

2020 President's Report

Ngā Rīpoata o Tumuaki



Mihi Whakatau

Kia hora te marino, kia whakapapa pounamu te moana, kia tere te kārohirohi i mua i tō huarahi.

May peace be widespread, may the sea glisten like greenstone, and may the shimmer of light guide you on your way.

Introduction

COVID-19

COVID-19 posed a number of challenges for the student body at large. While at the time it was over-described as 'unprecedented', the UCSA responded both diligently and collaboratively.

Incident Management Team

The UCSA led one of 12 streams managing the response to COVID-19 across the University via the President on the Incident Management Team (IMT). This team, reporting to the Vice-Chancellor, the Senior Leadership Team and Council, dealt with the 'nuts and bolts' of University operations, inter alia: academic matters; security; student and staff network connectivity; cleaning and hygiene; student and staff health and wellbeing; IT hardware provision; communications; and finance. This team's notable responses included the University expenditure of \$718,296 on hardship support for students and \$366,711 in providing technology and digital access for students experiencing hardship. UC spent at least \$781,030 on operational costs directly attributed to the pandemic response, for operations such as deep cleaning, communications and additional security.¹ In previous years the UCSA had no formal representation on this team whereas now our involvement has been solidified.

UCSA Responses

The UCSA team, staff and Executive alike made a number of efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, this included:

- \$10,000 Club Support Package and additional survival support.
- COVID-19 Hardship Scheme and Policy.
- Social Events and Engagement moved online such as:
 - Quizzes
 - Competitions
- Exam Breakfast and Fruit Drops all moved to houses
- Halls of Residence Enquiry Submission on behalf of hall residents

Additionally, representatives took on a significant amount of extra work in order to ensure the response factored in student views. This included:

- Informal and regular phone calls with the Vice Chancellor, including consultation in relation to moving all classes online and closing the University

¹ <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/media/documents/annual-reports/VCOF930-Annual-Report-20-Final.pdf>

2020 President's Report

- Establishing the International Student Experience Working Group
- Regular meetings with the UC Executive Director, Student Life, Services and Communications
- Academic Liaison Group (ALG)
- Academic support for Students Working Group
- Assessment Group
 - Primarily dealt with the nationwide response to assessment regulation and assessment process to ensure equitable outcomes for UC students
- Student Wellbeing Steering Group
- Regular liaison with UC Communications

Governance & Representation

In 2020 the UCSA Executive sat on approximately 50 boards and committees. The most significant step forward in this space was supporting Te Akatoki to maximum their membership of Academic Board through regular attendance at the meetings.

In 2020, the Central Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee was disestablished to make way for a new committee that will address the recommendations arising out of the Equity Review. This review is being carried out by Te Waka Pākākano.

Class Reps System

Class Reps are student representatives who act as liaison between classes and lecturers. Each class should have its own elected or volunteer Class Rep, whose task is to be the first point of contact for students in order to help resolve class issues, and to prevent these issues escalating.

In 2020, UCSA continued facilitating semesterly workshops between class representatives within each College and the corresponding UCSA Executive College Rep. Attendance of these workshops had increased from the previous year and continues to provide the UCSA with highly valuable feedback that is channeled back to the Colleges and UC.

Chief Executive

Dave Hawkey joined the UCSA as its Chief Executive in 2013. The Chief Executive is responsible for achieving the objectives of the Association through leadership and management of its activities and affairs.

In November 2020, Dave tendered his resignation with the UCSA to pursue new opportunities. During his tenure, Dave made significant contributions to the organisation from negotiating the insurance claim to overseeing the construction of the new UCSA building Haere-roa, the UCSA's COVID-19 response, and building new commercial opportunities while developing and maintaining key stakeholder relationships.

Advisory Board

UCSA has an Advisory Board that advises the Executive and Chief Executive on UCSA activities and operations, particularly on strategic governance and commercial decisions. The Board is made of up to six external professionals, as well as the President, Vice President and Finance & Engagement Officer. The Board meets once a month and the President chairs the meetings, while the Chief Executive sits in attendance.

The end of 2020 saw the resignation of Nigel Watson on the Advisory Board. Nigel provided support and guidance to the UCSA through a number of major challenges such as the Christchurch earthquakes, UCSA insurance claim, Haere-roa build and COVID-19.

The Advisory Board (external) members are:

Name	Year appointed
Nigel Watson	2006
Fiona James	2018
Jo De Joux	2018
Anna Galvan	2018
Murray Harrington	2020

Bicultural Representation

In 2020 the Executive worked to better understand and solidify the responsibilities of Te Tiriti and our partners in this, Te Akatoki. UCSA and Te Akatoki collaborated on events to celebrate Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori. This is in addition to the ongoing work through promoting the week through selected UCSA Food & Beverage outlets.

A number of efforts were made to better represent Te Akatoki and Māori students at large. The UCSA supported wider Māori student representation through the Academic Coordinator. Additionally, the UCSA lobbied with Te Akatoki for a Māori student seat alongside their UCSA counterparts, on a range of UC boards and committees.

The UCSA was supportive of Te Akatoki's move to restructure their Executive which similarly modeled the UCSA's in order to build their capacities in academic representation across the University.

Post a workshop with the Te Akatoki Executive, the UCSA discussed the Te Akatoki ex officio-position on the Executive including the long term commitment to Te Akatoki and how we could better support Māori student voice. Options to begin to meet this commitment included a gratuitous payment to the Te Akatoki Representative until longer term solutions could be implemented.

Pasifika Representation

Throughout 2020, we made a commitment to make the Pasifika student voice better heard and elevated. After student input at two focus groups held, a Pasifika Advisory Group was established as the first step in creating a stronger sense of belonging and Pasifika student voice on campus. This Pasifika Advisory Group is responsible for providing student feedback and direction to the UCSA Executive Committee regarding Pasifika students' needs and issues. The Pasifika Advisory Group provides advice and makes recommendations to the UCSA Executive Committee on issues and concerns. The position of Chairperson of the Pasifika Advisory Group will be allocated by the group in advance of the first meeting of the year and the membership consists of 5-10 members but no less than 5, nominated by Pasifika leaders and Pacific Development Team.

Postgraduate Representation

The Postgraduate Representative roles continued to gain momentum with a focus on postgraduate student representation, communication and a sense of engagement/connection to campus.

International Representation

Likewise this role also continued to grow with the University's focus on internationalisation, the establishment of the International Student Working Group to prioritise student support issues and opportunities, and the challenges presented by the pandemic and border closures.

Notable Submissions

2020 saw a number of key submissions made to enable change in collaboration with students. An overview of these includes:

- Enquiry into Student Accommodation ²
- ECHO360 Submission to Academic Board ³
- 60+ Course Proposals providing feedback to new courses or courses being changed at UC
- Submission to Council for Legal Education on Exam Weightings

Engagement

Over 2020 a number of efforts were made to engage students in different issues and events. This included new ways to engage and reward that participation. Primarily, the efforts were co-ordinated by the Finance and Engagement Officer. The efforts included:

- **Two Cents for a Week's Rent**

In previous years, the UCSA Executive have traditionally held open office hours, whereby once a week, students can engage with student Executive members in person. However, we have recognised that without prompting students with specific topics we would like feedback on, students may not be as inclined to engage with us through this mechanism. Accordingly at the beginning of Semester Two, we launched an engagement initiative called 'Two Cents for a Week's Rent'. Each week, we posed a topic that we wanted

²https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/submissions-and-advice/document/52SCEW_EVI_98038_EW8330/university-of-canterbury-students-association

³<https://ucsa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Website-Content/About-Us/Important-Documents/Meeting-&-Minutes/ECHO360-lecture-recording-paper-September-2020.pdf>

students' 'two cents on'. Discussion topics included things such as how they would make Haere-roa better for students, what new O-Week event they would like to see, UCSA Elections, general elections, etc. In return, students who engaged went into the draw to win a weekly cash prize equal to the average week's rent in a Canterbury student flat (e.g. \$137.65 exactly).

Ultimately, the 'Two Cents for a Week's Rent' initiative has played out very well. Since its implementation at the start of Semester Two, the initiative has attracted responses from over 1,582 students.

- **Study and exam weeks**

The Executive was able to engage with students on a personal level by doing flat fruit box drops and breakfast drops. These initiatives were met with excellent feedback.

- **The Suggestion Box**

This is an online portal where students can let us know about any new initiatives or changes they want to see the UCSA implement, concerning UCSA policy, our services, or a wider issue they're passionate about. The motivation for this initiative was to give students an anonymised and more formal alternative to posting suggestions on the UCSA Noticeboard.

- **Email and Video Initiatives**

Executive video updates highlighting key points from our recent Executive meetings became a monthly occurrence. We were really encouraged that these videos attracted around 3000 views on average.

Over the year, we made significant efforts to connect monthly via emails to all students, Postgraduate and International student emails. In order to close the feedback loop, these covered updates of particular efforts from the Executive in these spaces and meant students were better informed overall.

- **Elections**

Over the national Election we worked with the Electoral Commission to increase voter turnout amongst students. This resulted in a significant increase of 15% in the Ilam area and was credited to our partnership with the Youth Advocates of the Electoral Commission. Efforts to raise this included:

- Events teaching people how to vote.
- Collaborations with Clubs, Tip Top and UCSA cafes to incentivise students to enrol to vote.
- Collaboration with Pacific Youth Advisory Council to coordinate panels of Local MPs.

Partnership Agreement

Extensive work was undertaken by the UCSA and UC in collaboration with Te Waka Pākākano to create an overarching document bringing together a number of existing agreements as well as incorporating academic representation. It is anticipated that this agreement will be signed by UC and the UCSA in early 2021.

Memberships

Over 2020 memberships shone through as an important topic to consider as many potential partner organisations showed benefit and assistance in times of crisis. The Executive, in consultation with students at large, considered these and made a number of observations about key memberships.

New Zealand International Student Association (NZISA)

The 2020 Executive made a recommendation to 2021 Executive that they present a proposal to the student body in 2021 for the UCSA to become members of the NZISA. This was done on the understanding that:

- In the short time the NZISA has been established it was able to clearly show and articulate the benefit and community they bring to the International Students across New Zealand Universities.
- The costs associated with NZISA annual membership are:
0.45 cents per full cost international students therefore for UC, based on 2020 international student EFTs of 1688, the fee would be \$759.60
- We believe this would be a valuable investment given the continuing growth in the International Rep's role, the wider UC focus on Internationalisation, and the challenges faced both locally and nationally by international students particularly in light of the coronavirus.
- We also see this as timely given the recent establishment of the International Student Experience Working group, and its focus on not only issues impacting international students at UC, sharing ideas and initiatives from across the university and developing pan-university initiatives, but also a wider priority of identifying best practices from other institutions across NZ.

New Zealand Union of Students Associations (NZUSA)

In 2020 it was recommended by the UCSA Executive not to undertake NZUSA membership. At the time, it was not intended to be an all-encompassing decision, knowing that at some point in the future, it may pose benefit. The concept of National Student Voice is one which the UCSA recognises the importance of. Particularly, it recognises this in light of COVID-19, and exceptional New Zealand

2020 President's Report

Union of Students Associations (NZUSA) leadership over 2020. However, it remains that the UCSA still holds a number of concerns with membership. While it is certainly appreciated that a number of students have expressed interest in membership, it should be noted the context of this interest:

- A Facebook page was created and shared across the UCSA Platform - UCSA Noticeboard. The UCSA Noticeboard attracted 25k members and many posts often see hundreds if not thousands of engagements. The Facebook group focused on NZUSA Membership has 89 members.
- On a Facebook poll in July, 247 people voted not to join vs 87 who voted to join.
- One presidential candidate who was not elected openly expressed a desire to join. Others did note they would consider it.
- A membership requisition was received mid 2020 with 124 signatures. The content of the requisition seemed to be a direct motion to join the NZUSA. However, on reflection with the member who put forward the requisition, it presented as signatures of students who had been sitting in the library and not directly presented with the motion. However, in our view, this requisition still however holds importance.

The Executive saw the following as compelling reasons for entry:

1. Power in the collective – recognising change that can be made collectively.
2. Maintain relationships in the national education system which currently have to be maintained by the President.
3. Information sharing and ability to pick up trends nationally and create change nationally.

The Executive saw the following as barriers to entry:

1. Constitutional Structure – The structure has controls that do not reflect how most student associations conduct themselves in relation to their own constitutions. The most recent example of this can be found in the OUSA's request to become associate members. It should not be up to other associations to determine whether or not members are suffering financial hardship or not – especially when they are weighing up capital works that contribute to their building being more accessible vs membership of the NZUSA.

Additionally, upon reading the constitution, the members of the union are bound heavily by many rules and regulations, whereas the NZUSA governance and operations are not equally so. The UCSA believes in the opposite approach and this is reflected in our own constitution.

2. Governance & Continuity – there is a lack of continuity from President to President to ensure a sustainable organisation. The organisation is arguably not prepared to change, is unstable and under performs. There are no checks

and balances on an ongoing basis resulting in inconsistent profits, reporting and strategic vision. The credibility of the NZUSA has been called into question after the furore of the ACC research scandal.

3. The Union Mission – The UCSA feels the NZUSA should be a student Union, looking after the interests of, and securing direct and tangible benefits for, the members. This is fundamentally different from asking all members and associations to join campaigns that the NZUSA spearheads on our behalf.
4. The NZUSA is not representative due to lack of membership/structure. The NZUSA does not represent the 400,000 voices of students as stated on its website as not all Associations belong (i.e 3/8 Universities don't).
5. The NZUSA is not representative due to lack of membership/structure. The NZUSA does not represent the 400,000 voices of students as stated on its website as not all Associations belong (i.e 3/8 Universities and over half of the Polytech Associations don't). This is a particular issue for us because we don't see a space where we fit.
6. A number of Associations have their own resources to fulfil NZUSA's mission and are doing so. The UCSA, for example, has an Academic Coordinator who supports our Executive in the UC context.
7. What thought has gone into an alternative model? – One of the reasons the UCSA has been reluctant to join is the concept of *value* for money - lower costs, more value, relevance and accountability – both to students as well as to Associations. For example, in 2019 the NZUSA reported a 70k profit- ask if we were to be a paying member how is this going to further NZUSA's work in its current model when it seems in excess now.
8. Each Association has different issues – e.g. accommodation prices. A number of issues need regional context. This is achievable but not given.
9. Associations run the risk of losing their own voice – they have to adhere to NZUSA's agenda.
10. The lack of delivery that has been perceived to be a benefit in 2020. Grade bump, Accommodation, Presidents resigning, National Action Plan (which the UCSA signed and got the Vice Chancellor to endorse) were good concepts but failed to deliver change. For us this is a concern that has existed since we exited the NZUSA in 2000.

Commercial Activity

The UCSA, whilst facing challenges from COVID-19 maintained a strong commercial arm in 2020. The UCSA's commercial activities support the services the UCSA provides including the building, events and clubs, maintaining ownership and therefore regulations of the outlets. Key new initiatives included:

- Otto (Pizza Outlet) & Oishii (Sushi Outlet) were passed as concepts in June last 2020 and were opened in February 2021.
- UCSA won the Ka Ora Ka Ako | Healthy school lunches contract

Financials

The UCSA has reported a deficit of \$113,343 for the 2020 financial year following the financial impact of COVID-19. This figure includes interest income from the funds UC are holding and investing on our behalf as a result of our insurance claim. Revenue for the year was \$9,535,157 while operating expenses were \$9,594,976. The underlying operating deficit was \$113,343 including depreciation of \$1,050,617.

The UCSA qualified to receive \$1,492,995.20 from the Government's COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme. This was vital in keeping our staff employed.

Additionally, in conjunction with Te Waka Pākākano, the UCSA was responsible for deploying \$742,000 worth of COVID-19 related Financial Hardship Funds that the University received from the Tertiary Education Commission.

In 2020, the UCSA solidified the loan agreement for Haere-roa with UC. This resulted in a payment of insurance proceeds and interest totalling \$8,447,267.14 and an additional payment of \$3.5 million. The balance of \$5.498 million is to be paid over a 50 year loan subject to an initial interest rate of 3.25%.