

EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

NAME	Rory McCourt
POSITION	Vice-President (Welfare)
REPORT PERIOD	1 January – 30 June 2011
TOTAL WEEKS WORKED	13 (5 as Welfare Officer and 6 as WVP)
HOURS WORKED	514.25 Hours
BONUS APPLICATION	N/A

Reporting on Priority Goals:

1. Goal 1. Education: Student Support

To secure and maintain adequate state income, welfare and employment support for students.

Trimester 1 has marked a flurry of activity in the area of student support at VUWSA. We've worked hard to secure our own welfare services, those on Campus and our work towards a better deal from government.

(a) Internal Services:

- a. Welfare Service Agreements - We've signed contracts with the University to provide flu shots, the food bank and Stress Free Study Week services. It's fundamental that our services are secure in the new voluntary environment.
- b. Stress Free Study Week - Your Executive team has put in countless hours to deliver services like Stress Free Study Week at as little cost to you as possible. This includes hours of preparation, organising, provision and clean up. We delivered a record number of breakfasts, lunches and study packs. Instead of outsourcing production, this year your Student Association Executive made up the 700 study packs themselves. I'm proud to have lead, and played a pivotal role, in the organisation and delivery of this valuable service.

I'm now working on operationalising SFSW through an instructional guide so my successor can easily and efficiently run the service.
- c. I've been working with the VUWSA Budget consultation to find alternatives to service provision at Pipitea. It's important that our Law, Commerce and Administration students get their bus passes and other

essential services through alternative mechanisms like VicBooks, in the current budgetary environment.

(b) Campus (External) Services:

- a. Student Services Levy - Arguing the case for a student-responsive Student Service Levy Rate review in this year's consultation is crucial to students having a real say on their services. This has the potential to stop any rise in the Levy for 2012-2013. We've been questioning spending like the free shuttle service to the airport for International students, currently paid for by all of us. I hope to continue our work in this area to get a better deal for students.
- b. MindSpace Support Group - VUWSA has been working with Counseling Services to found a group for students to support their pairs dealing with the impacts of family alcohol and drug addiction. I've been leading VUWSA's contribution to this.
- c. Hardship Committee - I've been representing students on the University's committee charged with dispensing funds to those students with financial difficulties. From this group, I've seen a desperate need for targeted support for Architecture students, a great number of whom require assistance from the fund. Architecture students have some of the highest costs and least capacity to work part-time. VUWSA should be a part of working towards a dedicated Architecture Assistance Fund. It's something I'm committed about progressing in Trimester 2.

(c) Better Central and Local Government Support

- a. Budget Day Campaign - Your Association Executive worked extremely hard on developing and implementing a campaign around the Government's changes to student loans and allowances. This included rolling out a poster campaign in the weeks up until Budget Day, organising a march to Parliament alongside other groups, and being vocal in the media about how the changes will hurt vulnerable students. We based the campaign on the issue of students and graduates migrating to Australia in search of a better deal. We made the point that the Government ought to value students and give them more reasons to stay in Aotearoa -not less. I believe the campaign was a success. We achieved that which we set out to: -media coverage of the stories of our students, raised student awareness of the issues, and better cooperation between groups on campus concerned about student support. I'm proud of the campaign and the work will all did. The campaign, however, is not over and will be continuing in Trimester 2. We will close with groups on and off campus to keep the issue of student support alive.
- b. Public Transport – I've worked closely with the President, Environment and Campaigns Officers on our Fair Fares campaign. We have been meeting with Regional councillors and council officials on the Bus Review and Fare Review. VUWSA will be running a strong campaign in Trimester 2 to secure a 50% student discount on buses for all students part-time

and full-time. We hope you can support what will be a huge boost to the wallets of students.

- c. Wellington City 10 Year Plan – VUWSA canvassed the views of our members on the WCC’s Long Term Plan, which included proposals to cut funding for Te Papa, sports fields and environmental groups. We submitted the views of those members and gave a presentation to Council. The recommendations included maintaining funding for the three aforementioned items, and looking at ways of improving accommodation and public transport quality in Wellington. This consultation was part of the Executive’s focus on Better Campus, Better Wellington -engaging students as citizens. The success of this process is remarkable -VUWSA has been invited to meet with the Mayor and provide feedback on subsequent Council decisions. I’m proud of the work we’ve done in this area.

2. Goal 3. Education: Equity

To promote equity for disadvantaged members in access to and within the university.

Equity has been another priority area that your Student Association Executive has been working hard towards this trimester. I’ve been leading and supporting various pieces of work that will lift financial and gender equity.

(a) Financial Equity

a. My work on the student support Budget Campaign was all about creating a campus where students from low-income backgrounds, with children or in post-graduate study were not punished in terms of student finance. We raised issues of equity for Maori students in this campaign, also.

(b) Gender Equity

a. I’ve worked with Sara on the Campus Safety Audit, looking at how our campus can be made safer for women in particular.

b. I’ve also been assisting the VUWSA Women’s Group’s ‘Who Needs Feminism’ campaign set for launch in Trimester 2.

Reporting on Other Goals:

[Identify and explain any other Constitutional Goals you have worked towards in the past six months in addition to your priority goals]

1. Goal 6. Public Issues

To promote discussion and action as appropriate, on issues concerning students as citizens.

- (a) I've worked to promote the public issues of student support, public transport, civic engagement and local government planning. These issues are important to our members, and I've been committed to promoting discussion, debate and action on them. VUWSA's consultation with students on the Wellington City Council's Long Term Plan has been responsive to the views of students. I hope to continue this work.

2. Goal 9. Sustainability

To recognise the needs of current and future generations by promoting sustainable lifestyles and actions to members while ensuring the sustainable operation of the Association and University. .

- (a) My work on the Bus Review, Fair Fares etc has worked to make Wellington a more environmentally friendly capital that reduces emissions from private transport by supporting public transport.

General Tasks and Initiatives

1. Work on the Governance Review Working Party

I supported the consultation, formulation and promotion processes to ensure the Governance Review took in a wide range of student views. I attended most meetings, contributed to consultation and promoted the Review.

2. Presented VUWSA's Long Term Plan Submission

Councillors at the Wellington City Council were satisfied with VUWSA's effort to present the views of our members in their LTP consultation.

3. Smokefree Campus

I've been working, under the authority of the Executive, to represent VUWSA's members in the University's Smokefree Campus consultation. This work continues, but I am happy the University is taking our concerns about smokers' shelter into consideration. We think a balanced approach to the issue is important.

Representation

1. Advisory Committee on the Student Services Levy

I attended ACSSL, along with President Hood, a number of times this year. We challenged the University to engage in wide-ranging and genuine consultation with

students about their levy. The Committee has been convinced of the merits of this approach and is inviting students to comment on the suite of services provided in this year's consultation –a first in many years. We hope to work constructively with the University in the future to continue this process and provide increased scrutiny of their levy.

2. Hardship Committee

I have attended many Hardship Committee meetings this year since my predecessor's resignation. I have adopted VUWSA's policy on the Committee to ensure adequate support for students with financial difficulties. In the new Trimester, I look forward to progressing a targeted scheme for Architecture students.

3. Reduce Harm Committee

I have attended this committee. The committee's value to VUWSA and the student body is questionable. Trimester 2 will be a time for challenging the group to be more effective in taking action.

4. Executive Reporting Committee

I have attended this committee and supported Executive members to improve their work at VUWSA, and where applicable –their reporting.

5. Welfare Team Meeting

I regularly organised, chaired and supported the relevant officers in the Welfare Team through our meetings. It is in an important link in Executive communication and delegation.

Strengths

1. Democratic: I've ensured VUWSA has been seeking mandates and acting on them in my portfolio areas.
2. Long-term Vision: I've provided a long-term perspective on important discussions at Executive level about the direction, values and integrity of our organisation

Weaknesses

1. Delegation: I haven't taken enough opportunities to delegate work to Executive members who require work. I'll work to improve this
2. Cleanliness: I should have a cleaner office; this will be a task for Trimester 2.

Overall Rating

I believe I've worked hard this Trimester to deliver the governance, advocacy and welfare support students ought to expect from their Welfare Vice-President. It is up to students to decide whether this has brought them a better deal, or more say over their experience at Victoria.

