

NAME	Simran Rughani
POSITION	Academic Vic President
REPORT PERIOD	1 st January – 29 th July 2018
HOURS WORKED	573 + 2 weeks of leave that has been requested (40 hours)
HOURS REQUIRED	600

Constitutional Goals:

Constitutional goals that relate to the Academic Vice President (AVP) role, include goal 1, education quality “to ensure that the University provides the best teaching and learning, research opportunities, assessment and training to students” and goal 3, equity and access “to promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the University”. Another goal that I have tried to fulfill is goal 8, accountability “to ensure accountability to, and representation of, members.” I have been working on these goals in everything I have done this year, especially evident in the representation and consultation sides of my role.

Class Representatives

Last year, Isabella (AVP 2017) and Charlotte (SRC) decided to make some changes to the class representation system which had been implemented this year. These changes included a mass digitalization of processes, including our registration and training system, relating to VUWSA’s value of sustainability. This removed the in-person element of the training which we decided to replace with on-going events that support class representatives throughout the semester and allows them to form relationships with each other, building a community of class representatives. The events also enabled Faculty Delegates (FD) to attend and update students on what is going on at a higher level, connecting the various forms of student representatives. These events were generally a success and had positive feedback, hence why I believe they should be conducted in trimester 2 too.

The class representative handbook was also digitalized this year. Currently the 2017 edition is available on the website and the education team has been looking in to the

best way to redesign ours and undertaken an environmental scan of the class representation systems at other universities.

Due to significance of the changes to the system, short videos were produced at the start of each trimester to inform all students of the new process and to also encourage sign ups. This, again, had generally positive feedback although there were a few stumbles along the way. This included the fact that in trimester 1, the lecturns did not have the video pre-downloaded creating confusion for lecturers on how to play it and extra effort to play it. This didn't help with lecturer buy in which was another issue faced. We needed lecturers to play the videos in the first place in order for students to see them. For trimester 2, I tried to minimize these problems and we managed to get the lecturns set up on time and I emailed all the school managers with the link asking them to pass it on to their lecturers and reiterating how the class representation system is a partnership with the university, so we need lecturer buy in to. From my experience, more of my lecturers played it and it was more successful in terms of viewership than trimester 1 was. I would recommend that there is a video created with each trimester at least until the end of 2019 to establish the new system.

The Student Representation Celebration is also in the works with nominations now open. We already have a lot of engagement with both students and academics and I am excited to host it! We have been able to get Rawinia Higgins as our guest speaker as well as a slightly more sophisticated venue; Milk and Honey.

Class representatives tie in to goals 1, 3 and 8 as it empowers students to critically analyses the learning and teaching quality of lecturers, assessments in courses and enables students with a peer to come to with issues which increases the chance of a student stepping forward when they have concerns.

Boards and Committees

As per the role, I have sat on numerous university academic committees, representing the student voice including Learning and Teaching Committee, Academic Board and Academic Committee. There have many proposals come through, including changes to courses, policy and frameworks. Highlights that have come through this year so far include the tutor policy, assessment handbook changes, the equity, diversity and inclusion framework, recording by students of lectures and other teaching policy, and the school of education review. There has also been a restructuring of the Academic Committee (AC) and Learning and Teaching Committee (L&TC), meaning that L&TC reports to AC and there has been the creation of the Academic Policy Committee (APC). With the restructuring has come some changes to the membership of the committees, including some wins such as: PGSA sitting as a representative alongside the AVP on L&TC, the AVP and student representation coordinator (SRC) sitting as ex officio members on APC and the potential for more student representatives on AC.

This year, the SRC was on leave for roughly a month so I took up the responsibility to organize the FDs. This included organizing the papers for respective boards and committees and bringing the papers to the pre-meets to walk through them together. There were many challenges in this process, including organizing pre-meets with

multiple FDs around their and my exams, as well as chasing up administrators to send me the papers (on time) rather than the SRC. However, we got through and when a FD wasn't able to attend (with enough notice), I went to the meeting instead – for example the Faculty of Health Board.

This year, the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA) set up the National Education Committee (NEC) which I have been a member of. This committee has only met once so far and discussed general educational issues in NZ and common issues throughout the different universities.

Attending such meetings directly relates to goals 1, 3 and 8 as I have been reviewing the learning and teaching quality, representing the students on all matters arising and representing the best interests of students, including ensuring equity and accessibility to exemplary education.

Consultation

Another core responsibility I have upheld this year is to act as a representative student voice when asked for consultation in matters relating educational quality and experiences, directly relating to goals 1 and 8.

Matters I have consulted on thus far include the transformation of tourism management into a major in the BCom, the revitalization of the aegrotat process in the student services transformation project, changes to mathematics courses, and sitting as a student representative on the Victoria Business School's (VBS) working party for postgraduate pathways.

Wherever doable I have endeavored to consult as widely as possible with the student population, contacting appropriate class representatives, consulting at the student academic committee (SAC), and running focus groups.

Many of the matters are still being consulted on or are planned to be further consulted on such as a focus group on the new interface of Te Waharoa, VBS working party and a survey for aegrotat applicants during the first pilot, run in trimester 1.

The Education Officer (EO) and I also sat on in a focus group with the Tertiary Education Committee regarding the impacts of free fees, where it was concluded that there was a lot of confusion about eligibility and many other details that could be solved through effective communication, something we may help them with later in the year.

Building Relationships

A key focus for the Education Team (ET) so far this year has been on building and strengthening relationships. This includes relations with senior staff, such as Professor Steven Warburton (Assistance Vice-Chancellor – Digital Futures), the Center for Academic Development (CAD) through Kathryn Sutherland, Student Services (SAS) through Karen Davis, Te Ropu Awhina (TPA) and Te Putahi Atawhai (TRA). This is through a mixture of regular catch-ups and through collaboration projects.

The EO organized a collaboration project between SAS and the student representative groups Ngai Tuira and Pasifika Students Council which resulted in consultation with TRA and TPA leading to a Whakawhanaungatanga workshop during study-break.

These activities relate to the key responsibilities of the ET and goal 3 of creating a more equitable and accessible educational experience.

Student Academic Committee

The Student Academic Committee (SAC) is a constitutional committee and its purpose is to bring together a variety of student rep groups in order to strengthen the relationship between the rep groups, discuss how we can best support and empower rep groups and other student groups, raise and discuss major academic issues, allow for broader picture planning, seeing University-wide issues across faculties and student groups, and improve the mandate of student representative groups and individuals by strengthening their links to a diverse student body. It relates to goals 1, 3 and 8.

Because of this, I introduced a representative from the Student Equity and Diversity Committee (SEDC) to attend the SAC meetings. This is to increase representation and include perspectives that may not have necessarily been thought of, especially when looking at academic issues. It is easy to miss details of how it might impact upon a particular representative group if you do not belong or associate with the group, which includes decisions made in the academic sphere. This was especially evident in conversations around aegrotats for example.

This year we had quite a few new FDs this year and at SAC 1 Brad Olsen gave a presentation on his experiences, reflections and advice for the incoming FDs. Although there was low attendance in SAC 1 there was good discussion, feedback on the changes to the class representation system, consultation on the initial stages of the aegrotat pilot, updates from FDs and from the SRC on the assessment handbook working group.

SAC 2 had a much higher attendance rate, including the new SEDC representative. Kathryn Sutherland came to talk about CAD and a project she has been developing with Brad Olsen and Isabella Lenihan-Ikin, Ako in Action, which she is hoping to pilot in trimester 2. There was good discussion around the topic with lots of feedback from the group for Kathryn to take away. The EO came with an idea she had been working on to seek feedback from the group, the SRC consulted on behalf of Liz Jones and there was a roundtable discussion with updates from the FDS, with a particular focus on the BMC from the FHSS FDs and the VBS Working Party from Simran and Brad.

General Activities and Initiatives

A big win that occurred at the beginning of the year was a drop in the price of color printing! Color printing prices went down to 20c. Further conversations occurred later through the year with members of NZUSA's NEC and the Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer (WSO) in regards with the printing cultures and differences across the university and universities, but other projects have been priorities so far.

This year, the ET has tried to collaborate with the Welfare team and we have come up with idea of the Best Black Out day which is coming up and will be really exciting. I have also been involved in other VUWSA activities such as clubs' forums, Arts week, the RTA campaign, Halls Committee, Orientation and Re-Set Weeks, Stress Free Study Week, and Salient Columns to name a few.

Summary

This first half of the year has been a rollercoaster of a time. The first three months were spent learning the ropes and juggling all the responsibilities of the whole ET whilst waiting for the EO by-election. Trying to catch up on hours due from the Summer, when university wasn't open, and things weren't ready, was a big pressure for me, leading to over-working myself then falling sick for weeks at a time. The pressure increased after my family holiday in Vietnam where I had asked to use the leave that VPs are entitled to but being unsure if it was approved. This pressure impacted the VUWSA-study balance that I was trying to create which was very stressful. So, although the activities and projects and actual work was thoroughly enjoyable and such a good experience, the stress and pressure I have felt so far this year has been detrimental to my health and studies. For this reason, I am stepping down from this role and give the best of luck to the VUWSA team for the rest of the year. I will still be helping out with projects and volunteering where need be, so I'll still be around.

Noho ora mai, aroha nui tatou <3