

EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

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NAME	William Guzzo
POSITION	Treasurer
REPORT PERIOD	1 January – 1 June 2012
TOTAL WEEKS WORKED	20 Weeks
HOURS WORKED	246.75 hours, out of an expected 200 hours. Not including public holidays.
BONUS APPLICATION	Nil

Reporting on Priority Goals:

1. Priority Goal Four

To control the Student Union Complex and provide quality cost-effective (consumer) services for members

This goal is mostly outdated. I have no involvement in JSUB in my role, so the first part of Goal Four is essentially redundant to my position.

In terms of the second half of the goal, consumer services are now administered through our Manager and staff. As a part of being on the **Audit and Finance Committee**, I was able to make decisions to reduce costs in multiple areas which I am confident will give students more 'bang for their buck'. Although there is no longer a membership fee, our funding comes from the VUWSA Trust (which comes from the money of past students), and the SSL, which again is student money. Thus, ensuring our services are cost-effective is important. I believe I have helped to ensure VUWSA can continue to provide these services.

2. Priority Goal Seven

To maximise the benefits to members by minimising fees or user charges through internal efficiency and non-member revenue

To be frank, dealing with a zero membership fee has been difficult. In the **Audit and Finance Committee** (which I am chair of), we have gone through a process of reducing various costs. We had inherited a projected deficit of around \$350,000* from the previous year's executive and we have reduced this by \$150,000 to a deficit of \$200,000*. This has been a good effort, in my opinion, due to a lot of our potential cost-reduction options being constitutionally

bound. In the second half of the year, we will be working on these areas – the first step was the **“VUWSA Service Review”** we conducted in May.

** These figures do not include a VUWSA Trust contribution of up to \$250,000.*

Another initiative I have been involved in, along with Bridie Hood, is the setup of the **Executive Reporting Committee**. In previous years, the executive reporting was done in each executive meeting. It was a largely tedious and fruitless exercise.

With the **ERC**, we have been able to ensure that the executive (including myself) are getting you ‘bang for your buck’. We have also introduced a *pro-rata* scheme. In the past, every executive was paid in full every fortnight and had to make up hours later in the year. This resulted in inflated hours within work reports and lots of paid hours owing at the end of the year. With a pro-rata scheme, executive members can be paid only for the hours they have worked. This encourages more honest reporting and will mean a significantly lower executive honorarium spend than in previous years.

The **Publications Committee** also met a number of times this year. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the Publications Committee does not fully achieve what it intends to do, which is to promote a good relationship between VUWSA and Salient. In particular, the lack of a Sales and Advertising Manager has been of concern. In the second half of the year, I will be focussing on creating a better relationship between VUWSA and Salient, especially in terms of working more cohesively to achieve Salient’s financial goals.

I also discussed with the executive the idea of **not taking bonuses this year** to save costs. In principle, the executive all decided not to. This means the budgeted bonuses (~\$17,000) will be, in reality, zero. This is a real statement that the executive want to remain financially responsible.

Finally, I have begun setting up and planning a new committee for VUWSA – a **Revenue Committee**. This has only been a recent development, due to the focus of my energy going into reducing the inherited deficit from last year’s executive. This committee will begin meeting from next trimester. The aim of this group will be to increase VUWSA’s non-member revenue via a range of initiatives, in particular focusing on a tiered membership system for 2013. I am excited about this initiative and I am hoping this will be a permanent committee within VUWSA. With the current volatile financial environment, VUWSA needs to continually find new ways to increase non-member revenue.

3. Priority Goal Eight

To ensure that the structures and procedures of the Association result in effective and efficient communication, management and accountability

As above, the establishment of the **Executive Reporting Committee** has resulted in more accountability for executive members, with incentives to encourage honesty.

Also, I have been a member of the **Policy Committee**. We have been reviewing a range of VUWSA policy to ensure that our structures and procedures result in accountable management of VUWSA. We also commissioned the formation and terms of reference for the Governance Review. This will ensure that VUWSA can improve on its communication through a more robust executive structure. Unfortunately, due to the limited hours of my position, I have not been hands-on within the Governance Review (i.e. in the working party).

4. Priority Goal Nine

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

Again, this is a bit of a 'woolly' goal. However, I have been focussed on promoting the sustainable operation of the association through the initiatives described in Priority Goal Seven.

Reporting on Other Goals:

Goal 5. Activities

To provide or assist sporting, social and cultural activities, for and by members; primarily through clubs

I have provided a number of **clubs with financial advice** including the Victoria University Cricket Club and the VUW Science Society.

A project that has been temporarily postponed (due to the Clubs' Review) is the Club Finance Guide to help clubs to find enough money to maximise their contribution to the university community. Now the Clubs' Review has been completed, this will be a second trimester goal. This will hopefully enhance sporting, social and cultural activities on campus.

Goal 1. Education: Student Support

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

I have helped various students with **tax advice**. The first part of this was a campaign I ran at the beginning of the year regarding getting a tax refund for free. This can be an important financial boost for students and quite often many of them pay for this service via a company. Showing them how they can do it for free will hopefully increase the welfare of students. This campaign was a success. At the stall I had printed 600 handouts, and a large proportion of these were taken by students. I also had a sign up form online, to be emailed the instructions. Approximately seventy extra students signed up this way.

The second part of this is giving **specific tax advice** to those who needed it. I talked to about eight of these students. Most of these students were international, thus were confused and often nervous about getting income tax and compliance correct. I was able to help them through some, at times, quite complex issues. This took stress off these students so they were able to focus on their study.

Goal 6. Public Issues

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

I was lightly involved in the **budget campaign**, attending meetings with PGSA and WATU and helping in promote the event.

Due to efficiencies in other places of the budget (thanks to the good work the Audit and Finance Committee have been doing), I was able to grant \$1000 for Rory McCourt to execute a proper campaign.

General Tasks and Initiatives

- *Providing financial advice to executive members for their initiatives e.g. Genevieve Fowler with her "Almanac" project due to be executed later in the year.*
- *Helping with Orientation and ensuring VUWSA maximised its membership base by volunteering in signing up members.*
- *Various menial tasks that contributed to the running of VUWSA.*

Representation

[Please list all the Committee/Bodies/meetings that you have been attending during the last six months and comment on your contribution. Things like NZUSA Conference, VUWSA Trust, Exec, Publications Committee, regular meeting with groups etc]

1. Publications Committee - Chair

Regular updates from Salient, ensuring that they are doing a good job, resolving any issues. The Publications Committee has met twice this year.

2. Audit and Finance Committee - Chair

Reviewed all of VUWSA's budgeted expenditure to reduce costs significantly, ensuring the loss VUWSA will make this year will be small (in a worse case scenario).

Undergoing a short VUWSA Service Review to see what mix of services VUWSA should offer in this new financial environment.

Met four times this year.

3. Revenue Committee - Chair

In the process of being formed.

4. Executive Reporting Committee – Chair

Ensuring that the executive are accountable, transparent and efficient via regular reporting. Meets once a fortnight.

5. Policy Committee – member

Regularly reviewing policy, formation of the Governance Review.

Met about three times this year.

6. VUWSA Trust – ex-officio member

Ensuring VUWSA's assets are maintained in a way that is in the interest of students. Met once this year.

7. NZUSA Conference

This conference was attended at the beginning of the year. It was good to meet executive members from other associations while at the conference. Although, in my opinion, NZUSA crosses the line between student issues and politics too often, I found this to be a valuable learning experience which enabled me to attain a wider picture about tertiary education in New Zealand.

Strengths

1. **Strong financial knowledge** – I come from a business background, so I was able to bring this experience to VUWSA. This helped me to make financially sound decisions, especially in the Audit and Finance committee.
2. **Supportive nature** – As a part of the “top four” of the association, I believe I have been supportive to other executive members and encouraged them well in their endeavors.
3. **High energy with initiative** – In my role, I have shown a lot of energy and initiative. Previously, the handover between years has been poor. Thus, I have had to take the initiative on a lot of things within VUWSA. I think my initiative has helped to turn the Treasurer role into one in which the momentum can be carried into next year.

Weaknesses

1. **Lack of institutional knowledge** – due to little involvement in VUWSA in the past, as well as a lack of continuity within the Treasurer/AVP position, it has been a very significant learning experience for me. I still have some gaps, but am learning new things all the time. As a result, it is taken time to adjust and at times I have been lacking information to enable me to make decisions. Hopefully this is less of an issue in the second half of the year.
2. **Working effectively within a bureaucratic structure** – My personality naturally does not work well with bureaucratic structures. At times this has resulted in frustration and has made it hard to get as much done as I wanted to. There are also things that I want to change that are not in my jurisdiction. However, I have appreciated the patience people have had with this, and I am slowly adjusting myself to make some significant wins. Next trimester, I will be looking to achieve more things as I get more accustomed to getting bureaucracy working in my favour.
3. **At times I am outspoken** – I quite often speak my mind and have unconventional or experimental views and ideas. This has quite often caused some friction within the executive but I believe overall we have worked together well. I also have had to watch the way I say things and what I say in public. Earlier in the year, I was quoted in Salient as saying some of my honest opinions. However, upon reflection, as a student politician/leader, I have to have more tact with what I am saying. As a result of my Salient mishap, I have kept a much more private, lower profile on my online mediums including censoring my page from the public/media.

Overall Rating

I think that I have done quite well considering the circumstances surrounding the start of my VUWSA term – mainly VSM, a lack of handover from last year and the treasurer only being a ten hour per week position.

I am somewhat disappointed that I have not achieved more. However, I am optimistic that next semester I will be more settled into VUWSA and able to accomplish more.

Overall, I'd give myself an 8/10.

Bonus Application (if applicable)

Zero.