#### WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

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# Ready, Set, Go Online: Supporting International students

#### Presenter: Michelle Gillard & Amy Shao Chair: Vicky Gravolin

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# **Acknowledgement of Country**

Western Sydney University acknowledges the peoples of the Darug, Tharawal, Eora and Wiradjuri nations.

We also acknowledge that the teaching and learning currently delivered across our campuses and online is a continuance of the teaching and learning that has occurred on these lands for tens of thousands of years.





# Aims of today's presentation

### Increase awareness of the International Buddy Program

International Zoom Sessions - Purpose and Collaboration

### **Invitation to International Zooms**





# About the Program

- Support International students during their first year at Western
- SSAF Funded
- Originally piloted in 2017 no funding in 2018, funded in 2019 and 2020
- Staffing: Student Casuals
  - 1 Program Assistant (3 days per week)
  - 4 student casuals as International Buddies (4 5 hrs per week each). Over 120 applications were received for these roles.







#### International Buddy Program

Pre Covid	Now
Beach Safety Days	On Hold
International Orientation Stall – On Campus	International Orientation – Online
Welcome Week Activities – On Campus	Welcome Week Activities – Online
Coffee Catch Ups – Both Pre and Start of Semester on campus	Promoting Virtual Coffee Catch Ups
Weekly Email	Weekly Email
Promotion of other programs	Promotion of other Programs – in a non face to face environment
	International Zoom Meetings

Plans that were underway for Spring (currently on hold):

- Airport meet & greets, - Get to know your local area (shops, train station), - Getting to know Sydney

- Cross team campus events prior to session start (become familiar with campus prior to session)



Original Concern: How could our programs have an impact on a large number of International Students with the resources that we have.

Idea: Zoom Sessions to answer International Student's questions.





- 6 Western Success Advisors
- International Buddy Program
- Chaplaincy
- WESTERNLife
- 140 International Students in attendance

### **Our First Zoom**

### AGENDA

- 01 GUIDELINES FOR SESSION Make sure you're familiar with Zoom's features so you can participate effectively! 02 MEET THE TEAM
  - Get to know your presenters.
- 03 WESTERNLife Just because you can't meet in person doesn't mean you need to miss out! Discover the online events happening now! 04 MANAGING STRESS WITH CHAPLAINCY
- Uncertainty and rapid changes cause stress which impacts on daily life. Here are some tips to slow down. 05 UPDATE & BRAINSTORM
- There's been a lot of information around COVID-19, and much of it changes quickly. Here's an update and some alternativ activities that you can do.
- 06 STAYING MOTIVATED TO STUDY FROM HOME How do you leep yourself on track when work, university and personal life all begins to blur together? Try this tips 07 NEXT WEEK AND Q&A





# **Reflections on the First Week**

#### What we offered in the first week:

- A focus on studying successfully at home
- Introducing programs student could connect with online

What we realised students wanted:

- Answers regarding fees
- Answers regarding financial support

So we adapted, we realised the information was useful but not based on the questions that the student were raising in their registration.

# Pre Zoom

- Email invitation sent to all International students.

- RSVPS received
- Questions reviewed

### During Zoom

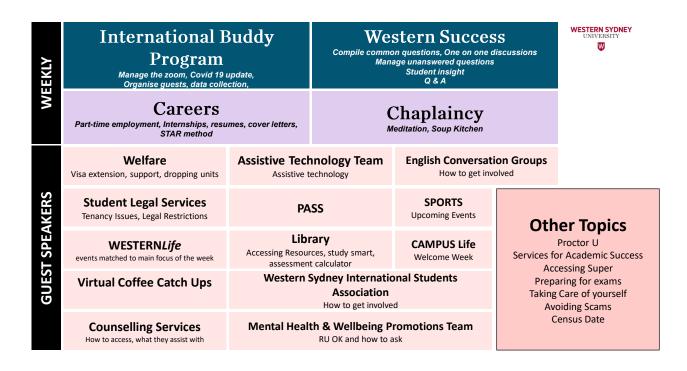
- Zoom Chat monitored
- Questions answered
- Unanswered questions documented

### Post Zoom

- Unanswered questions escalated to Western Success for action by the students advisor.

- Questions reviewed for future focus / topic

- Summary email sent includes links and bullet point summary







## Some of the stats

- We have run 54 Zoom Sessions
  - Lowest attendance 8
  - Highest attendance 58
- Average 25 students per session
- Attendance is higher when our blurbs provide more detail.
- Feedback is positive with over 92% of participants who complete the poll identifying the sessions as sharing "Good" or "Great" information
- Approximately 350 of the interactions have been with unique students.





# What We Have Found

**Patterns** The types of questions vary depending on where we are in session. Further reporting on this will be available in the near future. Week 4 increase in academic and reducing units questions increase.

#### Are the Zoom Session the right length? On average students are staying in the zoom session for approximately 54 minutes which suggests we are on the right track.

#### Immediate Feedback

We ask participants to identify all sections of the zoom that was relevant to them. Guest speaker topics achieve on average 85% relevance.

Careers achieve on average 80% relevance. Western Success Q & A averages 75% relevance.

Meditation is not relevant to all however the students who participate in the meditation actively comment on its importance.





#### FEES

Will the 10% reduction in fees be a refund or a credit? How will my Scholarship affect the discount? Can I defer payment for next session and how?

#### CAREERS / EMPLOYMENT

How can I find work part time work? Why can't I get a job? Where can I find internships?

#### DEGREE RELATED

My placement has been cancelled, what do I do? Who do I contact for..?

#### FINANCES / SUPPORT

How do I apply for the Student Support Fund? Can I receive another food hamper? Why was my request for assistance declined?

#### OTHER

How do I get a student card? When is Census date? Will I have to pay again if I fail a unit? How do I apply for a visa after my studies? How do I reduce my study load? I need an extension on my assignment?



# Acknowledgements

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- Careers Jackie

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- Western Success Advisors Marissa, Taurai, Shang, Brandon (co hosts)
- Chaplaincy Daniel

The biggest shout out goes to the International Buddy Program Assistant, **Amy Shao**, who without her focus, determination, diligence and ability to come up with solutions on the run the International Zooms would not run as smoothly as they do.

7/09/2020



