

**TO:** Board of Directors, Simon Fraser Student Society

**FROM:** Blossom Malhan, Arts and Social Sciences Faculty Representative

**DATE:** September 30, 2016

**RE:** Summer Semester Report

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## INTRODUCTION

After being elected as a representative for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, I officially began my term as a Board of Director for the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The term began with a two-day orientation that introduced us to various parts, projects and regulations of the society. We went over our by-laws, policies and other general procedures (room bookings, cheque requisitions and etc.) to understand the inner workings of the organization. We further discussed our platforms, common goals and committee work that we would like to achieve as a board over the year. In doing so, we began putting together our Board Plan which lead us to our Board Retreat.

The Board Retreat served as a valuable platform for becoming acquainted with each other. Through our team building exercises and conversations about the rest of the year, we learned about each other's working styles and strengths and weaknesses. After the Board Retreat, we began settling into our roles and dove right into Clubs Day tabling and committee appointments.

To further comprehend my role and responsibilities, I sat down with the SFSS Student Union Organizer, Arts Student Engagement Coordinator and the President of the Society of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS). All three of them gave me a detailed rundown of Departmental Student Unions (DSU), current and upcoming events and an overall feel of where the Faculty stood in relation with the Student Society.

Having received a detailed introduction to the society and faculty matters, I decided to contact every DSU via email to introduce myself and ask for their permission to attend anyone of their upcoming meetings or events. The responses and feedback from individual DSUs were overwhelmingly warm and welcoming. The responses provided a

great opportunity for me to be able to talk to and attend various different meetings and events over the summer.

## SEMESTER REPORT

The four months of the summer semester will be organized into committees, working groups, other activities and office/engagement hours for the purpose of this report. Additional notes or comments will be added to the conclusion.

## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

The Advocacy Committee was very active and ambitious throughout the summer months. In our first couple meetings we brainstormed ideas, issues and initiatives that were important to the student population at SFU. As we discussed, we realized that many niche and at-large issues required our attention and most if not all were important to the student body. In order to gain better insight on what required our immediate attention and what issues the students thought were most relevant to them, we decided to conduct an online survey.

Putting together the survey took a lot of work as committee members tried to frame questions in the most comprehensive yet simple forms for the student body. We were asking loaded questions regarding health and well-being, financial security and over all student experience and as you can imagine, it was quite a lengthy and difficult process. Not only did we have to come up with a survey that people could do in two to three minutes but we also had to figure out how we were going to weigh and dissect each participant's answers.

After we had worked through the nitty gritty details, we began promoting the survey at school and on social media. We set up tables in the Academic Quadrangle (AQ) to motivate students to fill out the survey in person. At each tabling shift, we had freezies and information pamphlets to attract students or at least gain their interest as we quickly told them about the survey. We also had iPads with us in the AQ so that we could quickly get students to fill out the survey as they walked to and from their classes. Along with in-person campaigning, we continued to push the survey online on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. I was also able to get the Faculty of Arts to promote our survey on their Facebook page. Nevertheless, summer semester is slow and it took us longer than expected to reach our target of five hundred student responses to conclude the survey campaign.

Once the survey campaign was complete, the chair put together a detailed report of all the survey results and eight, prominent issues came to light. The committee then decided to divide into smaller groups and further research each of the eight issues in order to find out how we could best help change or fix the eight problems highlighted in the survey results. My group and I looked into increasing study space on campus and the quality and consistency of our Teaching Assistances. The summer semester concluded with us presenting our finding and recommendations to the rest of the committee with plans of putting said recommendations into actions.

### GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Governance also started off strong with a clear plan for aligning our by-laws with that of the BC Societies Act by the end of November. The updates required by the government presented a great opportunity for updating the student society's by-laws and policies. We began by dissecting the policies and procedures of the society in order to align them with the new governance system. We read each policy and went over them word by word in order to eliminate unnecessary or outdated material from the policies and procedures document. In doing so, we realized that many things needed to be re-housed or removed all together because they did not serve their purpose in the policy document. Therefore, we decided to have three documents: by-laws, polices and separate procedure manuals for bodies such as Council and Independent Electoral Commission.

After the process of re-writing and re-analyzing society policies had been exhausted, we moved on to the by-laws. Not only did we have to organize the society's by-laws in accordance with the Societies Act of British Columbia but we also had to do major re-modeling of the by-laws in order to make them more effective. We spent a lot of time brainstorming and researching the likes of different governance models, candidate vetting systems and various other things in order to fully re-vamp our document. By-laws regarding membership, Board of Directors duties and responsibilities, and elections required the most amount of time and effort in coming up with something concrete and useful. At the end of summer, we had gone over both the policies and by-laws and were preparing to discuss them with our lawyer and presenting them to the Board of Directors in the Fall Semester.

### EVENTS COMMITTEE

Events Committee started off slow but picked up momentum as the Fall Semester neared. In the first couple meetings we brainstormed the type of events and engagement initiatives that we could execute to improve student life on campus. Pub

nights were a given since we almost always sell out and people enjoy the various different themes that are part of each pub night. We also discussed buying our own production equipment to avoid rental fees and transportation costs. The events committee decided to host a free pub night for all members in the beginning of July which was a huge success. After that pub night we began focusing our attention to Fall semester events and the Fall Kickoff Concert.

The events committee prepared for a Welcome-back pub night, the Fall Kickoff Concert and After Party which were going to take place in the second and third week of school. I was assigned the role of Director of Human Resources for the concert and Team Lead for the Fall Kickoff After Party. As HR, I began recruiting volunteers with the help of the organizing committee and the communications department. We put a call out for volunteers on our Facebook and Twitter accounts and received over a hundred applications. I looked over each application and took over the “concert volunteer” email account to be able to contact all volunteers and set up orientation dates for late August.

Three orientation dates were set and at each orientation day we saw 15 to 30 volunteers. I continued to recruit volunteers up until the beginning of September because there was a lot of turn-over as things came up or class schedules changed. Along with orientation, I designed a volunteer information package which included everything from roles and responsibilities, itinerary and emergency contacts. As the volunteer team came together, I also picked out team leaders to lead specific stations such as will call and entrance on the day of the event. Team leaders also attended orientation and were provided the volunteer package as well as their own very detailed list of responsibilities and itinerary.

As I continued to communicate with the volunteers, I also regularly met with the organizing committee and the production company to discuss our budget, artist lineup and production set up for the day of the event. During these meetings, directors also updated each other on human resources, sponsorship, marketing and finances to keep communication flowing and clear. Along with concert preparation, I also talked to the after party sponsors and worked out gate and production details as was my responsibility as the after party team lead. Towards the end of summer, we began selling tickets for the welcome back pub night and early bird concert tickets.

#### **ALCOHOL POLICY WORKING GROUP**

As required by the Board of Directors, an ad-hoc working group was set up to examine the situation of DSUs and FSUs spending large sums of their core funding on alcohol purchases. The working group was asked to analyze the problem and

recommend solutions to ensure an effective use of core funding in the coming year. After looking at the problem, we discovered that not only are student unions buying large amounts of alcohol on and off campus but they're also drinking without any safety measures in place and are definitely not thinking about hosting events that would include the underage membership. After much deliberation, the committee recommended that spending of core funding on alcohol purchases should be capped at thirty percent and all off campus events must have a licensed bar tender present in order to serve and consume alcohol. The board looked over our recommendations and suggested that we add an appeals process for the thirty percent cap in case a student union wants to host a large scale, annual event with a higher number of attendees than usual. The recommendation was added to the final proposal and the working group was terminated at the end of two months.

#### **FOOD BANK WORKING GROUP**

The Emergency Food Bank program has been an ongoing initiative that helps students in need via its voucher system. The working group was de-briefed about the program and its strength and weaknesses. From there the group discussed the program's strengths and weaknesses and decided to tackle three main issues which include better screening process, new sponsors or partners and if possible, creating a new metric system to collect data. In order to get started, the group decided to compile a list of all questions and information that we may require in our venture and asked staff to help us retrieve old data and find new electric models to keep track of everything instead of paper vouchers.

#### **GRANTING WORKING GROUP**

Board members along with the membership have expressed their concern about the lack of consistency in the granting process of the student society. Members applying for grants want to see a rubric of what is required and a quicker more efficient method for processing their granting applications. The board asked a small working group to help our staff come up with an easily accessible online granting system for our membership. Over the summer, staff came up with a very easy to use online medium for grant applications but the working group did not find the rubric to sufficient for granting purposes. Towards the end of the summer, the working group and staff were in the process of finalizing the online medium and a grading system for grant applications. The finished project will be presented to the board in the Fall Semester.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other activities included small projects, consultations and faculty related work that I did over the summer semester. The activities are listed below:

- Minute to Win it: Arts Central asked if I could organize a small game on behalf of the student society to engage with first year students who were attending meet and greet sessions on Burnaby Campus. The game was called house and students had to answer questions about the student society in order to build a house of cups to win the game. The game was a success and I was able to meet many in-coming Arts Students over the summer.
- Board Plan: Over the summer, board members spent a couple sessions trying to figure out what we wanted to accomplish over the next year. We brainstormed various different ideas and combined and delegated all of the to our committees and working groups.
- Finance and Audit Committee Video: The committee came up with the initiative to put together an informative video to inform students about how their activity fees are used within the society. I was one of the “actors” in the video.
- Sexual Assault Policy Consultations: The university invited interested board members to their policy consultation to figure out how they should run their consultation sessions with the rest of the student body. We were able to provide them with a better understanding of what to expect and what we ourselves thought were important notions that should be addressed in the policy.
- Terry Fox Run: The Surrey Communication’s Office reached out to me in order to gain the student society’s support and resources to promote the run. I was able to gain the board’s permission to work with Surrey’s Communication office and was able to connect them with our staff and the Surrey Campus Committee to promote their run.
- Frosh Giveaways: I was able to gather and organize frosh giveaways for the SASS frosh to hand out at their frosh.

## ENGAGEMENT AND OFFICE HOURS

Over the summer I held weekly office hours on Monday and Tuesday from 1:30 to 2:30pm. Attendance during office hours was extremely low but I spent the hours in the Board Office in case someone wanted to drop-by the office. Along with scheduled office hours, I was able to participate in Burnaby Campus’s Information Night on behalf of the SFSS and FASS to engage with prospective students and their families.

I was also able to table during Clubs Days at both Burnaby and Surrey Campus. At these tabling shifts, we also promoted committee applications for members at large so that they could get involved with the student society. Promotion of committee applications was also done at Vancouver's Harbour Centre and Woodward's campus in the beginning of May.

On the Arts side of things, I was able to attend a meet and greet with the newly recruited Peer Mentors for the Fall Peer Mentorship Program for incoming Arts students. Along with the above-mentioned meet and greet, I was also able to attend a couple DSU meetings and pub nights that were hosted during the summer months. Attending these meetings and events was the result of my introduction via email at the beginning of my term. Most DSUs and I communicated over email and those who were active during the summer allowed me to attend their gatherings.

#### **END NOTE**

Over all, the Summer semester served as a great learning period and I was fully able to immerse myself into the Faculty Representative Role. After Orientation, my involvement in the society increases gradually and now I am fully prepared and ready for the Fall Semester.

Thank you,

Blossom Malhan