



11.15 University of the Sunshine Coast

Summary of Impact

In summary, the impact of VSU at USC is assessed as moderate overall with impacts on the organisations providing student services assessed as follows:

- mild, in terms of annual operating funds lost, on USC itself. The reduction in the ASF funds available for use by the University of Sunshine Coast Student Guild (the Guild) resulted in a loss of income for USC from, for example, the collection of rent from the Guild for the use of its offices, and an increase in expenditure as the University took over services previously provided by the Guild. However, it should be noted that as a new university, when VSU was

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introduced USC did not have the advantage of having an established student support infrastructure paid for by years of Student Club/Guild contributions. It has therefore been faced with making significant capital investment in sports and other support facilities infrastructure. If this factor was taken into account the impact on USC could be assessed as moderate, or moderate to severe; and,

- severe for the Guild which had no form of income other than the ASF. Previously it received from the University more than 90 per cent of the ASF collected. The loss of this income resulted in staff redundancies and a significant reduction in the range and quality of the services it provides.

Overview of the Campus Services Organisations at USC

The Sunshine Coast University College was founded in 1994 and opened in 1996 on a 100 ha site at Sippy Downs. It was granted full university status in 1999 and changed its name to the University of the Sunshine Coast. It now has 5,246 students with 4,750 studying on-campus and 496 off-campus. Its 855 international students come from 47 countries. In 2005 its EFTSL was 3,267. It has a total of 423 staff.²³⁰

The Guild was established as a statutory incorporated body under the *University of the Sunshine Coast Act* 1998 and is a separate, not-for-profit entity to the University. It has a Board of thirteen elected Directors and prior to VSU had five paid staff.

It should be stated that obtaining information for this report has been difficult, not because the staff and students involved have been reluctant to cooperate, but, it would appear, because of demands on their time and a lack of resources. As a consequence it has been necessary to estimate some figures, particularly for the areas occupied by various sports infrastructure.

Overview of Impact on Amenities Fees and Subsequent Support Measures

Total income from compulsory amenities and services fees in 2005 is calculated to be of the order of \$520,000. In the first semester of 2006 it was approximately \$390,000.

Following the introduction of VSU the Guild retrenched staff members, moved into more affordable accommodation on-campus and significantly reduced the number and quality of the services provided. It continues to provide some services to all students and some specialised services to financial members for a fee of \$20 per semester.

The University was forced to take on two additional staff members in order to provide essential services previously provided by the Guild, specifically a University Sports and Activities Officer and a Health and Wellbeing Officer. Other departments of the University were given increased areas of responsibility/duties to support the

²³⁰ As at 18 February 2008 further background concerning the University of the Sunshine Coast could be obtained from the USC web site at:

<http://www.usc.edu.au>

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continuation of activities. Significant changes to restructuring of space and location of services was required to ensure the continuation of these services.

Detailed Impact on USC

The University lost income of some \$50,000 it received from compulsory amenities and services fees (after returning the majority of the funds to the Guild), incurred set up costs for new staff and equipment and became committed to estimated on-going additional costs of \$217,000. The on-going costs include the salaries of the new staff members it employed to take over the work previously performed by the employees of the Guild who lost their jobs. It received a \$5 million grant from the VSU Transition Fund for the construction of a multi-purpose indoor stadium which opened on 17 July 2007.

Its main facilities/services include:

- indoor sports stadium (opened in July 2007, 3,705m² and cost \$10 million) featuring:
 - three netball, basketball and volleyball courts,
 - four badminton courts,
 - one international sized futsal court,
 - timber sports thrust floor,
 - six large toilets/change rooms,
 - tiered spectator seating, and
 - air-conditioning;
- IAAF-standard athletics track (opened in 1999, 2.5 hectares) featuring:
 - eight and ten lane running tracks,
 - equipment for hurdles, steeplechase, javelin, shot put, discus, hammer throw, high jump, long jump, triple jump, pole vault and disabled throw events, and
 - night lighting, toilets, and kiosk;
- two multipurpose playing fields (1.5 hectares):
 - suitable for rugby union, touch football and soccer, and
 - one with night lighting;
- two multipurpose hard courts (opened in 2006, 2,400m²):
 - suitable for tennis, basketball and netball, and
 - both with night lighting;
- University Club overlooking the sports fields (840m²); and
- approval has been given for the construction of a five-storey, specialised Health and Sport Centre which will house the new School of Health and Sport Sciences, public health clinics, testing and research laboratories, a fitness centre, premises for the University's Centre for Healthy Activities, Sport and Exercise and staff offices. The University in 2006 launched a \$3.5 million public fundraising campaign, and in May 2007 year the Federal Government

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pledged \$3.5 million over the next two years which has provided a major boost to the project. The first stage, the two lower floors, is scheduled for completion in 2008 and will cost around \$3.5 million.

The main negative impacts of VSU have been:

- loss of future funding that was expected from the growing Guild;
- loss of income from rent of space to the Guild (\$46,000 per annum), set up costs for changes to staff (\$30,000) and on-going costs estimated to be \$217,000;
- required an additional two positions to be created in the organisation;
- required a redistribution of duties and responsibilities to existing departments/faculties; and
- the University has assumed responsibility for the payment of student accident insurance. The initial cost was a premium of \$3,066 and with transactional costs is estimated to be around \$5,000 this calendar year for very few claims.

The main positive impacts of VSU have been:

- the grant from the VSU Transition Fund has provided assistance with the construction of the indoor multi-sports facility; and
- students have received a positive financial benefit by being able to voluntarily join a student body and pay for respective services.

Considerations for the Future:

- further reorganisation of the services required by students may be necessary if the Guild has to make further reductions in its services; and
- funding of further capital works in a new university.

Detailed Impact on the Guild

The Guild partially retained a membership model with a membership fee of \$20 per semester for those wishing to avail themselves of the additional services it offers. It had to reduce staff numbers with the positions of manager, receptionist and several office personnel being made redundant. Its main facilities/services include:

- services delivered to all students:
 - cable TV,
 - fridge and microwave,
 - help/advice on tenancy issues,
 - advocacy and representation,
 - health referrals,
 - referrals to solicitors for free legal advice,

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- emergency accommodation referrals,
- magazines, newsletters and email bulletin,
- employment and work experience listings,
- accommodation, tutoring and 'second-hand textbook' listings,
- provision of general information for students, and
- DVD and book exchange;
- services delivered to its members:
 - student diary and bag,
 - cheap vending machines,
 - public transport timetables,
 - discounts, promotions, competitions and complimentary tickets,
 - regular entertainment and events including Live@Uni and BBQs,
 - free entry to Live@Uni events,
 - free netcard,
 - discounted photocopying, scanning, printing, fax and telephone services,
 - free tea and coffee,
 - free entry to membership draws, and
 - full voting rights at the AGM and Special General and Constitutional Meetings.

The main negative impacts of VSU have been:

- staff reduced from five full-time to three casuals, a reduction of more than 40 per cent and a reduction in hours services are accessible;
- loss of funds from compulsory amenities and services fees (in 2005 the Guild received \$485,000);
- loss of facilities;
- relocation of its offices to a lower-cost, demountable facility;
- significant reduction in services offered;
- clubs not supported and reduced in number and activity;
- Orientation Week activities continue with reduced funds; and
- reduction in the range and quality of services offered.

The main positive impact of VSU has been that it forced the organisation to conduct a critical review of its operations

Considerations for the future:

- negotiations with the University on the services which will continue to be provided, and by which organisation;
- the following is a quote from the President of the Student Guild:

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“The introduction of VSU has caused a decline in membership, and a loss of facilities, staff, and less funds that can be used by students. The Guild still provides staff to assist students (including non Guild members) through advocacy, and working towards securing funding for health events and information for students. The lack of facilities prior to VSU (as a new campus) has meant that rent takes up a sizable proportion of our funds and may not be covered by membership alone.”