



EXECUTIVE HALF YEAR REPORT

NAME	Sonya Clark
POSITION	President
REPORT PERIOD	1 January – 30 June 2014
TOTAL WEEKS WORKED	25
HOURS WORKED	1126

Goal 1

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

a) Returning VUWSA to the heart of student voice at Victoria: Signing off the Student Representation Review

The end of the Student Forum and the Student Representation Review was my major project in 2013 as Academic Vice President, and resolving this review has continued in 2014. The University Council approved in June that: VUWSA be recognized as the primary representative body of students at Victoria and work with other student groups to ensure student voice is independent and authentic. This was a massive win for the student voice, and was a major 180 degree change in direction from the Student Forum which had sought to replace VUWSA's role as the voice of students at Victoria.



We've implemented the majority of the recommendations from the review: notably setting up Student Academic and Equity and Diversity Committees.

I am proud that we managed to maintain our relationship with the university while asking some very hard questions and challenging the entire structure that had been set up. The end result is fantastic for student representation and for VUWSA's viability long term.

b) Speaking against the proposed changes to University Councils

I've worked with AVP Rawinia Thompson on speaking up against the legislation to remove the rights of students to be represented on University Councils. I've met with political parties, talked to media, presented to the Education and Science Select Committee where our written and oral submission were received very well.



c) Representation on University Council, Academic Board and Academic Committees

I sit alongside the Education Team on Academic Board and Academic Committee and speak up on issues concerning teaching and learning, assessment, and equity of assessment. Some topics I have spoken on:

- Future of Honours degrees at Victoria
- Equity issues in the move from teaching qualification as a Diploma to Masters – especially concerns around Maori, Pasifika, and low socio-economic representation in the profession
- Implementation of Programme Reviews
- Concerns around peer assessment
- Recognition of top-performing students
- Internships and Scholarships
- Fairness of assessment processes in faculties and schools in my capacity on Grievance Committees
- Impact of Student Allowance and Student Support cuts on equitable student outcomes in the university's move to postgraduate study and 180pt Masters
- Academic Audit



d) Victoria Strategic Plan 2015-2019

As a member of Council, I have spent significant time this year in Council strategic planning workshops and meetings discussing the strategic plan, especially the learning and extra-curricular experience of students at the university. I co-ordinated the first stage of student consultation and will be working on more of this throughout the year. Notable academic focuses have been:

- Advocacy for the 'student experience' to be the number one priority in the strategic plan, as it is currently viewed as weak by students and the New Zealand public;
- How to ensure quality of education remains or improves in the face of significant growth (the signal has been for a growth to 30,000 EFTS)
- Debates on the future of Honours and ensuring any changes are backed by students (I am on the Honours Working Party which has just begun)
- Ensuring that an improved use in technological modes for learning does not compromise the teaching and learning experience of students

e) Press Releases and Comment to Media

This year I've provided comment and context to media on:

- Student Support Changes
- University Council changes
- Tertiary Education and the Budget
- New Zealand School of Music amalgamation
- Living Costs inadequacy and Course-Related Costs
- Effects of Voluntary Student Membership on VUWSA
- Assaults on Students
- Fairer Fares
- Mental Health



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

a) Fairer Fares Campaign – I have worked closely with Welfare Vice President Rick Zwaan and Wellbeing and Sustainability Officer Steph Gregor on the Fairer Fares campaign for tertiary fares. Rick has led the direction of this campaign, but we've worked closely to present submissions to City and Regional Councils, meet with Regional Councillors and Victoria staff and garner publicity. This has been an enormously successful campaign and we've had the support of the Regional Council for tertiary fares conditional on City and institutional support.



b) Student Job Search – VUWSA is a constituent member of Student Job Search and I am a member of the National Council and IT committee. SJS is consistently rated by our students as one of our most valued services. It has been a busy year on the National Council as SJS has been through a lot of change: a new Chief Executive, and significant work in upgrading the IT so that the interface is more user-friendly.

Year To Date - VUWSA			
	From: 1/01/2014	1/01/2013	%
	To: 30/06/2014	30/06/2013	Change
Placed	1,905	1,978	-4
\$ Dollars	\$5,180,602	\$5,502,735	-6
Worker Weeks	10,478	11,527	-9
New Enrols	1,786	2,195	-19
Avg. \$ per place	\$2,719	\$2,782	-2

d) Save the 18 campaign – a mini campaign that we ran around the proposed closure of the No. 18 bus service that connects Wellington campuses.

c) Representation on ACSSL, University Council, Academic Board and Academic Committees – See description above and below

e) Press Releases and Comment to Media – See description above

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



a) Co-chair of Advisory Committee on Student Services Levy

Like the 4 Presidents before me, I am co-chair of this committee which oversees the Student Services Levy, and consistently advocate for transparency and effective use of student funding in this very pressured levy. We are on track to keeping the levy as low as possible for 2015. This Levy covers many services which support disadvantaged students: including Disability Support, Health and Counseling, Te Putahi Atawhai, Representative Group Support, Early Childcare services, Accommodation.

The main focus for the year was the budget simulator: I sponsored this review along with Pam Thorburn, working closely on the communications to students and design of the simulator since last year. The simulator was an interactive tool that let students prioritise the SSL budget. We are due to use this data to inform a 5 year strategic plan with shifts in funding, work to happen end of this year and early 2015.

b) Funding and Representative Group Support

This year we decided to again provide financial support to UniQ, Women's Group, Can-Do, and International, despite the university insisting they fit into the Clubs framework. I've met with most Presidents, offering support where I can, although they mostly work with the Welfare team.

I also catch up regularly on an informal basis with Pasifika Students Council, Ngai Taurira, and the PGSA to support them on any issues they face and enjoy a mutual relationship.

d) Support for Ngai Taurira, Pasifika Students Council, International Rep Group, PGSA

e) Representation on University Council, Academic Board and Academic Committees – See description above

f) Press Releases and Comment to Media – See description above

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

a) Support for General Manager – The majority of VUWSA's services are delivered by staff, including student media. My primary role in this area is as Employer – supporting the General Manager to ensure he has adequate resources to deliver the Key Performance Indicators set by Victoria. We meet weekly to ensure that both sides of the organization are working effectively to deliver services to students.

b) Student Media Publications Committee – I have revived this committee, which was largely inoperable in 2013, to ensure that the financial and operational oversight of student media is more effective. I instructed Management to put more resources in for advertising staff this year, and we are seeing major increases in advertising revenue from this change.

b) Service Outcomes for January-June 2014 – *These reports are not yet available, as are being completed this week for VUW.*

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



a) - One Wellington Orientation 2014

My first major initiative as President was to approach Massey Wellington Students' Association in November 2013 seeking a collaboration for Orientation. After two years of disappointing Orientations and ever-stretched funding, it was clear that working together was the way to go. They agreed, and we put on the first ever One Wellington Orientation 2014 with over 60 acts in 20 shows over the first few weeks of March with a different event management model: instead of the major financial risk associated with purchasing acts and being the sole promoter, we connected into Wellington promoters and used the contacts of MAWSA and the scale of VUWSA to join the dots. Overall, it went as smoothly as could be hoped with the limited timeframe, and I've continued the relationship with MAWSA President Todd Williamson and his staff throughout the year.



b) The Clubs Partnership and Student Representative on the Sponsorship Panel

The Clubs workstream largely sits within Recreation Services since the Lumio Report of 2012, and I've worked with Clubs Officer Toby Cooper as part of our partnership with Victoria in this area. Work so far this year:

- Sitting on the Sponsorship Panel and approving/questioning the spend of the Clubs fund
- Clubs Delivery Workshop with Toby, myself, Recreation Services
- Research into Van Delivery options for VUWSA to support Clubs
- Strengthening the Blues Awards
- I was 'Clubs Officer' for the first few weeks of term after the departure of Elizabeth and election of Toby – including chairing the Clubs Council AGM and first meeting.

c) Events - We've hired an Events Manager this year for the first time since VSM, as recognition of how crucial this area is for the student experience.

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) Response to Sexual Assaults on Students

Multiple assaults on Victoria students over Easter triggered a university-wide response and conversation amongst students that VUWSA has led. I wrote the [press release](#) and spoke to the Dominion Post, NZ Herald, Radio NZ, Radio Live and other media outlets over the coming days.

I worked with Maddy Ashton-Martyn (Equity Officer) and the VUWSA Women's Group on their idea of a 'Let Me Go Home' March to raise awareness of the broader issues of rape culture. Maddy, Rick and I led the logistics of the march, especially ensuring the Health and Safety side was covered, and halls, Police, University and external organizations were notified and present. The march was enormously successful with over 300 students attending and attendance and positive feedback



consent.

from other stakeholders.

VUWSA continued to work with the university communications team around messaging to students. After being critical of their focus on 'don't walk in the dark' they invited us to present to them a suitable campaign. I worked with Maddy and the Women's Group to write the presentation: a campaign focusing on educating students about

b) What Are You Voting for? Campaign

Low turnout of student voters has been an issue for some time. This year I've worked with NZUSA, the VUWSA Campaigns Committee, especially Campaigns officer Alasdair Keating, to develop VUWSA's approach to the general election. Our campaign focuses not just on increasing turnout, but on assisting students to clarify the positions of the parties in order to make an informed vote.



We have heaps of events planned for trimester 2 and have an excellent relationship with the Electoral Commission.

c) Regular Comment to Media – see above

Goal 8 - Accountability: To ensure accountability to, and representation of, members

- a. Fortnightly Work Reports
- b. Weekly Salient Columns
- c. Regular comment to Media and Salient
- d. Scrutineer and Signatory to VUWSA Accounts – I usually sign off every invoice of the Association (as well as the Manager and one other Executive member) – I am not afraid to question things I am unsure of
- e. Executive Reporting Committee
- f. Meetings with Executive members to ensure they are on track
- g. Joint Student Union Board – ensuring facilities built 50 years ago with VUWSA membership levies are being maintained by Victoria
- h. Advisory Committee on Student Services – accountability of student money in service delivery
- i. I prepared the majority of the 2013 Annual Report, and presented the finances and report to the Initial General Meeting
- j. Introduction of Executive Office Hours
- k. 'President in the Hub' was trialled in first semester – to varying success. The Executive felt in Annual Planning that an open door approach would prove more useful - I find that I am able to engage with more students through saying hi in the VUWSA kitchenette

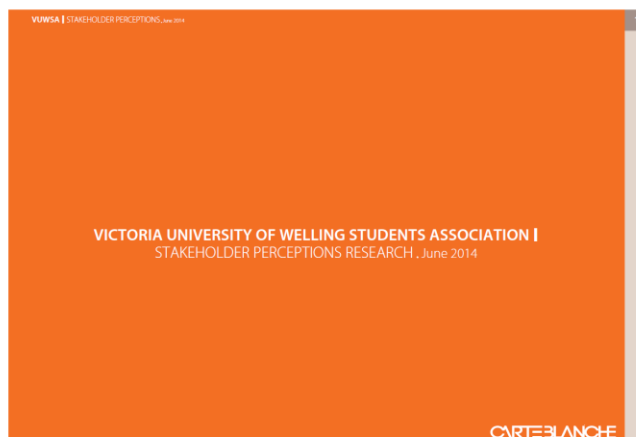
Goal 7 - Finance: To maximise the member benefits by minimising fees or user charges through internal efficiency and non-member revenue.

Goal 9 - Sustainability: To recognize 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) Project VUWSA 2020 (also Goals 4, 8)

One of my campaign promises was to enlist a financial review on how VUWSA could increase its revenue and reduce its major financial risk of dependence on Victoria.

I wrote a draft commercial brief for this project: but on the advice of the VUWSA Trust, decided that the project needed to go beyond revenue to a [post Voluntary Student Membership strategy of delivering value to students](#). It is only by delivering value to students that we can think about growing our finances. With the VUWSA Trust's financial support, I have worked alongside Kate McRoberts from Carte Blanche, a business and management consultancy, since April. The brief is to:



Stage 1: Conduct independent research on VUWSA's non-student stakeholders to identify the reputation of VUWSA amongst its stakeholders and what the blocks are to them getting the most out of VUWSA. 18 one hour stakeholder interviews were conducted over 3 days varying from: Victoria University (across the entire university), hospitality and events industry, student representative groups, and other Students' Associations. This work was completed in June.

Stage 2: Conduct independent extensive student research on students wants, needs, and perceptions of VUWSA. This phase aims to start from scratch and rethink the purpose of the organisation.

Stage 3/ongoing: Carte Blanche are contracted to work with the data and Executive on mapping a six year organisational strategic process. This strategy encompasses membership growth, financial growth and independence, communications and promotions and general focus and direction. Carte Blanche will be providing ongoing support to myself and the 2015 President to ensure this work is done thoroughly and lasts beyond my tenure, without binding future Executives.

This is the major project of my Presidency and I am really excited to see where it goes.

b) Joint Student Union Board Commercial Review

This review looked at growing commercial opportunities in the Student Union Complex (Rec Centre, Student Union Building, VUWSA). I met with the consultant and discussed commercial opportunities for VUWSA and JSUB. JSUB is currently considering these recommendations.

a) Service Level Agreement with Victoria University

Outgoing President Rory McCourt, General Manager Mark Maguire and I successfully

negotiated a more secure funding situation for VUWSA between Nov 2013 – March 2014. We finally have a two year bulk funded contract for 2014-15 that covers the true cost of most services, offering us a path to sustainable finances. No more cross-subsiding services out of our reserves.

I have a positive relationship with our contract manager, the Director of Student Academic Services, Pam Thorburn. She has been very supportive of our strategic and financial planning work.

c) VUWSA Annual Planning and Budget Setting– For the first time in a few years, I ran an Annual Planning process with the Executive that set down specific goals and projects for teams to work on through the year. We also passed a budget that allowed for a small deficit compared to the large ones of the last 2 years – we are currently on track to make a small surplus for the 2014 year. I am very proud of this as moving from major 100k deficits to small surpluses is crucial for the sustainability of VUWSA.

d) Winding down the VBC Trust – The VBC Trust is two years overdue to be wound down and assets of the radio station handed over to VUWSA. I've almost tied this up this year so that VUWSA can make decisions about the sustainable delivery of student media.

e) Fairer Fares – *see above*

Representation

External

1. Student Job Search IT Subcommittee
2. NZUSA Federal Executive
3. NZUSA Executive Director Performance Review Committee
4. Regular Meetings with Dan Haines, President NZUSA
5. NZUSA Conferences and Training
6. Regular Meetings with Massey Wellington Students' Association President Todd Williamson and staff
7. Regular contact with NZ wide Students' Associations
8. Written and oral Submissions to Education and Science Select Committee, Wellington City Council, Wellington Regional Council
9. Meetings with various Wellington City and Regional Councillors
10. Regular comment to media
11. ANZAC Day Services



Victoria University

1. VUW University Council
2. VUW University Council – Audit and Risk Committee
3. VUW University Council – Campus Development Committee

4. 7 Graduation Ceremonies
5. VUW Academic Board
6. VUW Academic Committee
7. VUW Advisory Committee on Student Services Levy (co-chair)
8. VUW Grievance Appeals Committee
9. VUW Sponsorship Panel
10. VUW/VUWSA Joint Student Union Board
11. VUW Future of Honours Working Party
12. VUW Student Leadership Roundtable
13. Student Academic Committee
14. Student Equity and Diversity Committee
15. Regular Meetings with Vice Chancellors Pat Walsh and Grant Guilford
16. Regular Meetings with Chancellor Ian McKinnon and University Councillors
17. Regular Meetings with Pam Thorburn, Director Student Academic Services
18. Regular Meetings with Academic Office staff
19. Regular meetings with Manager, Student Counselling, Gerard Hoffman
20. Meetings with Winnie Laban, Assistant Vice Chancellor (Pasifika)
21. Meetings with Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Penny Boumelha
22. Meetings with The Hunter Lounge/Milk and Honey/Good Chemistry Catering Owner Tim Ward

VUWSA

1. VUWSA Trust
2. VUWSA Executive Officers Meeting
3. VUWSA Executive Chair
4. VUWSA Executive Reporting Committee
5. VUWSA Audit and Risk Committee
6. VUWSA Policy Committee
7. VUWSA Campaigns Committee
8. VUWSA Association Manager Performance Review Committee
9. Regular Meetings with Sophie Boot, News Editor, Salient
10. Regular Meetings with Pasifika Students Council
11. Regular Meetings with Ngai Taura (since their election)
12. Regular Meetings with PGSA
13. Regular Meetings with University Council Student Representative David Alsop
14. Regular meetings with VUWSA Trust Chair Dave Guerin

Strengths

1. Long-term focus
2. Institutional knowledge

3. Passion for VUWSA to be relevant to the 'average student' and not just speak for the loudest/most political voices
4. Strictness on keeping to budget
5. Diplomacy and external relationships

Weaknesses

1. I have found it difficult to provide the Executive with the support and advice I would like due to pressures on my time
2. Diplomacy
3. Inclusivity in decision making – with 10 Executive members, I struggle to keep everyone on the same page with ever changing information
4. Delegation
5. I am very hard on myself. My confidence has grown enormously since becoming President, and especially since beginning VUWSA 18 months ago, but the Executive sometimes remind me to back myself more
6. Tendency to be risk averse, especially at the beginning of the year, when every decision felt major. I feel increasingly more confident to take on calculated risks and have hugely grown my appetite for criticism, especially through the mentoring from Carte Blanche.

Overall Rating

Overall I am proud of my work as President and of my team. It is a job like no other – challenging, all-consuming and hard to describe to the unsuspecting stranger or relative who asks 'what I do'. I have found it increasingly difficult to be patient when working in a large bureaucracy when a small organisation like VUWSA needs to be nimble and efficient.

There is room to up our engagement with students in the second half of this year, but this is an issue beyond this year, and one which the strategic review aims to address longer term. This area has been a challenge due to the decision to postpone Communications staff appointments until the development of the strategy.

The last month has been busy with the decision of the Association's General Manager, Mark Maguire, to move on from VUWSA after 5 years. The appointment of a General Manager is a major decision for any Board, and I have hired a temporary General Manager to keep things ticking so we can have space to focus on the strategic review before hiring for this position.

The future is good for VUWSA, and I feel humbled to carry this organisation for 2014 before handing on the mantle to the next team. I'm confident we can make significant progress before December.