



EXECUTIVE HALF-YEAR REPORT

NAME	Ralph Zambrano
POSITION	Treasurer-Secretary
REPORT PERIOD	1 st January 2020 – July 12 th 2020
HOURS WORKED	646
HOURS REQUIRED	280

INTRODUCTION

2020, what a year to be on the VUWSA Executive. From COVID-19, an internal restructure and fighting and delivering outcomes on student issues, it can be said that the first half of this year is one for the history books.

Coming into the Executive as a *fresh* face, I am very thankful and fortunate to have been welcomed in and treated like family by everyone. There was no moment that I felt alone or out of depth. This sense of whānau empowered me even more to do as much as I can to make a difference and help others make their difference.



A fresher Ralph right after the announcement of the 2020 VUWSA Executive

This half-year report highlights the wide-ranging projects and activities that I have done as the Treasurer-Secretary over the first 7 months. Sneak peek it includes: O-Week, committees, projects, policies, A LOT of admin and ZOOM meetings!

The first half of the year has been *something* but there is nothing I would change about it. There's been a lot of growing, relationship building and reflecting, and this will all make for an even better second half of the year!

TREASURER-SECRETARY CONSTITUTIONAL GOALS

My main goals for the year as per the Treasurer-Secretary role description include:

Goal 4 - Services:

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

Goal 7 - Finance:

- To maximise the member benefits by minimizing fees or user charges through internal efficiency and non-member revenue.

Goal 9 - Accountability:

- To ensure accountability to, and representation of, members.

These goals highlight some of the core aspects of the Treasurer-Secretary role. Whilst they are not as glamorous or engaging as some of the other goals, they are important to maintain the efficient and accurate running of the VUWSA. A lot of these goals have me hunched over a screen, looking over paperwork and timetables, and doing an insane amount of (*pestering*) emailing and messaging to people both inside of VUWSA and out. My role looks to ensure that VUWSA is run properly and that the association is strong and up to date with policy and other financial and administrative requirements. The aim is to have the association run like a well-oiled machine; in order to properly serve and represent students here at Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington.



pestering; it comes with the job :)

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

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

A major part of the Treasurer-Secretary role is the chairing of or sitting in VUWSA's internal committees. As Treasurer-Secretary, I chair all committees aside from Executive Reporting Committee and Policy Committee, which I co-chair with the Equity Officer, Parminder. Committees are crucial to the efficient running of VUWSA. Organising, running and doing the work that comes with our committees takes up a large portion of my time. These committees ensure that VUWSA is strong and runs smoothly. The outbreak of COVID-19 meant that a majority of the meetings for committees were held on zoom (the BEST thing ever XP)

Executive Reporting Committee

In this committee we review and approve the Executive work reports. Following the committee, I prepare the reports for publishing on the VUWSA website. These reports are submitted fortnightly (rarely and after some pushing and prodding) by the executive and reflect the work they have done and the hours they have allocated to each project/activity. The purpose of work report is to hold the exec accountable, ensure that work is being done, and to keep a track of it. This committee aims to meet monthly but has met inconsistently this year due to all the *barriers*. It isn't uncommon for work reports to not be done exactly by the fortnight but are usually completed with a strict deadline before the Executive Reporting Committee meets. This simply reflects the reality of university life - balancing studies, VUWSA, and other part-time jobs – admin particularly, work reports often get pushed back and done in bulk to save time. The Executive is expected to work between 10-40 hours per week, depending on the position. This year, the President and I created an Executive Hours Monitor spreadsheet to monitor, record and calculate the total hours worked by each Executive Member and see who is behind or over (I'm 100% guilty of this) their allocated hours.

Financial and Audit Committee

The committee is presented with the monthly financial statements, alongside a breakdown of the last months, and the same month last year – to compare how the money is being spent, and where. We meet to discuss these internal finances and see where decisions can be made differently – and to ensure the financial stability of the organisation. Making sure VUWSA is financially secure has been even more important considering COVID-19.

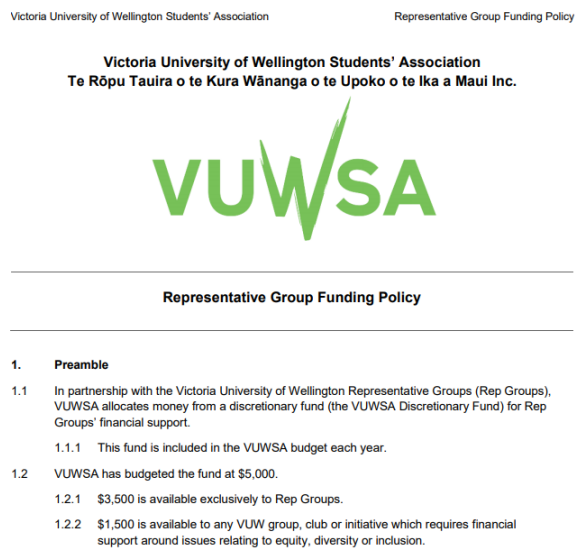
Legal and Constitutional Committee

This committee reviews and recommends changes to VUWSA's foundational documents, the constitution, memorandums of understandings and statutes. This includes content pertaining to entrenched regulations, elections, appointments and other crucial aspects of VUWSA.

Policy Committee

Policy committee aims to review and change the internal policies of VUWSA to ensure they are up-to date and in line with our goals. Our internal policies shape and regulate the way VUWSA functions in specific areas. Each of the members is given several policies to review and then bring them back to the committee to be discussed. Once changes are agreed upon, we take them to the exec meetings to make them official. I then work to have these changes promptly reflected on our website. This year as Treasurer-Secretary, I have spent a lot of my work focused around this committee. A year is a long time in politics, and this is reflected in VUWSA's policies, many of which need a refresh. COVID-19 has highlighted the holes in VUWSA operations that need new policies. The biggest policy change from the first half of the year is the creation of the Representative Group Funding Policy which established not one but TWO VUWSA discretionary funds! This policy allocates \$500 to each of our rep grounds and provides \$1,500 to initiatives relating to inclusion, equity and diversity!! Other policies were reviewed during the first half of the year, such as the Transport Policy and we are on track to review ALL policies and potentially make more new ones before the year ends! A big rip is having to table the Wellbeing Policy due to time and capacity constraints. Hopefully, this policy is picked up, worked on and created in the new future.

Revenue and Venture



Screenshot of the Rep Group Funding Policy

This committee brainstorms ways to increase revenue for the organisation. So far this year we have only had one meeting and discussed a few ideas, but nothing has been set in concrete. We are hoping to increase the function of this committee in the second half of the year, particularly with regards to the economic and financial impact of COVID-19.

VUWSA Trust

The VUWSA Trust is the main external committee that I sit on as Treasurer-Secretary. The Trust is chaired by Nik Green and consists of a wide array of individuals who have strong connections with VUWSA. The President and I, as Treasurer-Secretary, sit on the Trust as ex-officio members. The Trust has oversight over VUWSA's assets and makes sure it is managed in a sustainable and appropriate manner. The Trust is also there to financially assist VUWSA and the Executive by way of grants for projects and initiatives. After presenting to the Trust earlier this year, we secured a grant of \$25,000 for our General Elections Campaign that will run in the second half of the year.

VUW Foundation Board of Trustees

Towards the end of the first half of the year I took on a new responsibility of being the VUWSA representative on the VUW Foundation Board of Trustees. This was due to our internal restructuring. The board oversees the finances and assets of Victoria University and it is the VUWSA representative's role to ensure that they are being managed in the best interests of students.

NZUSA Finance, Risk and Audit Committee

After being encouraged by the President, I applied to sit on NZUSA's Finance, Risk and Audit Committee. To which, I was successful. I sit on this committee with the NZUSA Executive and 4 other representatives from Student Association Executive's around the country. In this committee we review NZUSA's financial performance to ensure it is financially sound, spending wisely and performing sustainably.

Clubs Council, Student Equity and Diversity Committee and Sustainability Committee

Outside of VUWSA's internal committees and the VUWSA Trust, are the groups and committees led by the other officers in the executive. The Clubs Council led by the Clubs and Activities Officer, Tara, the Student Equity and Diversity Committee, led by the Equity Officer,

Parminder, and the Sustainability Committee, led by the Sustainability and Wellbeing Officer, Sophie, are the three other external groups where I play a role. I take minutes for the meetings and contribute where I can, particularly on matters relating to financial support. Over the first half of the year, I have worked rather closely with Clubs Council and the Student Equity and Diversity Committee to resolve issues surrounding funding, financial support as well as policy. It is crucial that our student groups have adequate financial support, the necessary resources and assistance from VUWSA in other areas so they can thrive and successfully deliver for the subset of students that they serve.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Goal 7: FINANCE – to maximise the member benefits by minimising fees or user charges

This is a key concept for VUWSA, as we are financially independent from the University, and do not require university support for the continuance of the association. Whilst a nice idea, we rely heavily on the grant we get from the Student Services Levy. This grant goes towards several things within VUWSA, including; Salient, campaigns, and funding services.

VUWSA has maintained a *relatively* positive relationship with the University this year – with more funding going towards initiatives such as Student Assembly and Sustainability Week as our student support systems. However, this grant continues as a source of concern for not only myself, but other Treasurer-Secretary's before me, as it lessens out negotiating power with the university, as we are heavily reliant on this grant.

Notably, working with Matt and the President, we paved the way for a temporary but significant increase and a relaxation of the criteria to the Student Hardship Fund to assist students financially affected by COVID-19.

Budget

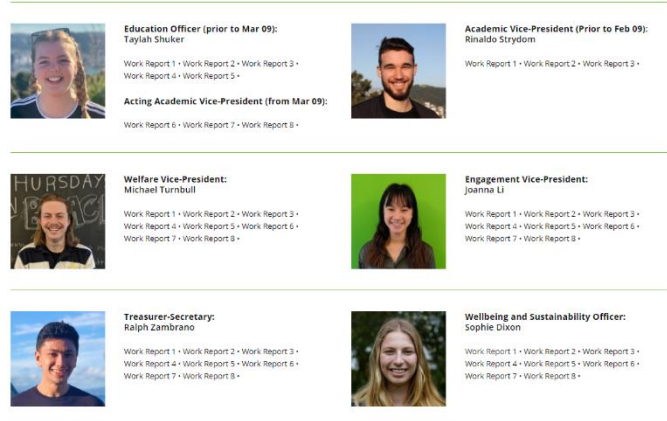
Our budget for the year started in a \$6,600 deficit – so it was prudent that from the start of the year we had to be budget-conscious and ensure we could save money where we could. This meant making changes to Executive spending and keep a tight grasp of wasteful and

unnecessary costs. This moderation ensures that crucial services and programmes can receive more funding and VUWSA is financially stable.

REPORTS AND MEETINGS

Goal 9: ACCOUNTABILITY – to ensure accountability to, and representation of, members.

There are multiple ways in which we try to ensure the accountability of the VUWSA Exec. Work reports are continued throughout the year and should be completed accurately. It is part of my role to work with the Executive to ensure this is done so and review them. There are other avenues in which we aim to ensure



Screenshot of the Work Report section of the VUWSA Website

accountability such as through Salient, keeping our fortnightly meetings open to the student body and student media to attend. Additionally, this year I have worked to ensure that all our official documents are accessible and promptly uploaded on the VUWSA website, so they are open to public scrutiny; outside of the posting of important actions on VUWSA’s social media pages.

GENERAL TASKS AND INITIATIVES

As a member of the Executive, the Treasurer-Secretary plays a role in a number of different projects and campaigns throughout the year.

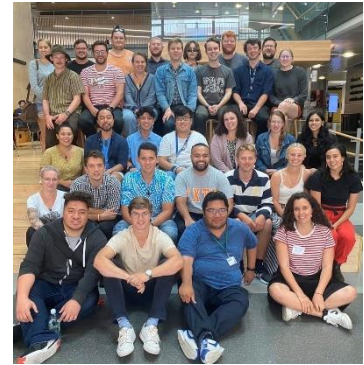
Australia Bushfire Fundraiser

This was the first initiative that I played a role in a capacity as Treasurer-Secretary. This was organised by Wellington City Councillor and 2019 VUWSA President, Tamatha Paul. I assisted with the external organisation and planning of the event and helped with the collection drive

on the day. The fundraiser raked in around \$10,000 and was split amongst three very deserving causes.

NZUSA Conference

I attended the NZUSA Conference at the beginning February with others in the VUWSA Executive. This was a great opportunity to network, interact and build relationships with Executive members of other student associations as well as key stakeholders in the student union environment.



NZUSA Conference with Student Executive Members from around NZ

Retreat

In February we also had our Executive Retreat. This was a great opportunity for us to properly bond, get to know each other and build real, meaningful relationships. We planned our activities, campaigns and initiatives for the year (little did we know COVID-19 would mess all that up), went for a lot of walks, took cute pics, shared good vibes and good times.



VUWSA Videos

The Engagement VP, Joanna and I took on a project of creating VUWSA Videos, a 3-part series introducing the executive, our services and opportunities for students to engage with VUWSA. This was a fun and new way for VUWSA to raise awareness and engage with students on social media. The videos garnered thousands of views and popped off! It was a fun experience and defo would recommend doing this to introduce future Execs!



Filming for VUWSA Videos

Mosaic Symposium (CW: sexual harm)

The Welfare VP, Michael and I attended the Mosaic Symposium on male sexual assault, abuse, trauma and recovery. The symposium was hosted at Vic and was incredibly eye-opening and

educational. Attending the symposium was to assist with our planned Men's Mental Health Campaign. We got great resources which will be hugely valuable in future.

O-WEEK

O-WEEK was an incredibly fun and exhausting time. I helped with the pre-event preparation such as O-Bag packing and helped out during the week with event supervision. I attended most of the night events, with alternating responsibilities ranging from post-event van driving and safe room and mosh supervision, and the



With Benee at O-Week

Welcome Festival where I did a takeover of the uni's Instagram account. It was meant to engage with students, meet Benee and finally attend the Toga Party (after not making it in first year XD)



Sex Week: Sex Tape

I participated in the VUWSA x Salient Sex Tape as part of our Sex Week initiative. I lied on a bed in the middle of The Hub and answered some fun and sexy questions. The purpose of the tape was to encourage safe and open conversations about sex.



Screenshot from the Sex Tape

Treasurer-Secretary *proposed* Restructure

I spent a fair amount of the first few months of the year working on a restructure of the Treasurer-Secretary position. The reason for taking on work for the proposed restructure was based off comments that the position has far more responsibilities than the hours allow for and previous Treasurer-Secretaries have had to choose what tasks to do and what not to do. The amount of admin the position holder does has led to selectivity, which restricts the ability of the Treasurer-Secretary to play a more significant role with the governance of VUWSA as an Officer. On the flip, when the position holder has done all the work entailed, they work double the number of hours (or more) that is required, and they are paid for. In planning the restructure, I had several meetings with previous Treasurer-Secretary's as well as other past/present VUWSA Executive Members. The restructure was to be presented at the VUWSA IGM in March but alas, COVID-19 blew up, we went into a nationwide lockdown, the IGM got canned and the restructure has been pinned. Hopefully, this is project is picked up and carried through in the near future as the change to the position is much needed (check out my fortnightly work reports for evidence). This is one of many projects that COVID-19 has stitched up. Welp.

Submissions

I helped with the submission party that our Engagement VP, Joanna and Campaigns Officer, Grace hosted for the Residential Tenancies Act where we asked student's their flattening horror stories and why better legislation which protects and ensures students have access to good housing is needed.



Working on the submission party for the RTA

COVID-19



Featuring in a NZUSA COVID-19 campaign

Yeah so COVID-19 happened. The first few months of the outbreak of the pandemic really pushed and tested everyone and everything but we've learnt so much and grown from it. Moving into a Level 4 lockdown meant that well, we were locked within our bubble. For me, that was at home with the parents. Anticipating the amount of work and free time I would have; I took home the desktop from the office and set up a mini VUWSA office space in the corner of my room. There were a lot of zoom

meetings, dabbling with Microsoft Team and Facebook messages and calls. The pandemic paved the way for particular student issues to arise such as the Halls Place Holder Fees, Student Hardship Fund, etc, and we worked to resolve them through internal and external lobbying. 2020, the year of COVID-19. Oh, we also welcomed Max Salmon into the Exec as the interim Education Officer, following Rinaldo's resignation and Taylah's (first) promotion to Academic VP.

Wellington Student Volunteer Army

During the Level 4 lockdown, I also helped out with the Wellington Student Volunteer Army as a community co-ordinator for the Northern Ward. The WSWA completed errands for people who could not leave their house during lockdown to complete important tasks due to complicating factors and needed help. As a community co-ordinator, I trained and helped lead a group of volunteers in completing task requests from those in need within our community, had oversight of the processing, administration and delegation of task requests and distributed protective equipment. I also was a point of communication for volunteers, requestee's and the lead organising team.



Training volunteers for the WSWA

Support Local Campaign

In response to the economic impact of COVID-19 on our local businesses, which are of utmost importance to students, I began and led the Support Local Campaign, #VUWSALOVESLOCAL. The purpose of the campaign is to drive a conversation among students to support local through active engagement and education on the multifaceted value of local businesses, group and initiatives. We partnered up with MAWSA to run parallel campaigns at our respective universities and interviewed representatives from various stakeholders such as Wellington City Council, local businesses and individuals, for the education aspect of the campaign. As part of the campaign, we also had a working group consisting of myself and three other Exec members, Clubs and Activities Officer Tara, Equity Officer, Parminder and Sustainability and Wellbeing Officer, Sophie, which we used to brainstorm ideas and share the workload by distributing tasks and responsibilities. The campaign is primarily run on social media except for a planned market expo at the start of Trimester 2.

Stress Free Study Week

Stress Free Study Week ran differently this year due to the one and only COVID-19. It is important for VUWSA to run this initiative as it helps students relax during the assessment period. I helped out with the breakfast service at the Kelburn and Pipitea campuses where we provided fruit, cereal, coffee, tea and hot chocolate.

CONCLUSION

I've absolutely loved being on the Executive and am ready for the next half of the year. LESHGOOOO.

