

# AGM 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020

## Item 5: Report of the Chair

The logo for ACUR, consisting of the letters 'A', 'C', 'U', and 'R' in a white, sans-serif font, arranged in a 2x2 grid within a green square.

The past year has seen the development of ACUR into a mature community of institutions, staff and students who are passionate about promoting and advancing the spread of undergraduate research in Australasia. It has also presented some challenges.

### Events

In December 2019, the first **UGR Xchange Colloquium** was held in collaboration with The University of Sydney Business School. Members of the ACUR Steering Group and Institutional managers came together to exchange ideas and hear about good practice in supporting undergraduate research engagement. An interesting line-up of speakers was arranged and there was lots of opportunity for discussion. Feedback following the event showed that delegates had truly experienced ACUR as a vibrant community.

Since 2012, over 900 students have been supported by approximately 40 universities to present their research at ACUR conferences and to experience the special ACUR community of scholars. Unfortunately, owing to the coronavirus pandemic, this year was the first year without such a conference. However, instead, our Student Committee launched **the Great ACUR Undergraduate Research Writing Project**. Prizes to the value of \$1500 have been donated. The deadline is 30<sup>th</sup> September and as I write this report, submissions are being sent for review.

### Membership

Initially this year, our membership base grew, but this was short-lived as the pandemic came to bite and we lost a third of our institutional members as universities tightened financial belts and decided not to renew their subscriptions. This has caused us to think hard about the value we add to our members and the need to expand our membership base. We already offer consultancy and resources, and shortly members will have their own special section on the website with opportunities to share ideas and strategies, information about undergraduate research opportunities, webinars, slides and videos of events such as our colloquia etc. All of this we hope will add value to members. We are going to need further sources of funding if we are to continue to fulfil our vision to foster the growth of undergraduate research within Australasia. With this in mind, we have already prepared the groundwork to reach out to potential sponsors.

### Student Committee

The Student Committee has been working through social media (@acurforstudents) and in a variety of ways to spread ideas and experiences of undergraduate research amongst students. There have, for example, been some fabulous profiles of undergraduate researchers and their projects, and the Writing Project has been advertised extensively. I am grateful to all the members of the Committee for the work they have done and particularly to Lachlan Deimel for his leadership of this group.

### Raising the profile of undergraduate research provision and achievements

ACUR is connected to international organisations promoting undergraduate research and this year four members of the Executive have been involved in writing chapters about undergraduate research in Australia and New Zealand for three different books on undergraduate research being edited by our international collaborators. Our Newsletter (URNA) is also one way of keeping in touch with many people at home and overseas and two issues were produced this year. My thanks to the Editor Eric Pawson, and to the University of Canterbury for its production.

### And finally

The two-year term of office of many members of the Executive ends this October and later we will consider nominations for the next two years. Our Communications Officer, Nicki Lee has decided not to contest her position and I'd like particularly to thank her for all she has done for ACUR, particularly her fantastic contributions to the website. We wish her well in her new position as DVC at La Trobe University. I'd like to express thanks to everyone on the ACUR 84-member Steering Committee, and to particularly pay tribute to the ACUR Executive: Denise Wood, Lilia Mantai, Rachel Spronken-Smith, Eric Pawson, Lachlan Deimel, Rubay Tessema, Caitlin MacDonald, Seak Lin Ly and Donna Bennett for making possible these events and innovations.

**Angela Brew**  
**Chair of ACUR**

**AGM 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020****Item 6: Report of the Executive Committee****Executive members**

- ACUR Chair: Angela Brew (Macquarie University)
- Vice Chair: Denise Wood (Sunshine Coast University)
- Treasurer: Lilia Mantai (The University of Sydney)
- New Zealand Representative: Rachel Spronken-Smith (Otago University)
- Communications: Nicolette Lee (La Trobe University)
- URNA Editor: Eric Pawson (Canterbury University)
- 2019 Conference Convenor: Rubay Tessema (Australian National University)
- Student Representative: Lachlan Deimel (Australian National University)
- Executive Officer: Donna Bennett (Office Logistics)

**Executive meetings**

The Executive Committee met twice during the year as required by the ACUR Constitution. Meetings took place by Zoom on 21 February and 11 August. In the meantime, there was regular email communication.

**Coronavirus Strategy**

A Coronavirus strategy was circulated in March. Executive members agreed to reduce administrative hours from a notional 9 hours per week to 6 hours per week to save costs. In discussion with the agreed and potential conference organisers the Executive decided to defer the 2020 conference until 2021 and to defer the 2021 conference until 2022.

**Student Committee transition**

AGM 2019 Minutes Point 6.3 stated. "Executive was asked to bring a proposal to the next AGM about lengths of term for Chairs of the Student Committee and whether they need to be undergraduates".

At the meeting on 21 February, the Executive Committee discussed this and accepted that the Chair of the Student Committee would serve for two years; one year in the ascendant position and one year in the descendent position. The Executive agreed to recommend to AGM that this position would be an undergraduate in the first year, but in the descendent position may not still be an undergraduate.

**ACTION: The AGM is asked to endorse this recommendation.**

**Bi-annual Executive review and report to the AGM**

The Constitution states (point 13.2) "In the interests of good governance, the Executive will complete a biennial self-review and present this at the following Annual General Meeting". Prior to the Executive meeting on 11th August, the Executive members discussed via email how to do this. Each person completed a self-assessment form, and a SWOT analysis was carried out during the meeting. A draft report was circulated for comment.

### Key Issues that arose from the review

1. The organisation is more articulated and more organised than a few years ago. We have a better sense of who we are and where we are going. However, the vision and values required further work.
2. There is a strong student voice. Staff and students are working together throughout.
3. We have been branching out with events, including the X-Change Colloquium, the Writing Project and the proposed Posters in Parliament exhibition, as well as the annual conference.
4. ACUR relies on institutional memberships and this needs to be communicated to potential and existing members, but it is vulnerable as a membership organisation as has been shown through the pandemic. Ongoing membership is a challenge when university finances are stretched.
5. It is disappointing that many universities are not investing in ACUR when lots of their students are attending conferences. We need to open up membership to foundations and corporates that directly sponsor undergraduate research. We also need corporate sponsorship, and we need to leverage new mechanism for associate members.
6. Direct benefits to institutions need to be more firmly articulated.

### Executive actions taken following the review

- Vision and values statements were discussed and agreed. These are now on the website.
- Initial attempts to widen the membership base have been made, encouraging more individual memberships and gathering data for corporate publicity.
- A members-only section of the website is being established with a view to adding value to members including providing for the ongoing exchange of ideas and developments online.
- The Executive has decided to meet more often in order to plan for the future and to manage the level of business.

**ACTION: AGM is asked to note that the Executive Committee has completed its biennial self-review.**

### **Other ACUR Executive Activities**

**Conferences.** The Executive took action to ensure appropriate completion of 2019 conference processes. In light of the Coronavirus strategy other conference support was suspended. The Executive has however continued to liaise with the 2021 conference hosts.

**Colloquium.** On 4th December 2019 an Undergraduate Research X-Change Colloquium was held jointly with the University of Sydney Business School. Forty-five staff and students from member universities came together to discuss and showcase faculty and departmental strategies, and institutional approaches to developing undergraduate research. Workshops focused on employability, and on curriculum decision-making, and the event opened with a keynote by a student and her supervisor and concluded with a student panel.

**The Great ACUR Undergraduate Research Writing Project.** This is an initiative of the Student Committee in collaboration with the Executive. \$1500 in prize money has been donated. Student submissions closed on 30th September.

**Undergraduate Research News Australasia (URNA).** The Executive has continued to publish and distribute widely this twice-yearly newsletter.

**Research.** Two ACUR research projects have been planned. One is an impact evaluation of the effects of ACUR conference presentation; the other is a project on assessing undergraduate research being carried out in collaboration with Deakin University's Centre for Research on Assessment and Digital Learning.

**Website improvements.** The Executive contributed many improvements to the website including the addition of a student section, and linkage to updated resources.

**ACTION: The AGM is asked to note the report of the Executive Committee.**

## Treasurer's Report

### 2019 – 2020 Financial Year

Reported Balance as at 30 June 2019	\$27,379.75
Cash Balance as at 30 June 2020 (as per Balance Sheet)	\$37,638.53
Profit for 2019-2020 financial year	\$7,812.69

#### Points to Note

In last year's Treasurer's report, \$500 was shown as Expenditure for Project payment. This money had been allocated but had not been expensed until after 30 June 2019. Therefore the actual Balance was \$500 more = \$27,879.75.

Membership fees were established at the 2018 AGM. For the 2019-20 membership/financial year, they were:

1. Institutional membership (Australian and NZ Universities) = \$3,000
2. Affiliate Membership = \$500
3. Individual membership = \$75 waged; \$25 unwaged
4. Student membership = \$10 (since 2019, included as part of conference fee)

#### Actions:

- 1.1. **The AGM is asked to consider and approve the Treasurer's Report for the year 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020**
- 1.2. **Membership fees: To approve the membership fees as stated in the Treasurer's Report for the remainder of the 2020-2021 financial year**

# Australasian Council for Undergraduate

Research Inc.

Suite 154, 4/16-18 Beenleigh Redland Bay Rd,  
LOGANHOLME QLD 4129

## Balance Sheet

As of June 2020

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Assets		
Current Assets		
Westpac Business #642093	\$37,079.08	
Paypal	\$559.45	
Total Assets		<u>\$37,638.53</u>
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors	\$2,446.40	
Total Current Liabilities	<u>\$2,446.40</u>	
Donation Provision: Project	\$500.00	
Total Liabilities		<u>\$2,946.40</u>
Net Assets		<u>\$34,692.13</u>
Equity		
Current Year Earnings	\$7,812.69	
Historical Balancing	\$26,879.44	
Total Equity		<u>\$34,692.13</u>

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## Profit & Loss Statement

July 2019 through June 2020

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Income		
Membership Subscriptions		
Student Member	\$1,120.00	
Individual Full-Time Member	\$300.00	
Institutional Member	\$36,000.00	
Processing Fee Collected		\$161.00
Events		
Event Registrations	\$1,078.00	
Event Sponsorship	\$1,000.00	
Total Income		<u>\$39,659.00</u>
Cost of Sales		
Gross Profit		<u>\$39,659.00</u>
Expenses		
Bank & Merchant Fees		\$463.43
Postage		-\$3.75
Statutory & License Fees		\$142.70
Travel		\$1,053.83
Administration Expenses		
Association Management	\$26,455.00	
Printing	\$27.83	
Postage	\$129.69	
Dues & Subscriptions	\$3,087.26	
Event Expenses		
Catering	\$524.23	
Total Expenses		<u>\$31,880.22</u>
Operating Profit		<u>\$7,778.78</u>
Other Income		
Interest Income		\$33.91
Project Donation - Prev Yr		\$500.00
Total Other Income		<u>\$533.91</u>
Other Expenses		
Project Payments		\$500.00
Total Other Expenses		<u>\$500.00</u>
Net Profit / (Loss)		<u>\$7,812.69</u>