

## 2017 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### HIGH LEVEL SUMMARY

- Building relationships
- Adapting to a reduced council size

2017 has been a year of both opportunity and challenge for the Graduate Management Association of the University of Western Australia (Inc.) (GMA). The restructure of the University of Western Australia (UWA) presented us with the opportunity to build new relationships on campus. These are starting to show positive results, with a return on these efforts expected in the next half year to two years. The challenge has been the reduced council size. Personal commitments have resulted in councillor resignations and we haven't been able to replace them. With a half-sized council, we've adjusted accordingly, reducing our operational commitments.

### INTRODUCTION

The GMA is a 41 year old independent, incorporated, not-for-profit association for alumni of the UWA Business School's (UWABS) Master of Business Administration and postgraduate courses. Its constitution aligns it closely with UWABS' purpose and values. Its board or council consists of 12 volunteer directors or councillors. The GMA has no operational staff and the council acts as an operational board. Councillors conduct all of the tasks associated with the running the GMA and they rely on the support of partners, sponsors and additional volunteers. The GMA council provides value to its alumni members and it also works on ways to provide value to current UWABS Master of Business Administration (MBA) and postgraduate students as they are the future alumni.

The October 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM) saw elections that resulted in a full 2017 council of 12 council members. This new council planned to build on the success of the 2016 council which occurred during the GMA's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year by addressing the following areas: determine how we can best provide value to our members, new and existing member engagement, review our membership structure, improve communication with our members, build new sponsorship streams, distribute GMA administrative tasks amongst councillors, update our constitution to reflect changes to the Associations Incorporation Act 2015, and building new relationships and renewing old ones at UWA. However, due to the reduced council size, we focused our efforts on building relationships and ensuring the reduced schedule of events ran successfully.

### RELATIONSHIPS

In the latter part of 2016, the GMA was awaiting the finalisation of UWA's restructure. This restructure took effect at the start of 2017, resulting in a change of UWA personnel and implementation of new hierarchical structure. UWABS now sits within the new Faculty of Arts, Business, Law and Education (FABLE). There has been minimal impact on the GMA regarding where it sits within this new structure. We continues to be aligned with UWABS and its MBA and postgraduate courses, as per our constitution. However, UWA Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) now takes on greater responsibility for alumni across the university, including UWABS, making the GMA's existing relationship with DAR more important. This restructure has presented us with an opportunity to build new relationships and rebuild old ones at all levels of the university. It should be noted that there has been a settling-in period for the restructure with those people in new positions and hierarchies working out how everything works. Thus, our relationship building efforts are slowly progressing over time.

Our relationship with our patron, UWA chancellor Dr Michael Chaney AO, continues to be a strong one. We are grateful for his ongoing support, especially his efforts to secure us fantastic keynote speakers for our annual black tie dinners.

UWABS has seen the appointment of a new dean, Professor Peter Robertson, and MBA director, Professor Mark Griffin. We met with them earlier this year and gave them an overview of and insight into the GMA. Both of them saw the value of the association and are supportive of us.

As similar overview was given to student engagement, including Tennille Trevaskis, the FABLE student engagement manager and Kate Hutchinson, the UWABS student engagement manager. They also see the value of the association and are supportive of us. The UWABS student engagement team have been supporting us by marketing our communications (e.g. annual dinner invitations, Charles Harper Prize nomination forms).

We met with UWA vice-chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater when we were invited as guests to her table at the Western Australian of the Year Awards. The vice-chancellor also sees the value of the GMA and is supportive of us.

We also plan to meet with the executive team from FABLE, Executive Dean Professor Matthew Tonts or Associate Dean (Community and Engagement) Dr Brenda McGivern, in the next few months.

We continue to grow our relationship with DAR. We collaborated with them on their Career Café in April, helping to find mentors for the event. I had an opportunity to be a mentor at both that event and the recent September Career Café. DAR also supported our annual black tie dinner again, this year. They helped with administration, marketing, ticketing and resourcing, helping to make the night the success it was. Not only do we benefit from DAR's alumni expertise, but we are learning from them as well and this will ultimately benefit our members. Thank you to Brenda Tournier and Josh Van Kampen and the rest of the DAR team. We will continue to collaborate with them next year.

Following on from last year's successful event collaboration with the UWABS Young Alumni Network (YAN) (i.e. Leadership Series featuring Adrian Fini), we explored collaborating on a similar event this year. However, this proposed event was postponed to next year, due to the reduced size of the GMA council. We look forward to working with YAN in 2018.

The GMA continues to build its relationship with the Convocation of UWA Graduates (Convocation). All graduates of UWA are permanent members of Convocation, allowing them to have a life-long relationship with UWA. The GMA and Convocation share similar goals when it comes to graduates or alumni, and I plan to meet with the current Warden of Convocation, Dr Doug McGhie, to see how we can work together towards our goals. Note, Dr Doug McGhie, was president of the GMA from 1992 to 1993. Current GMA council member Graham Harmsworth has been a council member of Convocation in recent years and has been co-opted back onto the Convocation council this year. And at the recent Convocation Spring Ordinary Meeting this September, past GMA presidents Mark Palermo and Thomas Murrell, along with myself and Graham Harmsworth were in attendance.

Our relationship with the UWA MBA Student Social Club (UMSSC) continues to strengthen. The GMA council attended their end-of-year ball in 2016, and also sponsored a \$300 prize. The UMSSC promoted our annual black tie dinner to its members and also attended the dinner, organising two tables. The GMA promoted the UMSSC's July First Friday drinks to its members, resulting in around 10 GMA alumni attending. The GMA is also promoting the UMSSC end-of-year ball to its members and the council will again attend the ball and provide similar sponsorship. The GMA will continue to collaborate with UMSSC, connecting its alumni members with current students. As mentioned earlier, current students are future alumni members.

Finally, sponsorship has been challenging this year. All sponsorship received this year was for the annual black tie dinner. Value-in-kind and prize sponsorship totalled over \$10,000 and cash sponsorship totalled \$5,750. We are grateful to our new sponsors Aggreko (principal) and UWA Innovation Quarter, and returning sponsors Business News, Chartered Accountants ANZ and Manny Tamayo Photography (Manny is a GMA member). Our reduced council size meant that the amount of time spent looking for sponsorship was limited. In addition, potential sponsors approached were not in a position to provide sponsorship.

## COUNCIL

The GMA council has lost seven of its 12 councillors between our AGM in October 2016 and April 2017. Robert Sills, Tarik Voirin, Sourabh Patwardhan, Federica Zampieron, Divya Bhardwarj and Uttara Merchant all resigned for personal reasons such as work and family commitments. Marie Claire Bennetts was the council's UWABS representative and could no longer fulfil that role when she moved to DAR as part of the university restructure. Note, UWABS is currently considering who they should nominate to come onto the 2018 council as their representative. All of these departures were amicable and I thank them all for their service and for volunteering to sit on council in the first place. I have taken on the additional roles of secretary and administrator and Rebecca White has taken on the additional role of treasurer. I would like to thank William Ooi, who was the treasurer in last year's council, for continuing to provide us support with all treasurer related activities. I would also like to thank Mark Palermo, the immediate past president, for attending council meetings. He is under no obligation to do so and his continuing support is appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank the remaining councillors for their ongoing efforts.

We have had a challenging time refilling these new vacant positions on council this year. We're looking at the upcoming AGM to help with this. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, with only five councillors remaining on council, the workload increased greatly. We compensated for this by reducing the number of events we would run in 2017 to the dinner and two sundowners. The April Career Café required us to find mentors and not run the actual event. However, the amount of effort required to both keep the GMA operational and run the dinner was still significant. We haven't had enough resource (people and time) to actively canvas replacements as much as we would like. Secondly, the GMA council typically consists of more new and recent graduates than graduates from many years ago, and current students. Our relationships with students, recent graduates and the UWABS hasn't been as strong as we would have preferred in recent years. Thus, our pipeline to refill the council had slowed to a trickle. Note, this also affected our membership, with new member sign-up also slowing to a trickle. This is why we have focused our limited resource on building new relationships and rebuilding old ones in the lead up to and following the university restructure. We are slowly seeing the positive results of this, with a return on these efforts expected in the next half year to two years.

The following table sets out the number of meetings of the GMA Council held during the year to September 2017 and the number of meetings attended by each Councillor.

2017 GMA Councillor Meeting Attendance			
Name	Position	Eligible to attend	Attended
Conrad Pires	President	7	7
Rebecca White	Vice President	7	6
Federica Zampieron*	Secretary	5	3
Tarik Voirin*	Treasurer	2	1
Graham Harmsworth	Graduate Councillor	7	4
Marisa Powell	Graduate Councillor	7	5
Robert Sills*	Graduate Councillor	0	0
Jamie Jenkins	Student Councillor	7	5
Divya Bhardwaj*	Student Councillor	4	2
Uttarra Merchant*	Student Councillor	5	1
Sourabh Patwardhan*	International Student Councillor	1	1
Marie Claire Bennetts**	Business School Representative	2	0
Mark Palermo***	Immediate Past President	7	6
* Resigned from council ** Transferred from UWABS to DAR *** The immediate past president is under no obligation to attend council meetings			

## EVENTS

Events continued to make up the core business of the GMA, even with the reduced schedule due to the reduced council size. We discontinued the 2020 Business Insights Forum event this year as they required extensive effort and resource to organise. Also, selecting a topic for the forum that would easily sell tickets was proving to be quite challenging. The Career Cafés run with DAR were to take the place of this event. Our Leadership Series events were previously run in conjunction with Marie Claire Bennetts and UWABS, but the university restructure and Marie Claire Bennetts' move to DAR meant UWABS was no longer able to do this. The GMA planned to run a similarly themed event with YAN, but as explained earlier, this was postponed until 2018. We ran two sundowners, one in December 2016 at The Western Australian Club and the other at the Treasury Lounge Bar at the refurbished State Buildings. Both were attended by around 30 people. The council will continue to run sundowners in the future based on the 'no-cost' model with a free venue and a cash bar.

As mentioned earlier, the GMA promoted the UMSSC's July First Friday drinks to its members, resulting in around 10 GMA alumni attending. The GMA will continue to collaborate with UMSSC.

Our main event for the year was our Annual Black Tie Dinner on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Held at the University Club of Western Australia, it ran smoothly and was well received. Like last year, it was great to see people up and about in the room connecting and reconnecting. It created a great atmosphere and we've received positive feedback on the event.

GMA patron, Dr Michael Chaney AO, secured Rob Scott, former silver medallist Olympian and the incoming CEO for Wesfarmers as our keynote speaker. Rob spoke about his success in business and in sport, and talked about the importance of having a sense of purpose and establishing the right settings to encourage innovation and performance. He was both informative and entertaining and the audience was eager to ask him questions. On behalf of the council, I would like to thank Michael for arranging this.

For my address, I spoke about the GMA founder Charles Harper and his forebearers. They were all pioneering Western Australians and his grandfather, Charles Walter Harper helped to establish Wesfarmers in 1913. This added a nice symmetry to the night, given our keynote speaker and our patron, who is the chairman of Wesfarmers. I was fortunate that Margaret Harper provided me with the late Charles Harper's history. Margaret continues to play the significant roles of adviser to and supporter of the GMA and has done so for at least the past 10 years. We are very grateful for this.

The Charles Harper Award was presented on the night to the 2016 winner Aine Healy Carter. The GMA Legend award was also presented to Antoine Musu, a long-time supporter of the GMA.

Overall, it was a great night and a photo of our VIPs, consisting of Rob Scott, vice-chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater, Dr Michael Chaney AO, managing director George Whyte from our principal sponsor Aggreko, and UWABS chairman and Reverse Bank of Australia director Mark Barnaba, appeared in The Western Australian's "Herd on the Terrace" section on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017.

As mentioned earlier, the sponsorship for the dinner was harder to come this year, with only \$5,750 in cash received. Financially, the dinner made a small loss in the region of a \$1,500 dollars or so. The exact amount is still being finalised but we are able to cover it with our cash reserves, though our preference is to at least break even with our events.

The organising team for the dinner comprised of Councillors Marisa Powell, Rebecca White, Divya Bhardwaj and myself. With the resignation of Divya Bhardwarj and other councillors, the remaining councillors consisting of Marisa Powell, Rebecca White, Graham Harmsworth, Jamie Jenkins and myself managed the dinner organisation. I'd like to thank them all for their efforts and in particular Rebecca White and Graham Harmsworth for helping the lead-up to the dinner and on the night. I'd also like to thank Rebecca White for organising volunteer to help set-up on the night, as well as DAR for their help with organising the dinner and providing support on the night.

## MEMBERSHIP

As of September 2017, the GMA had a total of 1,680 members, consisting of:

- 441 students
- 1,112 alumni

Since 20 October 2016, we have had six new member applications, which are included in the figures above.

As mentioned in last year's report, the shift to paid annual membership has not been successful. The 2016 council had discussed a number of alternative membership models at its strategic planning day, but resolved not to make a final decision on how to proceed until the University's restructure was completed. In 2017, due to the reduced council size, no action has been taken to resolve this. I expect the next council to be in position to make a decision regarding membership.

## FINAL MESSAGE

This year was my first year as president of the GMA and it was a challenging one. I'd like to thank the council for their support in running the GMA this year. Not only did we manage to adapt to a decrease in councillors, but I believe we have made good progress building relationships and this will help contribute to our success in the future.

GMA councillors are all volunteers and being on the council offers many rewards, such as the chance to network at a higher level, build new skills and gain board experience. I encourage anyone interested in giving back to UWA, UWABS and the GMA to nominate for council prior to our AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

I am confident that the 2018 GMA council will be able to build on the progress we have made this year and continue to provide value to its members, UWABS and UWA.

Yours sincerely,



Conrad Pires  
MBA GAICD  
President  
Graduate Management Association of UWA (Inc.)