

Annual Report 2016

Laura Harris

Introduction

Otago University Students' Association (OUSA) had another successful year in many spheres in 2016. It is my pleasure to write this report on the behalf of that executive outlining many of the achievements and experiences of the year. As there is no formal structure for these reports, I have chosen to make this a brief overview of key aspects of the year. I urge readers wanting a deeper understanding of executive functions and achievements over the year to consult the quarterly reports and CEO reports for further details, as this is by no means an exhaustive list.

Executive Initiatives

The following is a list outlining achievements of executive members throughout the year. I have limited each member to two key initiative that in some way defined their year, but all executive members achieved over and above these initiatives:

Executive Role	Executive Member	Key Executive Initiatives
President	Laura Harris	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wider student engagement with university committees- Investigation into sexual assault policy and provisions
Vice President	Jarred Griffiths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Reviewed OUSA's internal policies and guidelines-Local Body Election campaign
Finance Officer	Jesse Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Regularly liaised with the accounts department to ensure financial situations were sound-Created several business proposals outlining opportunities for OUSA
Education Officer	Alexia Cochrane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Free Graduation photos- Computer-based examinations
Welfare Officer	Bryn Jenkins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Launched Thursdays in Black on campus- Free Flu vaccination trial
Postgraduate Officer	Mariana Te Pou	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Unified the Postgraduate student voice with collaboration between new postgrad ambassadors, the postgrad society and the postgrad officer.

		-Effectively represented postgrad views on GRSLC
International Officer	Rachel Goh	-Established the inaugural International Cultural Carnival -Re-established the International Cultural Council
Colleges Officer	Bayden Harris	-Brought Kitten Cuddle Fix into colleges during exam time -Re-established the Colleges Committee network.
Campaigns Officer	Sean Gamble	-Local Body Elections Campaign -24hr Study Space
Recreation Officer	William Guy	Club innovation initiative -Re-established the Affiliated Clubs Council

No resignations were received for any executive members this year, which is the first occurrence of this in recent years. Overall, this year's executive were a hardworking group of highly capable individuals who achieved success with their goals and initiatives- ultimately improving the student experience for students of the University of Otago. All of them have something to be proud of achieving during their time on the executive, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Executive Training

Executive training was definitely a highlight for many executive members. This is the second year training had been provided by Alison Stewart, and it was well suited to its intended audience having been changed and adapted from 2015 executive advice. Given that the environment executive members undertake their roles within is the university, it is vital they have as comprehensive understanding of key people and processes as early on in the year as possible. Often new executive members have no prior experience with OUSA and have a lot to learn in a short space of time. This makes Alison's university specific training a huge benefit to executive members, and her leadership training an asset to them as current student leaders as well as future leaders. Therefore, leadership training as a form of professional development adds another aspect of appeal to OUSA executive member roles and is yet another tangible benefit students are able to receive when they put themselves forth for these roles.

Resource People

All executive members were strongly encouraged to meet with their assigned resource people at least once, and some chose to take up the support of those people throughout the year, whereas for others once was enough for them to gain an understanding of their position in relation to university processes. Some executive members sought out their own resource people throughout the year, which is also completely acceptable as these were people they formed relationships with throughout the year. However, my recommendation would be for there to be a written document outlining the purpose of a resource person so that appropriate boundaries can be set for both parties, which will not compromise the independence of OUSA when working with university staff members.

Honorarium

The honorarium structure did not work effectively for this year's executive, and was a source of confusion and tension at different points of the year. It was hoped that a committee would be convened to review and recommended changes to the honorarium structure, but unfortunately, this was one of the tasks PolCom was unable to successfully complete this year. I do recommend that the 2017 executive if possible readdresses aspects of this.

Committee structure

This year, many executive members chaired internal committees with the view to increase communication between relevant executive members and the wider student committee. Policy work done by this year's Administrative Vice-President Jarred Griffiths ensured that these committees' term of reference and structures were up to date. Those committees were as follows:

Policy Committee (PolCom)- Chaired by Administrative Vice-President Jarred Griffiths (includes external representatives)

Financial Expenditure Committee (FEC)- Chaired by Finance Officer Jesse Hall (fully internal)

Education Committee (EdCom)- Chaired by Education Officer Alexia Cochrane (includes external representatives)

Welfare Committee (WelCom)- Chaired by Welfare Officer Bryn Jenkins (includes external representatives)

International Committee (ICOM)- Convened by International Officer Rachel Goh (made up of representatives from different cultural clubs)

Colleges Network- Chaired by Colleges Officer Bayden Harris (made up of representatives from each Residential College)

Grants Committee- Chaired by Recreation Officer William Guy (includes external representatives)

Local Body Elections Committee- Chaired by Campaigns Officer Sean Gamble (temporary committee, which includes external representatives)

Operations

Nothing that occurs at OUSA could happen without the wealth of experience, support and skill that is present in the staff members that work for the association. Together they manage different aspects of the organisation ensuring students are advocated for, represented, supported and given endless opportunities to engage with a variety of events, recreation, societies and opportunities. I know I can speak for the executive when I say our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the staff who work tirelessly to make this operation a success year after year, and whose skill and support meant we could see our own projects and ideas come to fruition. As students ourselves, we are grateful to you for all you do that positively affects the student community. A particular staff support to executive members over the years has always been Association Secretary Donna Jones, who again this year provided endless support to executive members in need.

Events

Both orientation and re-orientation were run successfully with widely positive media coverage of all events. Hyde Street was yet another success which is credit to the time and energy the events team put into organising an event that involved so many community stakeholders. The events team continues to outdo themselves with bigger, better, more diverse and always smoothly run events that make the University of Otago student experience the envy of many other student campuses around New Zealand.

Media and Communications

The media and communications team have been vital to operations this year at OUSA. This was the first year the media began to report on trouble in student quarter being perpetrated by non-students attracted to the atmosphere created by the student- dense, residential living environment. This was a positive move in better framing the views about students within the Dunedin community, which was becoming increasingly hostile after the TVNZ Sunday interview last year.

Communications Manager Tess Trotter was a particularly critical support with the balcony collapse incident, advising on matters, helping me deliver food parcels to the affected flats and navigating the press conference held in the aftermath. She was also a steady presence for the Hyde street press conference, and the Hyde Street costume media stories. I am very grateful for the guidance and advice she was able to offer all executive members who were involved with campaigns or tasks that required media coverage.

The manager of the communications team changed during 2016 when Tess left to spend more time with her family. A current member of the media and communications team Katrina McLennan was promoted into that role and took over during a smooth transition period. She was able to provide executive members a similar level of advice and support around media issues. Ultimately, there were multiple media issues under both managers, and OUSA was very lucky to have two such intelligent and able people in this position. There were further changes of staff near the end of the year with the resignation of long time designer Luci McConnon, and the employment of Sarah McDonald into Katrina McLennan's former position.

Clubs and Societies

The Clubs and Societies team also saw a couple of changes in staff, welcoming Sarah Taylor as the Clubs Development Officer and incorporating aspects of seeking external funding opportunities for students into her role as per campaign promises of the executive. The recreation centre also saw the resignation of its manager Matt Tucker (who was also a former manager of Student Support) and the promotion of Michaela Tangimetua into his position as Manager. During his time as Manager, Matt Tucker and his team were very supportive of many executive initiatives including the 24/hr study space, mental health and wellbeing day and kitten cuddle fix.

Student Support

This year Student Support created a new position for a senior advocate, which was filled by Justine. They also placed a focus on volunteering with the Volunteer Coordinator role held by Sarah McDonald (who at the end of the year moved to Katrina's position in Media and Comms), which will end at the close of the year, and be replaced by a Class Representative Coordinator position to be held by Craig Madigan. Student Support continue to provide outstanding and vital support to students in need, and this year established a funding pool for students in financial hardship to promote that cause even further. The Student Support centre continues to run the Are You Okay programme, ensuring the safety of students at OUSA events and beyond. Student welfare and advocacy is at the heart of every students association, and Philippa Keane and her wonderful team are certainly at the heart of ours.

Subsidiaries (Former and Current)

PMDL

Planet Media Dunedin Limited was finally dissolved at the beginning of this year. In its place to protect the media independence of former subsidiaries, who would officially become departments under the new structure, was a media independence policy passed by the executive outlining possible pathways for media concerns and issues.

UBS

University Book Shop (UBS) undertook significant discussions about building projects and the future plan for the bookshop. It is important for executives to realise that the transient nature of executives can cause unease in relationships such as this. This makes it important to set expectations in this relationship early on. This year we made good progress towards several building and financial goals as a board. The board consists of several passionate, intelligent and dedicated individuals who form a strong leadership team overseeing the operations of the bookshop. This is further enhanced by the extraordinary capabilities of Phillipa Duffy, the current General Manager who has been a driving force behind the dramatic turnaround in performance of the bookshop. This has been particularly important over the past few years as Dunedin was made a UNESCO city of literature. This relationship between the executive as stakeholders and the bookshop board is a very important one, and it should be treated as such. Working hard to understand the nuanced opportunities for the bookshop is something I would encourage executive members to engage in so they can actively participate in creating this vision.

UUL

University Union Limited also experienced a significant construction project this year, and the new Health and Safety legislation was the catalyst for several conversations about aspects of these processes in relation to the buildings. Beyond this, UUL experienced operations as normal throughout the year.

External Relationships and Engagement Opportunities

NZUSA

This year's relationship with NZUSA was much more constructive than it has been in previous years. The biggest contribution they made to the University of Otago campus was its establishment and oversight of the Thursday's in Black campaign, which fit perfectly with one of the executives goals this year. They also allowed for collaboration between campuses nationally on similar issues, like the 7EFTs cap which was removed in December 2015. One opportunity in this vein which unfortunately never came to pass was the idea of a "National Student Voting Day" for all tertiary institutions so that we could maximise national media interest and coverage, and demonstrate to local body candidates the strength and volume of the student voice. Although this never came to pass in a local body elections context, I would recommend using NZUSA as a platform to take this approach for the upcoming general election as a voting drive for students nationally.

Good One Party Register

The Party Register was an idea that came from Canterbury University Students' Association and described their relationship with their local police and other external stakeholders within the Christchurch community. The intention behind bringing it to Dunedin was to make sure students were adequately educated about their rights and the legal implications of them being hosts of a party. It was hoped that this could also be a mechanism that would advertise to students' the support that was available to them in case things got out of hand- such as Campus Watch, and also public service information about how to run a safe party. Ultimately, it hoped to reward students for being proactive and forward thinking hosts who considered the safety of their partygoers a priority. It was also hoped that this would help decrease some of the negative situations students were getting into, or having happen to them, which seemed particularly critical in the aftermath of the balcony collapse. It was never intended to be a punitive measure- although some parties went out of their way to present it as such. These dismantling efforts unfortunately were in large part the reason it was not implemented in Dunedin city. However, I do feel there is still opportunity to utilise the stakeholders who are brought together by events like Hyde Street to convene a regularly meeting group to discuss idea and initiatives to help students in this sphere, which is part of the collaborative atmosphere the party register was designed to provide.

Dunedin City Council

The CEO put a great deal of time and care into OUSA's relationship with the DCC over matters ensuring student safety, and securing benefits for OUSA as a result of that. Debbie Downs can be crediting with the sustained positive relationship OUSA holds with the DCC, particularly given the continuity she provides for them over the years.

The DCC were interested in supporting leadership awards for the University community, so awards to this effect were created to be included with the annual Blues and Golds awards. The DCC were not able to support these for their inaugural year, so they were fully funded by the university, but they may be interested in future years so this would be a good thing to follow up with.

Finally, the local body election campaign was a further opportunity for new and incoming councillors to engage with students on campus, and to give responses to

Incidents of Note

Hyde Street

Hyde street experienced its first year without any serious event (last year similarly having an overall positive outcome, but with a shoulder barged ambulance van the only serious situation to occur.) Though the media presence was heavy, only positive or fact-based stories were printed about the event. There was some potential for new liquor licensing law to cause OUSA to rethink aspects of this, but with the support of community stakeholders the event moving forward stands to be in safe hands.

Six60 Balcony Collapse

The six60 balcony collapse was a tragic event that occurred at a flat party organised by an external third party hosting the popular kiwi and six60. Health and safety measures had been overlooked in some areas, which led to a balcony in the flat complex becoming so overwhelmed with people that it snapped off, crushing students standing beneath it. Unfortunately, some students were seriously injured in this incident.

The way some members from the media acted around this story was extremely ill informed, antagonistic and unnecessarily harassing of the students involved. Some of the media stories themselves placed undue blame on the students and the reaction to them by the New Zealand public was insulting, offensive and hurtful to a community still reeling in the aftermath of the event itself. This spurred myself and the Vice-Chancellor to request a report into the events leading up to the tragedy, so that the voices of the students could be accurately heard and represented. This report is set to come out early 2017.

Humanities Cuts

A further event of note that occurred was the announcement that the Humanities division would be going through a review process. This brought up many important conversations about the importance of critical thought and the place of humanities in both a university context, and the wider community. Many executive members explored their personal views on this issue, and I participated in a group called "Rethinking the Bachelor of Arts Working Group" made up of academic and administrative staff where we discussed ideas to rejuvenate the Bachelor of Arts at the University of Otago. Therefore, the student voice was often present in many different forms as this discussion progressed throughout the year.

Anzac Day

This event was once again a success at bringing together people at the University Clocktower to remember sacrifices and value peace. Many executive members participated in this event and it was great to do so alongside Te Roopu Māori to signify the strength of that relationship and the parts of student life that bring us altogether.

In conclusion, 2016 was a year of successes for the executive, staff and students alike. I would like to again reiterate that this report is not an all-inclusive dictation of the year, but instead an insight into key aspects of it. Lastly, I would like to thank again the members of the 2016 executive, OUSA's extraordinary staff, and staff at the University of Otago who positively influenced the work and initiatives at OUSA this year, and most importantly the students- who are the reason we exist and are able to do what we do, it is all with you in mind. Finally, I would like to wish next year's executive the best of luck in their terms as student leaders- it is a very rewarding opportunity.

