

## EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

NAME	Jonathan Gee
POSITION	President
REPORT PERIOD	1 January – 30 June 2016
HOURS WORKED	1236.25 (219 surplus)
HOURS REQUIRED	1017.25

### Priority Goals

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

**a. Contributing to the VUW Learning and Teaching Strategy**

I'm proud to be part of the VUW Learning and Teaching Committee, which is tasked with producing a Learning and Teaching Strategy for the next five years. VUW is keen to build on student civic engagement to achieve its strategic vision of becoming a world-leading capital city University, and strategic goal of providing a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none. I have been pushing for greater acknowledgement and support for student engagement activities that often compliment a student's study, such as being a club president or volunteering for community-based organisations. Being on this Committee is an exciting opportunity to have students at the heart of a new strategy.

**b. Pushing for longer library hours**

I'm excited to see a preliminary proposal to finally extend library hours and create consistency across all University libraries. I have had discussions with the University Librarian and the Library and Information Services Committee to extend library hours for students. I hope to see something implemented by the Trimester 2 exam period.

**c. Building a stronger student voice**

The student representation structure on committees throughout the University has been largely solidified as a result of the *Representation Review*, approved by University Council in 2014. This Review formally recognised VUWSA as the primary representative body at Victoria, as well as established the structure of representation at Vic. Now that the structural work has been completed, I am carefully working through how both Victoria and VUWSA can help develop the highest-quality student representatives, as well as consider how we can strengthen our consultation methods. I am currently scoping out ways this can be included in our new strategic plan.

**d. Building VUWSA's relationship with University Council**

After our campaign to retain two student seats on University Council, I have worked at building our relationship with Council. This included a joint governance training session at the beginning

of the year. Many University Councillors recognise the important role VUWSA has advancing some of the University's strategic priorities, and this has created a respectful relationship.

**e. Representing students on Academic Board and Academic Committee**

This is my second year as a student member on Academic Board and Committee. Alongside our Academic Vice President, I have spoken at these meetings on a range of topics including:

- Industry demand of proposed 180-point master's degrees
- Implementation of programme reviews
- Appropriate assessment in proposed courses
- The future of Honours
- Information around plagiarism and academic integrity
- 'Victoria Values' project and how to best support student-civic engagement in the curriculum
- Pathways from undergraduate to postgraduate study in particular disciplines
- Enhancing the interdisciplinary dimension in proposed qualifications

**f. Academic Quality Agency Board**

I was nominated by NZUSA to sit on the Board of the Academic Quality Agency, the Agency which conducts academic university audits, ensuring they are of high quality. This is an important role ensuring the student voice and student feedback is a key component of assessing the academic quality of institutions. Being on the Board has allowed me to gain a greater insight into the student voice and student feedback methods of other universities, which helps inform my thinking in how VUW can improve.

**g. Developing a VUWSA Strategic Plan 2017-2021 (see Goal 9)**

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

**a. Advocating for Healthy Homes**

I've worked closely with our Welfare Vice President to advocate for warmer, drier flats. This includes submissions to the Social Service Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill earlier this year, which captured significant media coverage. We also acknowledged the additional funding in the 2016 Government Budget for Warm Up New Zealand toward insulating rental housing, and are in the process of raising



awareness of the subsidy to students. I've also had a range of discussions with the University, Sustainability Trust and city councillors about how we can advance rental warrant of fitness or at least better support students living in cold and damp flats.

#### **b. Lobbying for Fairer Fares**

Fairer Fares has been a policy at VUWSA since the last Local Body Elections in 2013. As we move closer to the 2016 Local Body Elections, we are working to get attention around making a public transport tertiary discount a reality. After discussions, mayoral candidate, Justin Lester, and regional council candidate, Daran Ponter, made a commitment to a 50% tertiary discount if elected. This was a significant boost to our campaign, and we are working on getting other council candidates to support Fairer Fares.

I connected with Byron Oosthuizen, the student who started the change.org petition for a tertiary discount, to show we had other students supporting Fairer Fares. He joined me and our Welfare Vice President in making an oral submission to Greater Wellington Regional Council on introducing a 25% discount in this year's annual plan, presenting his petition with 3,587 signatures. Unfortunately, the discount was voted down for this year's annual plan, but it got significant media attention including national media coverage, and we are currently lobbying some regional councillors around next steps.

#### **c. Building our Student Friendly Wellington campaign**

I've worked closely with our Campaigns Officer and Welfare Vice President to plan out Student Friendly Wellington campaign for the local body elections. I've met with nearly all mayoral candidates, and have had discussions with regional councilors and University staff about getting Fairer Fares over the line. Work continues around developing our campaign website and organising events on campus such as the Mayoral Debate. I hope to link up with other student groups to build the strongest and broadest possible student lobby come the local body elections. Increasing student voter turnout as well as getting candidates to commit to our policies are the two key objectives for our Student Friendly Wellington campaign.

#### **d. Co-Chairing the Advisory Committee for Student Services Levy (ACSSL)**

I am co-chair of ACSSL, which oversees the Student Services Levy, where I advocate for transparency and effective use of student funding. I am currently in the process of organising consultation around the levy for 2017. Three- year reviews of each SSL-funded service comes to ACSSL, for which recreation was the most recent. I am currently in the process, along with our Welfare Vice President, of providing recommendations to the service around improvements.

#### **e. Being the student voice in the media**

Examples of the stories I have commented on include:

- Katharine Jermyn Hall alcohol stories plus bunk beds
- Stress Free Study Week
- Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill
- Wellington *not* becoming the new Dunedin
- Privatisation of foundation studies
- Budget 2016
- Tertiary discount on public transport – Greater Wellington voting down the amendment to Annual Plan
- Slumlords
- Change.org petition on fairer fares
- Delayed degrees pushing up costs for students

- OWEEK
- Quality and supply of student housing
- Labour's free tertiary education policy announcement
- Airport arrest for loan defaulter

Notable media outlets in which I appear include:

- Breakfast TV interview with Rawdon Christie
- Front page Dominion Post article
- Dominion Post and stuff.co.nz
- NewsTalkZB
- TVNZ website
- Newshub website
- Māori Television
- NZ Herald
- WorldTV

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

**a. Supporting UniQ in lobbying for better queer support at Vic**

After UniQ's opinion piece in *Salient* regarding the lack of queer support at Vic, I facilitated a meeting between the UniQ President, Alex Mark, and the VUW Director of Student Academic Services. Quarterly meetings have now been scheduled so that UniQ have a direct line to the University to raise queer issues. As a queer student myself, I am proud to stand alongside UniQ to get queer issues on the University's agenda. Work is currently underway to scope out how VUW can improve queer student support.

**b. Lobbying for Fairer Fares (see Goal 2)**

**c. Co-Chairing the Advisory Committee for Student Services Levy (ACSSL) (see Goal 2)**

**Goal 4 – Services: To provide quality, cost effective services for the benefit of members, and, where appropriate, students.**

**a. Opening a Pipitea office**

The Rutherford House redevelopment presented us with an opportunity to have a more visible and serviced office at Pipitea Campus. We now have a receptionist at the office three days a week, delivering services such as community pantry food parcels, free inter-campus bus passes, lost property and accommodating ad hoc advocacy services. VUWSA needs to be the representative body for ALL students, and after careful financial management, the opening of the Pipitea office has been one more step towards this.

**b. Support for General Manager and streamlining our management policies**

The majority of VUWSA's services are delivered by staff, including student media. My primary role in this area is as employer, providing support and direction to the General Manager who is their employer. After the restructuring at the end of 2014, I have worked with the General Manager and Treasurer-Secretary (as Chair of Policy Committee) to streamline policies such as the delegated authority and finance policies. This sort of streamlining allows the Executive to focus its work less on internal operations and more on external/representation of students.

**c. Managing our contractual relationship with VUW (see Goal 7)**

**d. Strengthening support for clubs (see Goal 5)**

**e. Co-Chairing the Advisory Committee for Student Services Levy (ACSSL) (see Goal 2)**

**f. Supporting OWEEK (see Goal 5)**



**Goal 5 – Activities: To support sporting, social and cultural activities for any by members and students, particularly through Clubs.**

**a. Strengthening support for clubs**

I've worked to increase the number of students who sit on the VUW Sponsorship Panel, instigate a clubs support review for Trimester 2, and worked with our Clubs and Activities Officer to get approval and funding for an inaugural Golds Awards to give formal recognition of outstanding clubs and club leaders. As a former club president, I'm very passionate about how VUW and VUWSA can better empower clubs to help enhance the overall student experience.

**b. Maintaining a presence at club and other student events**

An important part of my job is that I am visible and accessible to the wider student body. This can be difficult when representing a University of 22,000 students, but I have done my best to attend a range of club and other student events to engage in the student community. These have all been meaningful interactions, and my favourite part of this job is talking to students about key issues and empowering/supporting them to succeed. These interactions have helped inform the way I represent students at various university committees. Issues discussed include: questions around extensions and grade reconsiderations, mental health of students, library hours, clubs funding, clubs support, tertiary discount on public transport, VUWSA events, local body elections, fair trade and many more.

**c. Supporting OWEEK**

The vision for OWEEK 2016 was to create a diverse line-up of fun and safe events for Vic students to connect with others, engage with VUWSA, and get amongst the Wellington community. I'm very proud of how smoothly OWEEK went, and how it fostered a sense of comradery among both exec and staff. Notable successes include bringing an international act on campus (G-Eazy), strong VUWSA branding across our membership stalls (including some fresh-looking diaries and wall planners) and a strong presence (including sponsoring a stage) at Newtown festival. I spoke at several orientation events, including the first-year welcome at Kelburn Park, Māori orientation breakfast, Pasifika orientation breakfast, mature students' orientation and campus coaches training. A highlight was speaking at the first-year welcome in front of 3000 students, where I gave the first years advice that I would give my 18-year old self.

**d. Making Vic a fair trade university (see Goal 9)**

**Goal 6 – Public Issues: To be the critic and conscience of the University and society, by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students.**

**a. Being the student voice in the media**

I've made regular comment to media about student issues. These include dispelling the myth that Wellington is becoming the new Dunedin; drawing attention to the cold, damp conditions of student flats; halls of residence issues; lobbying for a tertiary discount on public transport; among other issues. Notable appearances include being interviewed on the TV1 Breakfast

programme; a Dominion Post front page piece; and national coverage on the Greater Wellington Regional Council's failure to include a tertiary discount in this year's annual plan.

- b. **Making Vic a fair trade university** (see Goal 9)
- c. **Advocating for Healthy Homes** (see Goal 2)
- d. **Lobbying for Fairer Fares** (see Goal 2)
- e. **Contributing to our national student voice** (see Goal 8)
- f. **Building our Student Friendly Wellington campaign** (see Goal 2)



**Goal 7 – Finance: To maximise the member benefits by minimising fees or user charges through internal efficiency and non-member revenue.**

**a. Managing our contractual relationship with VUW**

I am ecstatic that we have been given additional funding to alleviate our operating deficit in 2016. Alongside our General Manager, I manage our contractual relationship with VUW which provides us with funding to support our operations. After negotiations at the end of last year, we were offered an increase in funding that did not sufficiently cover the budget required to operate. This resulted in a \$50,000 operating deficit for the 2016 budget. After careful management of our budget against our services, I reassured members at our Initial General Meeting that there would be no cuts to services despite this financial position. In June this year, the Advisory Committee for the Student Services Levy (ACSSL) approved additional funding to VUWSA to fund our operating deficit. This has been achieved alongside a strengthening partnership yet growing distinctiveness between VUW and VUWSA.

**b. Annual Plan and budget-setting process**

Alongside our Treasurer-Secretary, I led the creation of an Annual Plan, outlining what we want to achieve as well as the resources we need to get us there. This impressed on the Executive the constraints on our budget, and has allowed executive members to better organize their time. It has also allowed for greater internal accountability around the progress of certain projects. In conjunction with this work, our Treasurer-Secretary and I (with our General Manager) presented a proposed and received approval of our 2016 budget, the earliest any Executive has approved their budget in a number of years.

- c. **Developing a VUWSA Strategic Plan 2017-2021** (see Goal 9)
- d. **Support for General Manager and streamlining our management policies** (see Goal 4)
- e. **Co-Chairing the Advisory Committee for Student Services Levy (ACSSL)** (see Goal 2)
- f. **Chairing our Initial General Meeting** (see Goal 8)

**Goal 8 – Accountability: To ensure accountability to, and representation of, members.**

**a. Updating students through our monthly newsletter**

A key objective this year is to better engage with our members, and to better articulate the work that VUWSA does to support them. After the appointment of a Communications Coordinator at the end of last year, we've been able to refine some of our communications, including producing a monthly newsletter for members. Many students have mentioned the

newsletter to me over the last few months and how they appreciate hearing what VUWSA has been up to, as well as a chance for them to engage and interact with our work.

**b. Contributing to our national student voice**

I attend monthly national executive meetings of NZUSA. Meetings involve governance decisions as well as discussion on national student issues such as student support. I hosted NZUSA when they commemorated \$15 billion debt day in the Hub (to mark student debt reach \$15b this year). NZUSA is currently creating its strategic plan, and I am working to ensure to our national student voice is as relevant and responsive as possible.

**c. Chairing our Initial General Meeting**

One of our constitutional duties to ensure we remain accountable to our members is holding an Initial General Meeting. Two new additions to the IGM included opening up our books by presenting our budget for the year, as well as presenting our plan for the year. I thoroughly enjoyed chairing the meeting and being held accountable through questions from the floor. This is democracy in action, and reminds our Executive that our mandate comes from those we represent.



- d. Building a stronger student voice** (see Goal 1)
- e. Developing a VUWSA Strategic Plan 2017-2021** (see Goal 9)
- f. Being the student voice in the media** (see Goal 6)
- g. Maintaining a presence at club and other student events** (see Goal 5)
- h. Co-Chairing the Advisory Committee for Student Services Levy (ACSSL)** (see Goal 2)
- i. Annual Plan and budget-setting process** (see Goal 7)
- j. Representing students on Academic Board and Academic Committee** (see Goal 1)

**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 members.**

**a. Developing a VUWSA Strategic Plan 2017-2021**

The current strategic plan 2011-2015 expired at the end of last year. While I had originally planned to launch a new strategic plan in April at our Initial General Meeting (IGM), I decided that if we are to do the process justice and meaningfully consult with students, staff and external stakeholders to develop an ambitious yet realistic strategic plan, then we would need more time. At the IGM I proposed to delay the launch of the plan until our AGM in August. This strategic plan ‘gap year’ would involve a comprehensive engagement plan so that the executive has a strong understanding of the needs and wants of a range of students before finalising our strategic priorities. I’ve had many great discussions with various student leaders, as well as external stakeholders such as university staff, about the future of student voice at Vic.

**b. Making Vic a Fair Trade University**

Mabel Ye from Victoria Development Society approached me to discuss VUW becoming a fair trade university. I linked her up with the newly-appointed Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability) to start an action plan towards formal accreditation. VUWSA passed a resolution in 2009 supporting a fair trade university, and I have linked Mabel up with our Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer to advance this.

**c. Advocating for Healthy Homes (see Goal 2)**

**General Tasks and Initiatives**

1. Fortnightly work reports
2. Weekly *Salient* columns
3. Scrutineer and signatory to VUWSA accounts
4. Preparing for meetings (reading agenda papers and reports, research, pre-meets etc)
5. Meeting and liaising with executive members and supporting them with projects
6. Meeting and liaising with VUWSA staff
7. Meeting and liaising with VUW staff
8. Meeting and liaising with externals (MPs, student presidents etc)
9. Representing VUWSA at events (Graduation, ANZAC day commemorations, student events, hall visits etc)
10. Dealing with ad hoc student issues



**Representation**

**VUWSA**

1. Executive (Chair)
2. Performance Review Committee (Chair)
3. Audit and Finance Committee
4. Policy Committee
5. Executive Reporting Committee
6. Revenue and Venture Committee
7. Student Media Committee
8. Student Academic Committee
9. Student Equity and Diversity Committee
10. Management Committee
11. Strategic Plan Working Group
12. Local Body Campaign Working Group
13. VUWSA Trust
14. Student Leaders Meet and Greet
15. Meetings with Ngāi Tauria, Pasifika Students Council, PGSA, VUWLSS, VicCom, STUDIO, UniQ
16. Regular meeting with Salient News Editor





17. Fortnightly one-on-ones with each Executive member
18. Weekly briefings with General Manager

### **Victoria University**

1. University Council
2. University Council Audit and Risk Committee
3. VUW Foundation Board of Trustees
4. Academic Board
5. Academic Committee
6. Advisory Committee for the Student Services Levy (ACSSL) (Co-Chair)
7. Joint Student Union Board (JSUB)
8. JSUB Food and Beverage Committee
9. Wellbeing Oversight Committee
10. Student Wellbeing Network
11. Library and Information Services Committee
12. Student Leaders roundtable
13. Sponsorship Panel
14. Honours Working Party
15. Disciplinary Committee
16. Learning and Teaching Committee
17. myQual Advisory Group
18. Regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, Provost, Vice-Provost (Academic and Equity), Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika), Director Student Academic Services and other staff
19. 8 Graduation ceremonies, including Te Hui Whakapūmau and Pasifika Graduation Celebration
20. Neighbours meetings

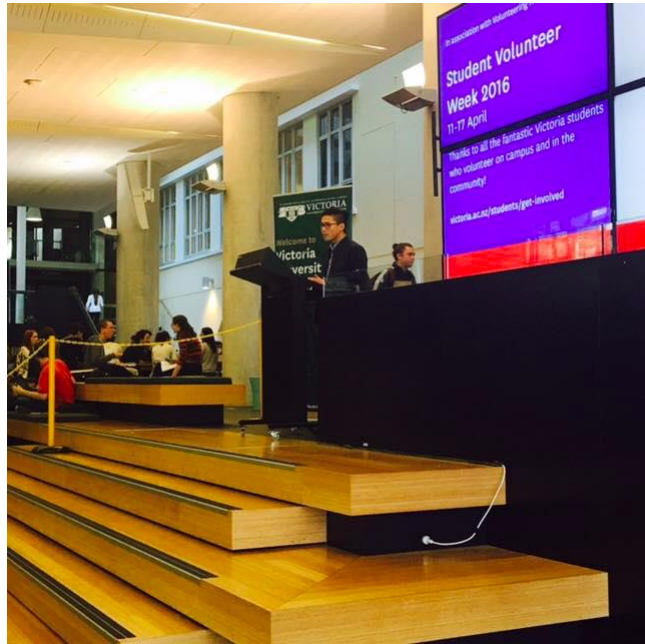


### **External**

1. Academic Quality Agency Board
2. NZ Union of Student Associations (NZUSA) National Executive
3. ANZAC Day commemorations
4. Meetings with other student presidents
5. Meetings with MPs based in Wellington Central (Grant Robertson, Paul Foster-Bell and James Shaw)
6. Meetings with the Mayor and city councilors
7. Written and Oral submissions to Parliamentary Social Services Committee, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Wellington City Council
8. Regular comment to media on current affairs

### **Strengths**

1. **Work ethic:** I'm extremely dedicated to VUWSA. I am often the first one to arrive in the morning and the last to leave, and work hard to complete projects that I've started. I know my limit, and am usually good at delegating tasks when need be. My work ethic is such that I do try and create boundaries to switch off from VUWSA, such as on Saturdays and some weeknights. Balance is always a challenge but I believe I am managing it well.
2. **Diplomacy:** A skill that I've brought with me from other leadership roles is the art of diplomacy. I've built some strong relationships with both internally and externally through dealing with people in a tactful and sensitive way. I believe this has been to the benefit of VUWSA's partnerships as well as internal culture.
3. **Long-term focus:** I'm very aware of the state of the organization at this moment in time. I've been committed to ensuring that VUWSA is successful into the future by making a new five-year strategic plan a key focus of my year. I often question and scrutinize proposed policies and decisions to ensure their longevity and durability beyond this year's executive.
4. **Keeping composure in stressful situations:** Being president is a stressful job, constantly being scrutinized and having people relying on you to make weighty yet swift decisions; but I'm well rehearsed in keeping calm in high-pressure situations.



## Weaknesses

1. **Diplomacy:** While this skill is a strength in most situations, I can sometimes be too diplomatic. Some situations may call for more antagonism or calling things out, and while I am not that sort of person, sometimes the role requires me to do so.
2. **High expectations:** I not only have high expectations of others, but high expectations of myself. While this is self-motivating, it can also be detrimental on my wellbeing when I criticize myself for a bad decision or tricky situation.

## Overall Rating

I'm very proud of what has been achieved so far, not just by me, but by the entire VUWSA team. I'm feel privileged to have such a dedicated team working alongside me, where many achievements are not just individual but collective wins for the organisation. We have started off the year extremely well, and have laid a strong foundation for a highly successful next six months through the Student Friendly Wellington campaign, various events, and launching our strategic plan.

In the second half of the year, we need to rapidly scale up our engagement to ensure we are as relevant and responsive as possible to the students we represent, especially in light of developing our five-year strategic plan. This is an important turning point for VUWSA, as we enter into the next chapter of its 117-year history. I'm confident that VUWSA has the right people in it at this moment to take it into the next phase.

