

BOARD REPORT

President

USU BOARD MEETING DATE: 29/11/2024

REPORT PERIOD: November 2024

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| Recommendation 1 That the Board notes the report of the President. | X | X |

HEADLINE SUMMARY

| Count | Key Issue | Key Areas |
|-------|--|---|
| 1 | Organisational Health and Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial health • Organisational health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisation restructure |
| 2 | Governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WHS committee ○ Debates committee ○ Governance committee ○ P&C committee ○ C&S committee • Incorporation • Working party updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student Safety Conference ○ New Nominations Committee |
| 3 | Stakeholder Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UI ○ University Groups ○ Student Life • External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FoodHub ○ Other Unions • Student Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SUPRA |
| 4 | Interaction and Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Fest • F&B Strategy commissioned |

ORGANISATIONAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Financial Health

I am pleased with the Board's strategy concerning financial health and stability. In pursuing a greater buffer in the 2025 budget, we are planning for the long-term future of the USU, which will assist us in offering a first-tier experience to students. Thank you to Michelle and her team for all the work they have done this semester to provide the organization with a budget for 2025, and to continue to produce high-quality financial statements for the benefit of the Board.

In noting the positive result, the USU has attained this month due to the strong performance of Graduations (\$132,000 above forecast) and HostCo (\$174,000 above forecast), the slight dip in Hermann's and our other outlets must be analysed to ensure that our offerings are in line with students' preferences and expectations. As the USU embarks on its comprehensive Food & Beverage (F&B) strategy, it is important to note key areas of potential growth, with yearly figures indicating that Fisher, despite its relatively slim offering, regularly outperforms our other venues.

Operational Health

The USU has embarked on a major organisational restructure this month to align the USU with our strategy for 2024-27. Since the Town Hall on the 11th of November, the SLT have been working expeditiously to complete the consultation process with affected staff, which concluded at the end of last week, in line with our Enterprise Agreement.

Whilst some positions have been affected, we are committed to growth, which is why I am excited by 9 new positions that the USU will be hiring for in the coming month, including a new Manager of Services role to manage our F&B and digital transformation. I am confident that the restructure, which should have been done years ago, will bring our organisation a culture of high-performance, and am confident that we have retained all institutional knowledge through this process necessary to transition effectively to the new structure. My sincere thanks to members of the SLT team for their hard work during what is naturally an uncomfortable process.

GOVERNANCE

Committee Updates

The Workplace Health and Safety committee met this month to discuss several new policy changes, and to hear from staff about areas in which WHS can improve. Whilst I am pleased with the positive feedback given to USU policies, including our newly created Right to Disconnect Policy, I am keen to keep the two-way street between department representatives and the Board going. For example, in the name of prudence, we will be holding over the approval of the Uniform Policy to the next meeting to provide the committee with further time to go to their teams and seek feedback on best practice. Thank you to Michelle and Nicole for all their work organising and running these sessions.

The Debates committee met this month for the final meeting of the current team. I would like to thank Will Price and his committee for all their hard work this year, which has culminated in one of the most successful campaigns the Union has ever seen, particularly with regards to Australs. Thank you to Grace Wallman for her efforts in chairing the committee.

The Governance committee met this month to discuss a number of matters, including to discuss the appointment of a new governance consultant to drive the Board through the incorporation process. I am pleased with the position the committee has come to and look forward to engaging that consultant in December. Furthermore, the committee assessed a proposal from Ethan regarding portfolios, which will be coming to the Board.

The P&C committee also met this month to discuss a range of matters, including the organizational restructure. On the agenda too were staff surveys conducted for the SLT and Board, and it was resolved that, after the next survey takes place following the restructure, the Board would be presented with both reports with tracked metrics to gauge how staff sentiment has changed through the restructure.

Working Groups

Under the indefatigable leadership of Grace Porter, the Student Safety Conference working group has met again a number of times this semester. Whilst significant progress has been made towards the conference next year, including a bid to secure some groundbreaking speakers, the committee also concluded its report with recommendations from last year's conference. I am very happy to report that these recommendations were accepted in full by the SCAG group, and we will be working with that group and the university's new prevention lead to implement them.

As part of our bid to fill external committee positions, I will be canvassing directors on a new 'Nominations Working Group' in December to make recommendations as to individuals and endorse their appointment. I ask directors to please look out for that correspondence from me and engage where appropriate to ensure that we fill knowledge gaps in our organization.

An informal group consisting of myself, Julia and James continue to work on our DGR presentation to the University, as approved by this Board last meeting.

Incorporation

Progress continues with incorporation planning. The latest consultations have been positive, with recommendations aligned with legal and governance requirements, as presented to the governance committee this month. Thank you to Ben for his leadership in this space.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

University

Engagement with the University is continuing through monthly Student Life meetings, which have been newly established. These meetings have proven to be an effective forum for collaboration, allowing both parties to align on key student-centred initiatives. By maintaining open communication channels, we ensure that the USU's priorities are reflected in broader University strategies, fostering a unified approach to enhancing campus life.

The USU's active involvement in the Food on Campus Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) is driving improvements in food quality and accessibility across campus. This collaboration has been instrumental in addressing critical issues around affordability and nutritional options, ensuring that students have better choices tailored to their needs. Our contributions have been well-received and continue to shape meaningful changes in the campus food ecosystem.

Michael and I will be meeting with UI as soon as they have completed their decant and investment strategy for Wentworth. In the meantime, our investment into the ISL will be completed by the end of the year, representing the first major uplift to that space in years.

The Executive will be meeting with Chancellor Thodey in January to discuss student experience initiatives, and I will be again meeting with Vice Chancellor Scott to continue our discussions on the CES and other matters relevant to the USU.

External relations

The USU has garnered external recognition for its impactful programs, with the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently spotlighting the FoodHub initiative. This media coverage underscores the importance of our efforts in tackling food insecurity and highlights the Union's role as a leader in student support.

Additionally, I have been in contact with Luc Mackay, the University of Canterbury Student Union, over positive initiatives our two Unions run. These conversations have been mutually beneficial, offering insights into innovative approaches to student engagement and welfare, and have underscored the need to me of a country-wide forum for Student Unions like ours.

Student Groups

Shirley has continued to engage SUPRA on their proposal for international student travel cards in the external group she sits on. This progress is pivotal to offering students beneficial outcomes.

INTERACTION AND EXPERIENCE

Planning for Welcome Fest 2025 is well underway, with Campus Activity Coordinators and Welcome Fest Leaders taking the lead in organizing this critical event. The festival will focus on creating a vibrant and inclusive environment for new students, helping them transition into university life with ease. Through a variety of activities, we aim to showcase the diversity and energy of campus life, fostering connections among students and with the broader campus community.

November saw the end of our calendar events, with remaining Day trips and USU Eats Exam Ready program concluding. I would like to thank Sam and her team for their extensive efforts this year!

As we approach the end of 2024, the USU is in a strong position both financially and operationally. Our achievements this year reflect our commitment to delivering value to students, fostering meaningful collaborations with the University and external partners, and ensuring a vibrant and inclusive campus experience. Through strategic initiatives such as Welcome Fest 2025, improvements to our Food & Beverage operations, and progress in incorporation planning, we are laying a solid foundation for future growth and sustainability.

The positive outcomes highlighted in this report, including our financial surplus, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and successful programs, demonstrate the dedication and hard work of our team. Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on innovation, responsiveness, and student-centred leadership to ensure the USU remains a vital part of campus life. I look forward to working closely with the Board and stakeholders to build on these successes and deliver on our shared vision for 2025 and beyond.