

Dear Deakin Leadership Award team

When Juliet landed with a splash at Renaissance International School Saigon I knew she would be the perfect leader to head up one of the most ambitious and complex projects ever attempted- a student led triathlon.

I had sat on this idea for two years waiting for the right people to lead and Juliet was one of the keys that opened it up. No school in the whole of Vietnam had ever tried this before so there was no prior knowledge or blueprint, but when I asked Juliet to co-lead the project she was, as is typical for her, an immediate yes.

It took 6 months to plan. There were many complexities that were unforeseen on top of the avalanche of safety requirements in such an event but Juliet and her co-lead Ricky dealt with them all with minimum fuss and maximum grace. Juliet and Ricky's naturally fell into their strengths to deal with these issues – Juliet in particular was stronger on ideas, logistics, and practical solutions and Ricky was better at executing those ideas on the ground. One day Juliet turned up to a meeting with the course mapped out on the back of a calendar – lines and numbers everywhere – but it became the basis of our final course, months later.

The final event, there were three distances, it employed about 25 other students in roles from marshalling to timekeeping, had ambulances on standby from a local clinic, medals for the finishers, professional photography on course, and was able to draw a competitive field comprised of more than 50% female students. It also raised 67 million VND for our chosen community partner Newborns Vietnam. A success by all metrics.

Of course a six-month long complex project like this was not all smooth sailing. There were disagreements, big and small, which all needed decisions. Whenever possible I delegated to Juliet, but some decisions had to come from a member of staff so I took them. These could be difficult for Juliet to take and at that time she would fight tooth and nail for her point of view. This was a common feature of her time at Renaissance – wanting to make people come round to her point of view. In those early interactions she followed the same path that many nascent leaders have- wanting to prove their leadership skills themselves by making all decisions, rather than listening to everyone around them.

This is by no means a criticism or a bad thing – she was beginning her leadership journey by wanting to make decisions. Being a decision maker she was always putting her head above the parapet- a rare thing in a 17 year old. If she ever had any doubts in her own ability, I never saw it and it was never evident in her entire time at Renaissance as she continued to lead several other projects, sometimes simultaneously. She also led the Rose Friends (a group setup to support young girls at risk of abuse), and the school student newspaper talk town. Student passion projects come and go but talk down is still running today, a testament to the structure that was developed by Juliet when it was established so many years ago.

Reading this list of stellar achievements it's perhaps easy to ignore the less glamorous side of these projects. The graft that went into these, and many other things (I don't have time to go into the swimming team, the science week assembly, the other CAS activities) is the glue that binds achievements together. I feel privileged to have known Juliet at a time when her leadership abilities were developing and can wholeheartedly recommend her for this award.

Warmest Regards



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