uni. What is that at Western?

[00:05:12] Jordan

The Vietnamese Student Association. Everyone's is that.

[00:05:16] Sid

The VSA! That's awesome. Tell me a little bit about what they do.

[00:05:19] Jordan

The Vietnamese Student Association, they do some cool events. Not just for Vietnamese people, you know, there's a lot like I know Cambodian too in it , you know, a lot of Chinese people in it. They'll run a lot of social networking events and they do some pretty cool events, like free bahn mi on campus and free - I think summer rolls on campus they do that too. Yeah, they host these really cool events on campus and that everyone gets stuck in to and they really liven up that campus atmosphere.

[00:05:49] Michael

Yeah, they do a lot of barbecues as well and they do just sausage sizzles as well. It's really of course the sausage sizzle culture of Australia.

[00:05:58] Sid

When you guys came to uni for the first time, [00:06:01] what was the first club that you joined and why?

[00:06:03] Michael

The Kendo Club.

[00:06:06] Jordan

The Kendo Club as well!

[00:06:07] Michael

Yeah, I think when I just showed up I was the only one in my friend group to come to Western Sydney. So I was looking around and I saw Kendo and I'd seen that before in like Japanese Anime and stuff like that. And I thought I may as well give it a try and here I am five years later.

[00:06:26] Sid

And you've made some friends out of it, too.

[00:06:29] Michael

So I've made quite a few friends out of it. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:06:33] Sid

What about you Claire? I mean because everyone's a little bit shy when they're showing up to university for the first time and just looking to connect with people. What kind of club would you suggest for someone who's just looking to get into something that maybe isn't so specialised but it's just a good way to make friends.

[00:06:47] Claire

So when I first started I got into debating, but I also got into music club. I'm not musically talented I can sort of sing. So I find music club. They're absolutely amazing. They're super welcoming. They're always doing things on campus. So I think if you want to learn an instrument they teach you, if you're wanting to jam out they'll do that as well. So they're an awesome club for just like anybody and because you can learn that skill, but for me my first one would be debating. I just learnt so many things about how to argue properly and structure and public speaking skills that I just love and that's why I'm president of it.

[00:07:27] Charbel

So for me, I still remember like my friend dragging me to debating for like one of their first sessions and he's like, you can really benefit from this you can overcome your fear of public speaking which is a something that I still struggle with and it does work, like you get there you start to learn how to structure your arguments and you start to win arguments and that's the best thing about it and you can use it anywhere!

[00:07:47] Sid

Yeah, I know. I mean that is basically essay writing right?

[00:07:50] Charbel

Exactly.

[00:07:50] Sid

What are some of your tips for someone who's looking to join a club, but there's you know can't decide between all 250 of them.

[00:07:59] Charbel

You'd have to find a club that aligns with your values and [00:08:01] beliefs. So if it's, if you're interested in something just pursue it go check out one of their sessions see if you like it. If you do, join up.

[00:08:22] Sid

And I know that once you've joined a club, you know, you're part of the community and a society, but all of you are executives in the clubs that you are from and I know that it gives you a lot of opportunity to you know, kind of move up and get a little bit more involved in the direction of those clubs as well. So tell me a little bit about your experience, you know becoming the president of the Debating Club Claire?

[00:08:42] Claire

So yeah, I really enjoy debating, being the president is a bit overwhelming sometimes but I find it's really good. I think that being able to just create policies that are more engaging. So we have a lot of things where we're trying to engage more females, or trying to make our club more multicultural just to like really reflect our area and like what we can bring and I think it's just really cool to be able to go to International tournaments and represent Western there. It's just amazing.

[00:09:15] Jordan

To be an executive, you have to be passionate about the club and you want to be passionate in the way that you're helping this club run, so I was passionate in helping set up our club for every time we have gradings, every time we have a registration, every time we have a competition and also all these like Western Fair and Campus Life, uni games. It's just that it helps being, being an executive helps it teaches you so many things. I've had to learn how to build a website. I'm a policing student, but had to build a website.

[00:09:45] Sid

Such great experiences though, right like yeah.

[00:09:48] Michael

And as president, it's good to learn how to create relationships with other clubs. So for example, UTS Kendo Club, UNSW Kendo club, or USYD Kendo Club, we've got all [00:10:01] members from all those clubs coming to visit us. We've got, we get invitations to participate in events across Sydney and sometimes internationally as well.

[00:10:10] Sid

Charbel, what do you do if the club that you really want to join doesn't exist yet?

[00:10:15] Charbel

You create it.

[00:10:17] Sid

It's that easy?

[00:10:17] Charbel

It's literally that easy - you just you have to find members, find people that share your vision and just sign them up. I think you need like maybe 10 members and you can just lodge a form online and you just sign up and you create your own club.

[00:10:35] Sid

Number three. Join a Sports Club. Basketball courts, gyms, football fields and hockey pitches. The beauty of going to university in Western Sydney is that you have so much space and room for sport. Jordan, Michael, what are some of the sports that are available?

[00:10:51] Jordan

So Western Sydney has a large variety of sports in clubs. There's the tennis club that I know of. There's a SKUWS - skate and skate boarders there. I would say, I would say they're a sport, yeah, you're doing something active.

[00:11:04] Michael

There's also like the boxing clubs, the martial arts clubs like Taekwondo, Kendo, and I think there's been an interest in Judo recently as well that's been growing.

[00:11:14] Jordan

And also other clubs, they also have tryouts from time to time so you can represent the uni. Volleyball is one of them, baseball is one of them, soccer and football one of them.

[00:11:25] Sid

Say that you are really good at a particular sport, say that you love martial arts and you've been doing it for a really long time. Can Western support you in some way?

[00:11:35] Michael

Every year, I think they have an application for the elites, elites, [00:11:40] Jordan - Elite Athlete's Program - [00:11:41] Michael - Elite Athletes Program. That's it. If you can prove that you, prove your dedication, show like your training schedule stuff like that. They are willing to provide like a scholarship and provide notes to help you get extensions on assignments, so that you may continue representing the uni in that sport.

[00:11:58] Sid

What if you're looking to try something new? What if you, you know suddenly want to play tennis but you've never played tennis before in your life. Claire, are there any particular clubs or sports clubs that are really accessible to new newbies?

[00:12:12] Claire

So I have no balance at all, but I recently went on an adventure with lovely, the skateboarding club and they offer like free skateboarding lessons with like actual coaches. I may have fallen a few times, but it's really fun. It's completely free and I can actually ride slightly a skateboard now so I'm very happy with that skill.

[00:12:34] Sid

What if you're just looking to get fit or find some new friends in not such a serious environment. What can you do?

[00:12:40] Jordan

So the Western Sydney Sports Officers - they made I think social sporting events. They have, they hold those regularly. I think the last one they had was a basketball social sporting event. You just come in, have fun and then after that, you know or during that time you're playing, make new friends and then after that because it's so short like everyone's going to have, you're going to have fun after. This way you make life long friends while playing something, while being active at the same time. Humans are social animals. That's what I learnt from my degree. So

what's the best way to get someone to do something? You give them an incentive socially to be able to do it and if they find that they like it, it's two birds with one stone, I feel.

[00:13:25] Sid

Number four. Let's find out a little bit more about Out and About. What exactly is it?

[00:13:31] Charbel

Yeah, so I know there's a trip for like the Blue Mountain, like exploring the Blue Mountains. I know there's a, an activity which is like learn to surf so you go and you pretty much learn how to surf. There's one for Port Stephens which includes, like if you're lucky I guess you get to see some dolphins and whales. I know there's like a Hunter Valley trip, so I'm assuming that's going to be like a wine tasting tour. Canberra, visiting Canberra. Some like going to Taronga Zoo. So there's different, different kinds of activities.

[00:13:59] Sid

It sounds like a bucket list of things that people would want to do when they're visiting Sydney. So yeah really convenient way to explore and get to know the place. So, how big is the Out and About program?

[00:14:10] Charbel

Yeah, so I would say it's pretty big like every year we have different types of activities and students can just register online. Of course, there's a fee for that, for that but it's usually like you get it at a discounted price compared to what you would have to pay if you get it elsewhere.

[00:14:25] Sid

And why do you think that it's important for first-year students or new students to engage with something like Out and About?

[00:14:32] Charbel

For myself, coming from a different country, I feel like I don't know much about Australia and engaging with Out and About offered me a way to kind of go like a little sightseeing tours and adventures and I, like for me I find it that it offers a peace of mind because you're going with people who have like first aid certificates. They're trained in their field. They've done all the risk assessments. They know that what that you're going on is actually safe trip and everything's have been kind of thought of before and planned. So I think that offers me that peace of mind.

[00:15:00] Sid

And do you think students who maybe aren't really that outdoorsy can still get involved?

[00:15:05] Charbel

Yeah, so they do offer I think indoor activities as well. So it just depends on what activity you're into and what's on offer.

[00:15:16] Sid

Number five. Chaplaincy.

I'm talking to Michelle from the Programs Unit. So tell me, Michelle, what is Chaplaincy?

[00:15:24] Michelle

So Chaplaincy is a team we have across all our campuses. We have a Program Coordinator and they assist students who are looking to find some spiritual assistance. So we have Chaplains from all different denominations and they organise events on campus for those students. They also run quite a few programs such as our soup kitchens and they're really a friendly face and a kind ear to listen to you. So they're there on all of our campuses, while we don't necessarily have every denomination covered, [00:16:01] we have a lot of them covered and even if we don't have a Chaplain on campus that's the same denomination as someone else, they have the ability to help you find someone in your local area who you can connect with.

[00:16:14] Sid

Where can people get access to the Chaplaincy program or services like is there a drop in place on campus or?

[00:16:21] Michelle

Yep, so each campus there is an office for the Chaplains and the great thing is they also have their contact phone numbers. So if you can't catch them in their office, because they are often running around, they have their phone number that you can give them a call and organise to make a time to meet with them.

[00:16:37] Sid

And what kind of faiths or denominations are offered?

[00:16:39] Michelle

So yeah, so we have Christian, we have Buddhists, we have Greek Orthodox, we have Islam, so there's quite a few different denominations that are covered.

[00:16:50] Charbel

And also we had we run a soup kitchen every week. So we get together a bunch of student volunteers will get together and we'll cook a meal. So it's a great way to a) learn how to cook and get a free meal as well as engage a lot with like different students.

[00:17:04] Michelle

And the great thing is you don't have to be religious to go. It's open to all students and there's no sort of, your conversations are what you want to have. So there's no sort of set guide to how your conversation is going to go on the evening.

[00:17:19] Sid

It sounds like a really nice non-judgmental space.

If you have anymore questions, head to westernsydney.edu.au and make sure you check out the other episodes like Cheap Eats, where you can find out the best places to eat around campus with your new friends. Thanks for listening. I'm Sid Sharma. See you next time.