



EXECUTIVE HALF-YEAR REPORT

NAME	Taylah Shuker
POSITION(S)	Education Officer, Academic Vice-President and President
REPORT PERIOD	January 01 – July 12 2020
HOURS WORKED	Education Officer: 166 Academic Vice-President: 404.25 President: 70 <i>Total: 640.25</i>
HOURS REQUIRED	Education Officer: 110 Academic Vice-President: 280 President: 70 <i>Total: 460</i>

1 Introduction

What. A. YEAR. (and we are only half-way though!). A year ago, I would have laughed in disbelief if you told me I would become VUWSA President less than six-months after being elected as Education Officer. However, here we are. Although this was not the year I expected, it has been one of the most tremendous, thrilling and transformative ones. I am so grateful to have learnt so much, to work with a fantastic team (love you all) and to advocate for students on a number of important issues.

Further, position changing was not the only spanner in the works that 2020 had to offer, please welcome COVID-19... A significant amount of VUWSA’s advocacy was reactive to policy from the Government, decisions from the University and students changing needs. Further, VUWSA did a LOT of proactive planning and advocacy, as well as continuing to run our usual services. I am so incredibly proud of our efforts. This report will cover a number of the issues we tackled, the Zooms we attended, and the mountain of emails we sent. However, this report does not do justice in displaying my gratitude to each and every person who made this response possible - endless thank you’s to all of you.

For simplicity, I have tried to keep this report as short as possible and have amalgamated my work under various headings, rather than the position occupied.

2020 has been unexpected to say the least. However, students' have demonstrated their resilience, kindness and empathy, time and time again. Here is hoping to a less eventful second half of the year!

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3 What on Earth Happened to Leave us Here?

VUWSA Appoints President From Its Own Ranks

ANNABEL MCCARTHY | TE WHAKATOHEA | SHE/HER



Image description: Salient article titled: "VUWSA Appoints President From Its Own Ranks", and me smiling 😊

As a consequence of the resignation of both Rinaldo Strydom (former Academic Vice-President) and Geo Robrigado (former President), I was appointed internally to eventual role of President by the current VUWSA Executive.

Although this was certainly unexpected, I feel deeply privileged to have stepped into both of these roles. Also, to continue to advocate for students' needs in a variety of avenues. Moreover, I am very grateful for the support, love and guidance of the 2020 Executive. I could not have done this without you <3

This report will detail my work done in all three roles I have occupied this year. For more information on this transition, it can be found in the relevant issues of the Salient or VUWSA's Facebook Page.

3A: Timeline

- Education Officer: 01 January - 22 March 2020
- Academic Vice-President: 23 March - 28 June
- President: 29 June – 12 July (Currently)

4 Goals

- **Goal 1: Education Quality:** To ensure the University provides the best teaching and learning, research opportunities, assessment and training to students
- **Goal 2: Student Support:** To advocate for adequate financial support, income and welfare for students in order to remove barriers to education.
- **Goal 3: Equity and Access:** To promote equity for disadvantaged students in access to and within the University.
- **Goal 4: Services:** To provide quality, cost effective services for the benefit of members, and, where appropriate, students.
- **Goal 5: Activities:** To support sporting, social and cultural activities for and by students; by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students.
- **Goal 6: Public Issues:** To be the critic and conscience of the University and society, by promoting discussion and action on issues concerning students.
- **Goal 7: Finance:** To maximize the member benefits by minimizing fees or user charges though internal efficiency and non-member revenue.

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

5 COVID-19

Here we go friends... perhaps the biggest pandemonium of the year... COVID-19.

Prior to lockdown, the Education team successfully advocated for universal lecture recording to ensure every student had access to their education. This was paramount for immuno-compromised students, elderly students and those uncomfortable attending University with the increase in alert levels. Then, the lockdown ensued.

For VUWSA, COVID-19 required a multi-faceted approach to ensure students were in the loop, issues were advocated for and the University had student voice included in decision making. After a meeting with NZUSA's President Isabella Lennihan-Ikin, I instigated VUWSA's COVID-19 response by calling an emergency executive meeting to plan how the executive would best run, how services would function and how we could best support students at the different alert levels. Furthermore, to ensure good communication between the Executive, I created a series of documents to create an overview of the issues and information to ensure a coordinated response. Below are some of the (very condensed) key highlights of my involvement in the COVID-19 response, each of which related to a number of my Constitutional Goals under my numerous roles.

5A: Wellington Student Volunteer Army (WSVA)

With the aim of building community in Wellington, I was involved in coordinating the Mt Cook area. This included training central volunteers, connecting volunteers to those in need and completing requests. Furthermore, WSVA was also an opportunity for VUWSA to continue the provision of their Menstrual Product and Community Pantry Services.

5B: Communication

A significant role that VUWSA played in the COVID-19 response was synthesizing the University's decisions into readable, accessible and simplified content. This included communicating access to services including the Hardship Fund where students could request financial support for laptops, access to WiFi and specialised software. Alongside a number of other fabulous executive members (most notably Joanna Li our Engagement VP), I learnt the beauty of CANVA (an infographic making tool).

Furthermore, I also worked heavily alongside the Executive to communicate the work that VUWSA was doing for students. Also, to ensure each of us were kept in the loop about what each other were doing.

5C: Advocacy

COVID-19 exacerbated many historic challenges as well as highlighting a number of new ones. In particular, students faced issues with:

- Accessibility of assessments;
- Transition to online learning;
- Access to laptops, WiFi, software etc.;
- Increased levels of stress;
- Concerns around the accessibility of digital content;
- Synchronous learning for international students in different time zones, students with additional caregiving responsibilities and increased essential work hours;
- Mixed messaging from the University;
- How practical courses including nursing, music and field trip courses would operate without in-person elements;
- Truncation of assessments as a consequence of the 5-week teaching break;
- Issues of aegrotats, withdrawals and refunds.

VUWSA addressed these issues in a number of forums including the Pandemic Response meetings, weekly meetings alongside other student representatives with Pam Thorburn – Director of Academic Services, and tri-weekly meetings with Stuart Brock – Vice Provost Academic, with the Associate Deans and Faculty Managers. Although these meeting could be time consuming, the debates were constructive and some major gains occurred behind the scenes for students.

In particular I was involved in:

- Expanding the accessibility of the Hardship Fund. This allowed financial support for students to get access to devices, software and WiFi;
- Working with Disability Services to ensure the format of lectures were accessible. For instance, large font, colour contrasting, subtitling etc.;
- Providing advice and hygiene products for clubs to facilitate safe events;
- Helping VUWSA review every major change to class assessment schedules to prevent even worse impacts of truncated assessments. This work could not have been done without some fabulous class representatives, faculty delegates and Joseph (VUWSA's Student Voice Coordinator);

- Providing advice to Xiaodan Gao (Director of Student Learning) to ensure appropriate and useful workshops for students;
- Running weekly 'Academic Drop-in Sessions' to address student representatives' concerns;
- Providing feedback on an instant complaint resolver through Blackboard with Stephen Marshall (Centre for Academic Development);
- Writing a 'Rent Reduction Letter' for students to apply for reduced rent over the lockdown period;
- Engaging with a number of student representative groups (see 8: Relationship Building);
- Advocating for consistency and communication from the University. This also included making communications more accessible;
- Helping with Student Engagement Day: designed to stress test system to see which students could or could not engage with digital learning. Subsequently, the University contacted every student who did not engage to ensure they could be connected;
- Ensuring mandatory lecture recordings and Zoom tutorials;
- Advocating for lowering of workload in favour of wellbeing. Trimester One had students sitting nine-weeks of continuous learning and assessments with only a one-week break between Trimester 1 and 2. Although this was eventually extended to two-weeks, this did not satisfactorily address our concerns with workload;
- Guaranteeing one free course withdrawal for every student;
- Contributing \$100,000 to the Hardship Fund to support financially troubled students;
- Advocating for flexibility in assessment extensions;
- [and so on!]

5D: Just Another Letter?

One of the most effective ways VUWSA could communicate to students about issues we were advocating for, and to lobby the University for change, was through the use of open letters. This was in addition to a *significant* number of internal meetings (mostly Zoom) raising student concerns.

All of these letters can be found on VUWSA's Facebook page or our website. I have included the front page of just two letters I was involved in writing this year.



April 24, 2020

To: Professor Grant Guilford

Vice-Chancellor

Victoria University of Wellington – Te Herenga Waka

CC: Wendy Larner

Provost

Victoria University of Wellington – Te Herenga Waka

Dear Professor Guilford,

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) appreciate the work university staff have done over the last four weeks regarding COVID-19. However, we are still hearing some concerns from students about the university's response and feel it is our job to ensure their voices are heard.

First, we would like to acknowledge the consultation to resolve issues that were flagged at the beginning of academic suspension, and thank the university for working with student representatives for the following successes:

- The university listening to our concerns surrounding wellbeing and burnout, and as a result extending the mid-year break.
- The attempt to provide equitable access through strengthening the Student Hardship Fund and the creation of a Technology Grant. We would like to extend our thanks to the team at Student Finance for their work in this area.
- We appreciate the efforts of staff, the Director of Student Services, and Vice-Provost (Academic) in contacting students who had not engaged in Student Engagement Day, as well as the weekly discussions we have with staff and student representatives.
- The tremendous work of Associate Deans and Course Coordinators in managing student workload within each course.
- The work that has been done to ensure student services remain virtually available. With special mention to the team at Maori Ora Student Health and Wellbeing, their quick response to COVID-19 and their continued assistance to students is admirable.
- At times such as this, students' voice is more important than ever, and we appreciate the university including us in meetings with staff on the direction of adapting. We also appreciate the work of Associate Deans and Course Coordinators in working with VUWSA and with student representatives in restructuring classes and assessment schedules with the wellbeing of staff and students at the forefront of mind.



Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association

Friday 12th June 2020

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

Victoria University of Wellington – Te Herenga Waka

ATTN: Professor Grant Guilford, Vice-Chancellor

Dear Professor Guilford,

VUWSA has been inundated with students who have concerns about increased stress, workload and negative impacts on their wellbeing. This has created an even greater need for student support from the University.

Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA) has been approached by thousands of students to advocate for a universal 5-point grade increase at Victoria University, to align with the approach taken by Auckland and Otago Universities. We acknowledge that Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington has made the decision to not adopt the grade scaling approach, moving against the feedback of elected student representatives.

After exhausting all avenues on behalf of students, including offering to speak with the University Council, VUWSA now asks: *How do we move forward from here?*

It is clear students do not feel assured by university communications that Victoria has adopted measures that alleviate the disruption of Covid-19 on their studies and offer parity between universities. It is disappointing that it has taken over 7,000 students to sign a petition for the university to clarify their position on a grade scaling stance, rather than through an appropriate communication channel. VUWSA feels the discourse surrounding the response to Covid-19 reflects a failure to respect partnership.

While now clear on the decision surrounding the 5-point grade increase, recent university communications to students remain unclear on how the University is mitigating the impacts of Covid-19 on their studies and on what they can expect for Trimester 2. Students do not understand how back room moderation processes work and these processes are not transparent.

Image description: two front pages from VUWSA's open letters.

5E: Halls Issue

Towards the end of the lockdown, the University made the decision to begin recharging Halls of Residence students for their rooms, despite being unable to return to Halls. Consequently, students, politicians, NZUSA and VUWSA alike, came together to support a Rent Strike in protest of this decision. Eventually, the wealth of stories detailing students across Aotearoa's experience in Halls of Residence raised the fact that issues with Halls of Residence stemmed from historical institutional challenges in policy (or a lack of). This led to the Inquiry into Student Accommodation, by the Education and Workforce Select Committee. I aided in supporting this initiative.

Moreover, VUWSA worked with students wanting to cancel their Halls of Residence Contracts without incurring a fee or penalty, particularly if they had a change in circumstances from the beginning of lockdown. This however, did present a number of challenges with Halls that were not run by the University (looking at you Stafford).



Image description: two screen clippings of Stuff articles on the issue of recharging Halls students.

5F: The 'Grade Bump'

Otago and Auckland Universities decided to instigate an automatic five-point increase to students' grades to recognize the disruption caused by COVID-19. VUWSA were particularly concerned with the lack of parity between our students and other Universities, leading to a significant amount of advocacy. I perceived the lack of a grade bump as a failure to acknowledge the disadvantage Te Herenga Waka students will face in applying for scholarships, postgrad positions, internships, grad programs and employment opportunities when competing against students from other Universities.

To this end, I lead some *heavy* internal lobbying with the University's Senior Leadership Team and was among an incredible minority in the room, leading to our views being shut down or ignored. Subsequently, the University failed to display good partnership as the news that the University decided against the grade bump was first communicated through Salient, rather than to students directly. At the request of students, I helped create a letter template that could be emailed to Professor Grant Guilford (Vice-Chancellor) and Stuart Brock (Vice-Provost Academic) to express their frustrations. I found it extremely disappointing that it took 7000 students to sign a petition to get clarification on their position on the grade scaling stance. Further to this, I also worked with a number of external parties including NZUSA and Nicola Willis (National MP) to advocate for this change. Additionally, I presented at an event called 'Careers Connect Chartered Accountant' to discuss parity issues with recruiters.

VUWSA promised to keep the University accountable to ensure students were not marked down or disadvantaged. Preliminary reports tell us that students grade point average (GPA) increased from 4.9 (2019) to 5.6 (2020), with the pass rate increasing from 87.7% to 89.2%. This is very promising, but VUWSA are keen to seek comparative data with other Universities and also the rough marks to ensure students were not negatively affected.

To: Vice-Chancellor Professor Grant Guilford and the Victoria University of Wellington Senior Leadership Team.

5-Point Grade Bump for VUW Students

Campaign created by VUWSA Campaigns



news

Students worried as NZ universities take different approaches to grades amid Covid-19 disruption

SAT, JUN 6 • SOURCE: 1 NEWS



University students are worried about their grades because of Covid-19, with universities taking different approaches to how they deal with the learning fallout.



Coronavirus: Thousands of Victoria students demand grade bump, in line with other universities

Laura Wilshere - 17:55, Jun 05 2020



Image description: three screen clippings of articles on the issue of the grade bump.

5G: Resilience Planning

To ensure the gains made to increase accessibility under COVID-19 were not backtracked, VUWSA were involved in the University resilience planning. In particular, I helped set up weekly meetings with project lead, Prof Rawinia Higgins (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori)) and participated in a number of the activities through various committees and workgroups. This was fundamental to ensuring good practice continues.

Secondly, VUWSA worked on the 'Fast Forward' Campaign which was designed to ensure lecture recordings were mandatory for a number of courses, the provision of online tutorials, and more accessible recordings for those with auditory and visual impairments. This coupled with the work to ensure student services remained accessible in a digital format.

Thirdly, I worked with the Center for Academic Development (CAD) to define a minimum online student experience and resilience guide for Te Herenga Waka. An example of this was the work to ensure that learning and teaching tools including Blackboard were functional, accessible and more useful. From this, a standard Blackboard template was developed called Toiere. This allowed a basis structure for lecturers to follow to have an effective course page.

5H: Staff Shoutout Campaign

VUWSA ran a 'Staff Shoutout' campaign to acknowledge the hard work of University Staff who went above and beyond to support students. We had 207 students celebrate these staff members and it was a great initiative to boost morale. I thoroughly enjoyed emailing nominated staff, my favourite response being "this warmed the cockles of my cold heart".

HUGE THANK YOU to Laura Jackson for her work on this initiative (amongst many others).

5I: Concluding Comments

Wow. That was a lot. I honestly had such a rollercoaster reliving the advocacy we did in this period. As you can imagine, COVID-19's impacts were not siloed to the aforementioned points. It

managed to weasel its way into almost every other aspect of this report. So, without further ado...

6 Academic Representation

Academic Representation is a fundamental responsibility for the Education Team. Students are the key stakeholder at the University and deserve to have the best equitable access to their education. Further, VUWSA is one of the only bodies that have direct access to the internal workings of Te Herenga Waka's academics and education policy, meaning this is a fundamental role of any President or Academic-Vice President. Further this proved absolutely paramount in decision making for COVID-19. Academic Representation also meets Goals 1: Education Quality, Goal 2: Student Support, Goal 3: Equity and Access, Goal 7: Finance, Goal 8: Accountability and Goal 9: Sustainability.

6A: Class Representatives and Faculty Delegates

Class Representatives play an important role in liaising between the lecturer and students, and effectively act as the 'eyes and ears' within classes, tutorials and labs. This proved particularly useful this year, as students raised a number of class specific concerns as a consequence to the transition to online learning.

In similarity, Faculty Delegates are student representatives who sit on their respective School or Faculty boards. This year, they played an important role in helping VUWSA understand the impact of COVID-19 on faculty wide issues. Further, without their support, Trimester 1 assessments would have been twice as awful. Thank you so much again to all of these student reps (and Joseph for your coordination), you are fantastic.

6B: Student Academic Committee

The Student Academic Committee (SAC - chaired by the Academic Vice-President) comprises of all Faculty Delegates, academic representatives from respective groups on campus (for instance, Ngāi Taura, Pasifika Students Council, VUWLSS, VicCom, V-ISA etc.), the VUWSA President and the VUWSA Education Team. SAC provides an opportunity for students to raise academic concerns and discuss academic matters. This proved particularly important to ensure that VUWSA had an accurate perspective of student thoughts on a number of pressing issues.

In particular, SAC discussed the issues of:

- Workload: in light of the truncation of assessments, learning and teaching in Trimester One;
 - Associate Deans: Kevin Gould, Peter Andreae, John Randal and Karen Smith; attended to provide their perspectives.
- Establishing a core set of principles around workload and student wellbeing;

- Students' stance on pass/ fail courses, rather than an A-E grade range;
- Pushing out the dates of Trimester 2 at the expense of Trimester 3;
- Teaching style for Trimester 2 – block courses with intense face-to-face elements.

6C: Academic Committee

Academic Committee is the sub-committee of Academic Board and is responsible for new course proposals, amendments to existing course and reviews of academic processes across the University. Here, we also discussed issues and proposals related to COVID-19 prior to their submission to Academic Board. Primarily, I focused on ensuring the University were accountable to equity and accessibility concerns.

6D: Academic Board

Academic Board advises the University Council on matters related to academics. There are six student members of Academic Board; Apiha Matauranga o Ngai Taurira; the Academic Officer of the Pasifika Students Council; the President of the PGSA, VUWSA President, VUWSA Academic Vice President and an additional student representative (today, the amazing Laura Jackson). Here, our primary responsibilities were keeping the University accountable to equity, accessibility concerns and student consultation in prior decision making.

6E: Learning and Teaching Committee

This Committee is responsible for effectively being the check and balance for Faculty learning, teaching and assessment practice. Primarily, these meetings have been focused on creating policy and initiatives for good policy response. This was particularly important for decision making around COVID-19.

6F: Assessment Handbook Working Group

This working group was charged with reviewing the Assessment Handbook which broadly includes academic approval processes, course design and reviews. VUWSA primarily focused on ensuring the provisions would not disadvantage students or cause additional stress. This working group much to my delight took great joy in finicky grammar – I learnt a lot.

6G: Academic Complaints

Students raised many concerns with VUWSA in relation to the impacts COVID-19 had on their teaching, wellbeing and assessment. Consequently, I was tasked with responding to these requests to ensure students were linked in with the appropriate support, information and/or advocacy channel. Huge thanks again to Erica, Alice (our Advocates) and Joseph in this respect.

6H: Faculty Meetings

Furthermore, in my role as Academic Vice-President, I had the opportunity to attend a number of Faculty Meetings including the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Architecture and Design (FAD). This was valuable to aid my understanding of the faculty-wide issues and grassroots thinking on issues. For instance, at FAD there was a discussion at length about students' ability to access specialized technology which helped frame our advocacy in relation to this issue.

7 Events

This section primarily summarizes my obligation to support student engagement on discussions and issues important to students under Goal 5: Activities. Although, COVID-19 restricted a number of these, there was an incredible amount of fun had.

7A: Retreat

VUWSA Retreat was a fantastic opportunity to get to know everyone on the team, understand our strengths (yay for Protagonists ENFJ's), and do some planning.



Image description: group photos of the Executive living their best summer life, unbeknownst to what lies ahead.

7B: Orientation Week

O-Week is a brilliant opportunity for student engagement, building a sense of community and helping new students transition into University life. I thoroughly enjoyed O-Bag packing to ensure students had some goodies to kick-start their year; attending a number of Welcome Breakfasts and Events (including Rainbow Welcome, Māori and Pasifika breakfasts) and as a pair of hands at the Clubs Expo. This was a great opportunity to chat to new students, introduce them to VUWSA Services and meet some new club's executives.



Image description: VUWSA executive posing with BENEÉ.

Equally as fun was manning the hydration station, driving full vanloads of rather intoxicated students and helping the saferoom, at the evening O-Week events. Highlights include meeting BENEÉ (wowie), vibing to Drax Project's sax (I LOVE THE SAX) and discovering DEADBEAT (very funky).

7C: Sex Week: Feature in the Sex Tape



Image description: black screen with the words 'sex week' 'get it in!' alongside an outlined pixelated image, eggplant and peach.

Unfortunately, due to the increase in alert levels, Sex Week had to be cancelled. However, this did not prevent many of us having our debut appearance on Salient TV in VUWSA's 'Sex Tape'. If there is one thing you should take from it, is the importance of consent and good communication.

7D: Stress Free Hand in Week

Stress Free Study Week was transformed into Stress Free Hand in Week to couple with the University's decision to replace exams with assessments. Further, health and safety restrictions with COVID-19 shaped our decision to provide self-serve fruit, cereal, coffee and tea. Te Aro saw lots of students taking advantage of this initiative which was great!

7E: Re-Retreat

After the year to date, Re-Retreat proved a fantastic opportunity for the Executive to refresh, refocus and re-plan. We reflected on our learnings from COVID-19, did some fabulous team building and created a coherent plan to help us get the big picture for the remainder of the year.

This would also prove useful for ensuring we stayed on track when the Uni threw us more curveballs... but that is for the next report!



Image description: group photos of the Executive at the beach and eating food. Whilst they knew what had come, Tri 2 was yet to ensue....

7F: Re-Orientation Week

This was a chance for our students to refresh and reengage with campus life after a rather unusual Trimester One. I thoroughly enjoyed doing some behind the scenes planning to help this come together.

8 Relationship Building

Relationship building is one of the cornerstones of being a VUWSA representative. Good working relationships increase our ability to understand the nature of issues students are facing, ensure VUWSA have support for advocacy areas and have the connections to make real, substantive change. If there is one thing I have learned, the respect of others can never be undervalued in student advocacy.

One of my first initiatives as Education Officer was to reach out to a number of clubs, representative groups and faculty groups to talk about how I could best support them in the coming year; any initiatives VUWSA should be aware of, and what sort of resources I could provide. I really appreciated groups giving up their time to talk to me and I thank everyone of them for their hard work this year. From a student representative position, I met with groups including STUDiO, VUW Commerce Society, Victoria Engineering Society, Disabled Students' Association, Tutors Collective Victoria International Students' Association, UniQ, Victoria Law Students' Society, Ngāi Tauira, Pasifika Students' Association, Post Graduates Students' Association, University Council Representatives (etc.).

Additionally, in the first half of the year, I met with a number of University staff including Prof. Rawinia Higgins (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori)), Jane Fletcher (Manager Careers and

Employment), Georgia Andrews (Rainbow and Inclusion Officer), Pam Thorburn (Director of Academic Services), Stuart Brock (Vice-Provost Academic), Associate Deans and Faculty Managers (etc.). This was vital to enhance my institutional knowledge, important for my voice to be weighted seriously, and for raising issues directly to the person who could solve them.

Finally, I engaged with a number of community and representative groups including the Teachers Education Union, Intercity Wellington and the Cable Car operators (etc.).

In collaboration, relationship building covers all of the Constitutional Goals to a certain extent, but is particularly important to Goal 2: Student Support and Goal 8: Accountability.

9 VUWSA Committees

Another aspect of my role at VUWSA is to sit on a number of subcommittees. At the beginning of the year, I was appointed to the Audit and Finance Committee, the Legal Constitutional Committee and the Executive Reporting Committee (post appointment to Academic Vice-President).

Furthermore, the girls also bonded together to form the Elections Working Group (yeah the girls!) to encourage students to engage, enroll and vote. The beginning of the year consisted of a substantial amount of planning and a potluck with representative groups to pinpoint key topics for our issue-based campaign.

10 Student Assembly

Student Assembly is a forum to bring together a variety of representative groups to discuss issues at Te Herenga Waka. This forum is for students, by students and allows VUWSA to better understand student voice on central and specific issues. Because the Assembly was designed in a pre-COVID-19 world, it has functioned quite differently to how it was first envisioned - meetings were held over Zoom and at a higher frequency. However, this was an invaluable tool in ensuring broad student voice on a number of issues paramount to students. I was very privileged aid in the implementation, chairing and general administration of the Assembly.



Image description: a number of student representatives sitting in the Council Chamber at our first in-person meeting.

11 Salient



An element of my campaign to be elected to VUWSA, was to empower the University community to use more Te Reo Māori and NZSL. An aspect of this was to research a Te Reo Māori and NZSL word of the week.

Image description: orange background with words “Word of the Week: Wellington” “Te Reo Māori: Te Whanganui-a-Tara” and a person signing Wellington - ‘holding up three fingers moving them side to side’.

12 Citizens Advice Bureau

Fantastically, VUWSA are collaborating with the Karori Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to train a number of students to provide advice to other students on a range of different issues. Unfortunately, COVID-19 presented a number of hurdles for the implementation of this service, but I am looking forward to continue the training and eventual ability to practically implement it.

13 New Zealand Union of Students’ Associations (NZUSA)

NZUSA is the national body that represents Students Associations. VUWSA as a member Association had a lot of interaction with NZUSA through the national COVID-19 response. In my role as Education Officer and Academic Vice-President, I had the pleasure of sitting on the National Education Committee. This Committee was a forum that discussed education issues at our respective institutions, how to resolve them and what national action we could take. For instance, supplementing VUWSA’s work on lecture recordings, we were a signatory on NZUSA’s call to petition the Vice-Chancellors and Chief Executives of universities and Institute of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP), to ensure education is more accessible.

To: Vice Chancellors and Chief Executives of New Zealand Universities and Polytechnics

Record our classes in response to COVID-19

 Campaign created by NZ Union of Students' Associations (NZUSA)



Dear Vice Chancellors and Chief Executives of New Zealand Universities and Polytechnics

.....
**NATIONAL STUDENT
ACTION PLAN ON
COVID-19**
.....

OUR COLLABORATORS



Image description:

- 1: NZUSA Petition "Record our classes in response to COVID-19".
- 2: Taurira Pasifika, Te Mana Ākonga and NZUSA's "National Student Action Plan on Covid-19" Coversheet

14 Bits and Bobs

Some other fun things:

- Just Speak Workshop: focused on how to instigate change through conversations;
- Providing feedback on the Respectful Bystanders Intervention and Wellbeing modules;
- Attending Wellbeing Network meetings;
- Attending the Black Lives Matter March;
- Appearing in a 3-part VUWSA video series: introducing the Executive, our services and opportunities for students to engage with VUWSA;
- Supporting the VUWSA Loves Local Campaign.



Image description: Grey background with water marked VUWSA building. To the left, myself with a builder's hard hat pointing to the text: "Taylah Shuker, Education Officer – loves language learning, got into a national golf croquet tournament, can drive a digger"

P.S. if you made it this far, thank you for reading!

P.P.S. Thank you so much to everyone who made this year possible, you are all phenomenal.