



EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT



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NAME	Isabella Lenihan-Ikin
POSITION	Academic Vice President
REPORT PERIOD	1 st January – 30 June, 2017
HOURS WORKED	620
HOURS REQUIRED	480

Constitutional Goals:

Goal 1 – Education Quality: to ensure that the University provides the best teaching and learning, research opportunities, assessment and training to students.

Goal one sits at the heart of the purpose and role of the Academic Vice President.

a) Class Representatives

The Class Representative system that VUWSA has established is recognized as being the most well organized and successful Class Representative system in the country. It has been a privilege supporting and developing the role of Class Representatives so far this year. Class Reps play a really important role at the grassroots level of the institution. They not only act as the liaison between the lecturer and students, but they also function as important ‘eyes and ears’ in lectures and tutorials, and I have regularly been contacted by Class Representatives who want to raise concerns with me.

For example, I worked alongside the Class Representative of a 100-level course that was students felt was compromising their student experience. Working alongside Erica Schouten, the VUWSA Advocate, the then Vice-Provost (Acting) Academic and Equity Professor Chris Eichbaum and the Timetabling Office we were able to reach an agreement with the course coordinators, such that the issue was resolved and processes have been put in place to prevent the issue occurring again in subsequent years. The issue, which concerned lecture space and technology usage sparked a greater, university wide conversation, about overflow rooms and lecture recordings.



One of my main priorities coming into this job was to continue to strengthen the relationship between Ngāi Taurira and VUWSA. Earlier in the year, I was really fortunate to have the support of the Ngāi Taurira in helping to translate parts of the Class Representative Handbook into Te Reo Māori. Below are some of the pages in the handbook.

Class Representative Handbook

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Importance of Class Reps

TE KAUPAPA NUI O TE MĀNGAI KARAHEHE

One of the University's primary strategies is to provide a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none. As a Class Representative, your role is important in a number of ways, including:

Support - Class Representatives provide the first point of contact for other students in their class. They help resolve basic problems, offer guidance and provide support.

Consultation - Class Representatives provide an important point of consultation when changes need to be made or are being proposed. More specifically, they work within Victoria's academic representation structures to provide constructive feedback about teaching quality and assessment, course content and facilities to academic staff and student representatives across Faculty and University committees.

Voice - Class Representatives are, most importantly, the ears and voices of Victoria students. They provide an important link between students, academic staff and the University Academic Office.

What happens now?

ME AHA?

1. Register

Fill out the registration form with your correct contact details. Return the form to your lecturer who will then pass the form on to your School Manager. The School Manager will compile a list of Class Representatives to send to the VUWSA Student Representation Coordinator. Your details will be entered into a database that will be accessible from the VUWSA website so you can easily be contacted by your class.

2. Meet with your Course Coordinator

Discuss the ways in which you can work together, including how to best elicit and present class feedback; and deal with any issues that might arise during the course. This is an important relationship as they are the first point of referral for the majority of issues.

3. Attend Class Representative training

There are two levels of training: Basic (for first time Class Representatives) and Advanced (for returning Class Representatives). Sessions are designed to inform and empower you in your role. They show you how you can best serve your class. They include guest speakers and food.

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It was fantastic to run and attend so many Class Representative trainings alongside Gemma Swan (former Student Representation Coordinator) and Erica. It was great to see so many students coming along to these trainings and a privilege to meet the hundreds of students that are volunteering their time to be a Class Representative for their course. I found the conversations that I had with students after the trainings invaluable and it provided me with a really good opportunity to meet students and hear about issues that Class Representatives are facing. One of the key issues that I identified in ensuring that there the development of communication channels between Faculty Delegates, Class Representatives and the Education Team on VUWSA.

b) Faculty Delegates

After the success of Faculty Delegate training in 2016, the Education Team decided to continue having a Faculty Delegate induction at the beginning of the year. This was led by the Gemma and myself. Although not all Faculty Delegates attended the 2-hour training, many delegates are returning students from 2016 or met independently with Gemma to discuss the role, expanding on the responsibilities that are outlined in the Faculty Delegate Handbook.

This training offered Faculty Delegates from across the University to meet each other and talk about the issues that students are facing in their respective Faculties and Schools. So that the training could precede Faculty Board and Committee meetings starting for the year, Faculty Delegate training took place in February (before the trimester started). We found that many Faculty Delegates could not attend the training due to work commitments. Gemma caught up with these students separately and gave the Faculty Delegate an opportunity to clarify any aspects of the Faculty Delegate Handbook.

c) Student Academic Committee

The Student Academic Committee (SAC) is comprised of all Faculty Delegates, education/academic portfolio Executive members of representation groups on campus (for example, Ngāi Taurira, Pasifika Students Council, VUWLSS, VicCom, V-ISA), the VUWSA President and the VUWSA Education Team. It both an opportunity for VUWSA to discuss academic related issues and also for students to raise concerns they have.

As the convener of the Student Academic Committee, I decided to make some changes to the structure of the committee meetings this year. There are four SAC meetings each year, and each meeting now has a theme, which a guest speaker will come in and speak to. The theme of the first meeting was *'How to be an effective board member'* and Jonathan Gee, NZUSA President and former VUWSA President and VUWSA AVP spoke about his experience on University committees. The second meeting was focused around 'Students as Partners' and Dr Kathryn Sutherland, Brad Olsen, Professor Marc Wilson and myself presented on this topic. These meetings have generated fantastic discussion.

There has been very high attendance at the Student Academic Committee meetings this year and students have said to me that they find it really worthwhile coming along.

d) Student Representation Celebration

Although the Student Representation Celebration is an event that takes place at the end of the year, the Education Team has already started planning for this event. Nominations for the Service Award and the Lecturer of the Year Award for trimester one has opened.

e) Academic Committee

Academic Committee is a sub-committee of Academic Board and is responsible for proposals for new courses, amendments to existing courses and reviews of academic processes across the University. I often asked questions on equity issues and industry support for new courses.

f) Academic Board

Academic Board is the sub-committee of Academic Committee and is chaired by the Vice Chancellor. Although some discussion can take place at Academic Board, most substantive discussion takes place at earlier boards/committees, including Academic Committee. There are six student members of Academic Board; Apiha Matauranga o Ngai Tauira; the Academic Officer of the Pasifika Students Council; the President of the PGSA, VUWSA President, VUWSA Academic Vice President and an additional student representative. At Academic Board, I have asked questions regarding equity considerations of courses and student involvement in decision making.

g) Learning and Teaching Committee

In addition to sitting on Academic Committee and Academic Board, the third university committee that I am a member of is the Learning and Teaching Committee. This committee is chaired by the Vice Provost Academic and Equity. The focus of the Learning and Teaching Committee this year has been the Learning and Teaching Strategy and Victoria Values.

h) Talis Aspire Working Group

In June, I was invited to attend the Talis Aspire working group. As the student representative on this working group, I will be able to share student perspectives on the Talis interface

i) Students as Partners

One of my main focuses this year has been working on a 'Students as Partners' project. There are several different projects that fall within the wider project, including Victoria Values, Student Consultants and student partnership in the co-design of courses.



In May 2017, I attended the 'Students as Partners' conference at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. Alongside Brad Olsen, Dr Kathryn Sutherland and Professor Marc Wilson, we attended this conference to begin planning how Victoria University can integrate civics education and participation into undergraduate study. This work has continued, with the group meeting weekly to read literature of similar initiatives taking place at other universities and the discussion of the program being refined.

Upon return from my trip, I have been working alongside Dr Kathryn Sutherland from the Centre for Academic Development to assess ways in which Student Partnership can become engrained into the practice of the University, especially in course design. Most recently, I have been working with the Sustainability Office on how student partnership can be integrated into course design of a new course.

The group that travelled to Canada also applied for a Learning and Teaching Research Grant from the University, which we have successfully received. The purpose of this research is to explore the inclusion of high impact pedagogies into different courses, and connects with international research. This research will take place in trimester two.



Furthermore, I have been working with the Centre for Academic Development to look at the introduction of Student Consultants as a means to engage Class Representatives in the enhancement of teaching and learning practices within the institution.

In the middle of July, VUWSA is co-hosting a workshop on student partnership in course design with the Centre for Academic Development.

j) Faculty of Health

The Faculty of Health is the newest Faculty to be established at Victoria. One of the first projects I worked on at the beginning of the year was writing the VUWSA submission for the Bachelor of Health. I then worked closely with the Faculty staff to run a workshop with interested students on the student experience and ways that the Faculty of Health can deliver an experience that is positive, enriching beneficial to its students. VUWSA commended the Faculty of Health for working in partnership with us on this project.

k) Course Evaluations

I have been working alongside Professor Steven Warburton and Linda Bowden to review how we can enhance student participation in course evaluations and the usefulness of the evaluations to students.

l) Students' Associations Visit

When I was in Canada, I also visited and spent several hours at the Students Associations' at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and the University of Toronto. These meetings were fantastic and allowed to gain insight into how other Students' Associations in different countries operate.



Goal 2 – Student Support: To advocate for adequate financial support, income and welfare for students in order to remove barriers to education.

Academic success is not just the product of how hard we work - it is largely influenced by our health, our happiness and our relationships with others.

In addition to my constitutional work requirements, I have also been a member of the Fairer Fares working group. Although we have not yet got the support of the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) for a tertiary discount on public transport, there has been overwhelming support from Wellington ratepayers and students for the discount. The 1700 submissions that the GWRC received on their 2017/2018 Draft Annual Plan is testament to the work that VUWSA and Victoria University students have done to generate support for this issue.



I also supported the Welfare Vice President in writing VUWSA's submission to the the Wellington City Council 2017/2018 Draft Annual Plan, in support of introducing a Rental Warrant of Fitness.

Goal 3 – Equity and Access: To promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the university.

a) Student Equity and Diversity Committee

Along with the VUWSA President, Welfare Vice President and Equity Officer, I sit on the Student Equity and Diversity Committee. I am currently working with CanDo to solve an equity issue related to the Dean's List.

b) Academic Board/Academic Committee

See above.

c) Academic Complaints

I have received numerous emails from students expressing concern with assessment, grades and lecturer conduct. I have worked closely with the VUWSA Advocate in support these students, and many of these have resulted in significant wins for both the students and VUWSA.

Priority Goals:

- Establish a Powerful Student Voice
- Build Collective Strength with Student Groups

- A Student Friendly Wellington

The underlying goal of the 2017 VUWSA Executive is to increase engagement with students, across all three campuses. I have worked hard with other members of the Executive to show that the VUWSA Executive is working hard for the student community at Victoria University. I regularly attend club events and at the beginning of the year I organised meetings with all of the Presidents and/or Academic Officers of the clubs and rep groups. One of my priorities is to increase engagement with students at Pipitea, and Rory and myself have organised quarterly meetings with the VicCom and VUWLSS Presidents.

General Tasks and Initiatives

1. O-Week

I worked in the Safe Room and drove the Van at four evening events (every night except the comedy night). I also worked on the VUWSA Stall = at two International Students' Association events and the sign-up stall during the first week of the trimester.



2. Stress Free Study Week

I really enjoyed working at four breakfast shifts during Stress Free Study Week. The students were incredibly grateful for the service that we provide and the Welfare Vice President, Anya Maule and Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer Beth Patterson did a fantastic job putting it together. I am really proud of the SFSW events being zero waste and there was great support from students for this initiative.

3. IGM

It was great that at the IGM held earlier this year there was unanimous support from our members for Executive Officer pay. This is a great step towards VUWSA becoming a Living Wage organisation.

4. Salient

I have written three articles for VUWSA's Salient column so far this year. These have been on our Class Representative system, my trip to Canada and the importance of a Rental Warrant of Fitness to improve the health of our flats.

5. Living Wage

I am a strong support of Living Wage Aotearoa, and am a participant at the annual Living Wage Aotearoa Residential Training in August.

6. VUWSA Executive Meetings

I have had exceptional attendance at the VUWSA Executive meetings. There have been a couple of meetings that I have been unable to attend, however I have skyped into these meetings from Auckland or Toronto, Canada. I attended the VUWSA Retreat in January and the the Governance workshop held in April.

7. Presidents/VP's meeting

The Vice Presidents and the President have weekly meetings to update each other on what our teams are doing.

8. Regular meetings with Student Academic Services

The President and the Vice Presidents have monthly meetings with staff from Student Academic Services to update each other and to inform each other of any upcoming projects that we should all be aware of.

9. VUWSA CEO Performance Review Committee

Alongside the President, I sit on the CEO Performance Review Committee. There has been one meeting of this committee so far this year.

10. VUWSA Education Team Meetings

The Education Team meets every Monday morning to discuss our work for the week and any upcoming projects that we should all be aware of.

11. Student Representation Coordinator

I work very closely with the Student Representation Coordinator and have frequent catch ups with the SRC to discuss projects, upcoming meetings and events.

12. General Election Working Group

I am working closely with the Campaigns Officer, Clubs and Activities Officer, Engagement Vice President and President in this working group to ensure that VUWSA delivers a strong and effective general election campaign.

Summary

It has been an absolute privilege being the Academic Vice President for the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association. Although it has been hard juggling fulltime study, working at VUWSA and also being highly involved in the running of an additional organisation, I am proud of the work that I have achieved so far.

One of the strengths that I bring to this role is that I am really committed to building stronger relationships with academics, Faculty Delegates and the academic/education officers on student representative groups. I think that this has been evident in my ability to work closely with the university on student partnership projects as well as develop and enhance the function of the Student Academic Committee. I have worked hard to develop these relationships and I think that these have been really important in allowing me to be successful in the work that I have done so far.

I think that one of my weaknesses is not working alongside other members of the Executive enough. I think that because the Education Team works very closely together, and also works very closely with the University (because we sit on many University Boards and Committees), it can sometime feel as though we are very separate to the other Executive members.

