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UTS's \$140,000 US Alumni Trip for Five Executives Revealed in Leaked Documents

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Leaked documents reveal that the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) spent over \$140,000 on a US alumni trip for five senior executives, including business class flights for three, while planning to cut 400 jobs to save \$100 million. This article examines the controversy surrounding the lavish expenditure, its timing, and the backlash from staff and unions.

In May 2025, UTS sent five executives, including Vice-Chancellor Andrew Parfitt, to the United States for alumni events, costing \$140,119.09, according to documents obtained by ABC News under freedom of information laws. Three executives, including Parfitt, flew business class with flight costs ranging from \$21,000 to \$23,000 each, while one traveled premium economy for \$13,995 and another economy for \$7,200. Accommodation costs ranged from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per person, with events held at upscale venues like the 71st floor of the Los Angeles Intercontinental and New York's Penn Club. The total included \$13,728 for a reception and dinner for 41 guests, featuring gourmet items like bacon-wrapped scallops and Emmolo Sauvignon Blanc (ABC News, July 22, 2025).

The expenditure has sparked outrage, as UTS's Operational Sustainability Initiative (OSI), led by Parfitt, aims to slash \$100 million annually, threatening 400 jobs. The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) labeled the spending "deeply shocking," with President Dr. Alison Barnes criticizing the executives' "fancy canapés in New York" while staff face redundancies (ABC News, July 22, 2025). A leaked NTEU survey of 380 UTS staff revealed 35% experienced high psychological distress amid the proposed cuts, with SafeWork investigating "psychological hazards" from the restructure (ABC News, July 3, 2025).

UTS defended the trip, stating alumni events foster "valuable opportunities" for donor engagement and partnerships, with senior leaders' involvement decided "depending on need" (ABC News, July 22, 2025). However, critics argue the timing—amid job cuts and a \$5 million KPMG-led restructure—shows poor judgment. Posts on X echoed the sentiment, with users like @UniStaffVoice calling it "tone-deaf" (July 22,

2025). As UTS faces scrutiny over governance and transparency, the lavish trip risks further eroding trust among its 45,000 students and 4,000 staff, who see a disconnect between executive excess and the university's financial woes.