



## EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| NAME               | Caroline Thirsk          |
| POSITION           | Education Officer        |
| REPORT PERIOD      | 1 January – 30 June 2013 |
| TOTAL WEEKS WORKED | 24 weeks                 |
| HOURS WORKED       | <b>259.25</b>            |

### Reporting on Priority Goals:

#### 1. Goal 1

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

This is the most important goal of the Education Team. Working closely with the Academic Vice President I attend Faculty Board meetings and Academic Committees to ensure that students know of and contribute to important decisions that affect them. I help run and report on surveys and focus groups to ensure that an accurate student opinion is found and taken into consideration.

#### 2. Goal 3

**Equity and Access: To promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the University.**

Our best system for this is the class rep system. Class representatives are trained in inter communication between lecturers and students and are also trained in who to put the student in contact with for more serious issues that they cannot handle, such as plagiarism charges. We provide counselling and aid to class reps who face more challenging problems and provide support funding for study sessions or class parties.

3. **Goal 6**

**Public Issues: To be the critic and conscience of the University and society, by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students.**

We are in close communication with the Victoria University Representation groups such as the Pacifica Students Council, Mature Students Association and the PGSA. We try to ensure that these groups are represented when sending out surveys or conducting focus groups. The year we have also started the Student Academic Committee to which we have invited the representatives of all these groups in order to get their unique views and opinions on important issues discussed in Academic Committee and Academic Board.

**Reporting on Other Goals:**

1. **Goal 2**

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

Although welfare is not our primary objective, as a team, we work very closely with class reps and students who come to us for help and with our student advocate to ensure that students get adequate support and representation.

**General Tasks and Initiatives**

1. **Stress Free Study week**

This is part of the welfare team. VUWSA provides breakfast and lunch to all students on campus every day in the week before exams. I was one of the volunteers from the exec who helped out with shifts.

2. **Minimum Online Course Requirements**

This was an Education Team initiative. The university wished to set up policy for minimum online presence for all courses focusing on Blackboard presence. I set up a survey (with our team staff member Jay) and summarised and presented the student feedback we received at the meetings. I have attended all the meetings (except one that fell in the same time as my exam) as a student representative and was able to help ensure that issues that faced students were addressed and prioritised. A lot of progress has been made.

### 3. **Class Representative Training**

The Class rep system is one of our top priorities and I, along with the Education Organiser and Academic Vice President, have helped review and improve the class rep trainings to focus more on what we feel are important issues and become more time effective as well as attended many and helped with the actual trainings. I was also involved in planning of the class rep celebration and in choosing class reps to particularly acknowledge. We have had 46 nominations this semester alone.

### 4. **Creating and maintaining the Class Representative Database**

I was very involved in processing Class Reps, making sure each faculty has enough class reps and class rep handbooks, booking Class Reps into trainings and recording attendance as well as special cases and exemptions and eligibility for certificates and VicPlus points.

### 5. **Processing and Creating Class Representative Certificates**

All requests for Class Representative Certificates were received and processed by me. I also created a new template for the certificates and print them all out. I was in contact with all class reps who requested a certificate.

### 6. **Supporting the Mature Students Group**

During O-week I was responsible for collecting contact details of Mature students who were interested in getting connected with other mature students. I was also in contact with and met with Michelle Laurenson one of the main leaders in the group to offer VUWSA support and help. The group is doing much better now than in the past mainly due to Michelle's efforts and her excellent relationship with VUWSA.



## **7. Setting up Student Academic Committee**

I have helped our Academic Vice President to organise our new Student Academic Committee where we have the opportunity to discuss important issues in a group that has delegates from all our representative groups. It is a group that has huge potential to share knowledge and initiate change.

## **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, regular meeting with groups, reviews and staff members at VUW etc.]*

### **1. Academic Committee**

I have in several times on this committee both as an observer and in place of the Academic Vice President. It has been a great opportunity to learn and contribute especially during pre-meets.

### **2. VUWSA Executive**

I have attended every VUWSA executive meeting were I have contributed to arising matters and passing motions that are important to VUWSA and all students.

### **3. Humanities Faculty Board**

I have sat in as the VUWSA representative on this board to help ensure student voice and provide feedback on issues and changes that the education team needs to be aware of and follow up on.

### **4. Academic Board**

Although I do not have a seat on Academic board I have participated in VUWSA pre-meets for Academic Board were we discuss issues that will and should be raised there and have been there as an observer.

### **5. Minimum Online Course Requirements Committee**

As mentioned above I have been on this committee from the very beginning and have played a large role in collecting student feedback and ensuring it is heard and put into practice.

## **Strengths**

Once I have been shown how to do something I can just go ahead and do it whenever needed. I have also found that if given a personal project to run with I can do it well and enjoy it.

### **Weaknesses**

My main weakness was lack of knowledge of the VUWSA and university processes and the huge scope of work that VUWSA is involved in. I felt completely overwhelmed at first and need to keep increasing my knowledge.

### **Overall Rating**

As a whole I believe I have contributed well to VUWSA as an Education Officer. There were times when I had clashes due to trying to maintain too many subjects were I could have participated more, therefore I have substantially cut back on my university work load for the next semester. Also as my knowledge and ability increased my contribution also increased throughout the trimester and I was able to take on personal projects. Although my contribution was not fantastic this was due to inexperience and not lack of effort. I have grown a lot and will continue to do so.