



Enoch Weng

President
Fall Work Report
2015

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Intro

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths”

Walt Disney

This semester was an extraordinary period of many challenges and of many victories. History was made as we began initiatives never before seen by the Society, and worked hard at creating and continuing major projects from the last semester. This report is a summary of the work done in the Fall 2015 Semester, and speaks of both the successes our Board has accomplished and of the challenges we faced along the way.

Strategic Planning

As chair of the Strategic Planning committee, it was truly exciting working towards laying down the foundation for the organization’s first ever strategic plan. In our meetings we explored the necessary steps needed to create a Strat-Plan, and began by identifying SFSS’ stakeholders and organizing key questions into central theme: recognition, brand reception, relevance, student needs, and communications. The first stage of work was focused on developing a consultation process, and we began by planning a “world café” style dialogue, one with board, and one with staff. The second piece was to survey our entire membership.

The creation and launch a membership wide survey assessment was one of our biggest achievements in the semester, as it was the first time something that the SFSS had reached out to its membership for feedback on its services. We created a list of key questions revolving around the themes listed in the paragraph above with the aim to see how students felt about the SFSS and our services, and to obtain general feedback on our activities. After several revisions of the survey, we whittled down the questions in half and launched it to the entire undergraduate student body. At the same time, we also developed and launched an outreach campaign to help promote the survey link. We would go out daily during our “outreach hours” and engage students in conversation to encourage them to fill out the survey. We used a variety of methods from group presentations, to handing out business cards with the survey link, to using iPads equipped with the survey. The outreach campaign lasted a total of 3 weeks, and we were able to promote on all three campus locations. Our efforts were rewarded with 1775 survey responses.

The next step would be to set the framework for the strategic plan, and to prepare ourselves for the creation of the strategic plan. I would like to take this moment to recognize the dedication and work of the Strategic Planning Committee team: Melissa Lee (Education Rep); Larissa Chen (Health Sciences Rep); Kathleen Yang (VP External); Salathiel Wells (FCAT Rep); Curtis Pooghkay (At-Large); Martin Wyant (CEO); Sindhu Dharmajah (Communications Coordinator); and Pierre Cassidy (CRP Coordinator).

Governance Changes

In the previous semester, the Board engaged in much discussions surrounding on improvements to the society, and focused on a key piece – governance. Since then, much work has been done towards changing the way the SFSS has functioned for the past decades. Following the Board's decision in the summer to review and update the ancient policies of the organization, the Governance Committee was created to do the work of reviewing policies, and to come up with recommendations on how to move forward.

Our first stage of work was on adopting the carver governance model, and we worked on a set of recommendations of new policies that reflected this. These included policies such as our Ends Policies, which describes the SFSS' missions and values. The most integral part of the policies presented was the separation of operations and governance, as outlined in Board and Executive limitations. This meant that the role of staff would be solely on operational work managed by the Chief Executive Officer, while the role of the board was to be on governance work, led by the President. The governance work to be done will be focused on decision making, with an emphasis on ensuring board fully engages with the membership to solicit solid feedback, which in turn will be used to drive key decisions.

In late September, we presented our set of recommendations to the Board, which was then formally adopted. The next step for the Governance Committee was to review and provide recommendations on the current committee structure. In this process, the governance committee consulted and engaged with staff, board members, and many other groups in creating new terms of reference. I worked closely with the Governance Chair Arr Farah to ensure that both current board committees and key groups were consulted. For example, we regularly engaged with the Surrey Campus Committee to learn about current operations, and to discuss with them next steps moving forwards towards a more streamlined committee structure. In addition to reviewing current committees we also removed some committees that were operational, which is necessary for our new governance structure, and will lead to greater efficiencies in the way the society operates. Our hope is to present these recommendations early next semester, and to have them formally adopted.

Staffing and Management

In the beginning of the summer semester, it was quite the ordeal single-handedly managing the entire HR component of the organization without the support of an Executive Director. Since having Martin step in as the new Chief Executive Officer, the HR process has changed significantly for the better, and we have worked together on improving the hiring process. The first change we aimed to fix was on the current hiring structure. For each new hire, the historical approach was to strike separate hiring committees with both board members and staff members. At the peak of the hiring period, we had 11 such committees appointed, which placed a huge strain on the society, and caused endless confusions. Our new approach, in alignment with our governance changes, was to have the CEO oversee the hiring of new recruits. We worked with the union over many months and succeeded in limiting the amount of people required to hire new positions. Martin and I have talked about the need to have a position

created to help assist with HR work (MTOs, scheduling, policy writing, etc.), and we will be presenting it to the Board, and hope to have the position filled as soon as possible.

The relationship with the Union was also something we focused on this term, and I would like to note that Union Grievances and subsequent management legal fees were substantially lower than in previous years. In this semester we hired a number of new positions within the administrative departments, and I was involved in a number of probationary reviews as well.

As the President is the CEO's direct report, I also have the responsibility to manage the CEO, and to continually monitor their performance and to prepare for an annual review at the end of the fiscal period. I have worked with Martin on the creation of reports on our major projects (Build SFU, FBS) as well as regular reporting on select HR news. This was a bit of a learning curve for myself, but I managed to fall into routine soon enough. In terms of creating the process for the CEO Performance Review I was greatly helped by our VP Student Services Darwin Binesh. The Executive Committee then reviewed and approved the Performance Review process. I will be continuing to prepare for the review in the next semester, which will be one of my biggest pieces of work to end off my year.

Board Chair and Internal Relations

As Board Chair, I continued to work closely with the CEO and with our Administrative Assistant Carmela Frouws in preparing the Agenda for our Board Meetings. For being new into her role, Carmela has done a great job so far in keeping up with all the different meetings, and with preparation of minutes and agendas.

I began the fall semester by reaching out to all board members for a check-in session. The purpose of these sessions was to learn about each person's aspirations and challenges from the last semester, and offering resources to help with goal setting. It went well, and I will continue to develop a more defined process that will also include a feedback component, and a focus on personal development.

In every group, especially one as large as our board, there often arises personal conflict and differences of opinions. As President and Chair of the board, I spent many hours mediating between board members and stepping in to resolving conflicts. It is my recommendation that the next board engage early on in conflict management sessions as a response to minimize some of the potential conflicts to come.

Other Committee Work and Regular Meetings

In addition to the committees named above, I also played a very active role in various committees around the SFSS and SFU.

As Chair of the Executive Committee, we met a number of times over the semester to address pressing items ranging from HR, to Legal, to Contracts. I also regularly joined in EPCOM and Advocacy Committee meetings. In EPCOM meetings, I was able to provide logistical and budgeting insight to the group based on my previous project management experiences. A large focus of EPCOM was on the Fall Kickoff, which

you can find in its own section. I was also a participant with the Advocacy committee, and regularly volunteered time to help with their campaigns.

One important advocacy presentation we made was to the B.C. Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, where VP External Kathleen Yang, VP Student Life Deepak Sharma, and Business Rep Hangué Kim and I represented the interests of key asks of our membership in regards to the provincial budget. Much thanks goes towards Kathleen for her hard work in putting together the presentation and supporting documents.

Other committees I sat on included the SFU App Steering committee, where we successfully launched the first official SFU Mobile Application, and the Joint Student Services committee, where members of SFSS and SFU Staff and I got together to share reports and best case practices, and identify areas of collaboration.

In addition to the above named committees, I was also in regular meetings between SFU, GSS, and the SFSS as part of the Joint Operations Group. I also had monthly meetings President Petter and AVP Students Tim Rahilly, where I was able to bring forward key issues and concerns, and to have dialogue surrounding important topics. I continued to also regularly met with the GSS, in particular with the Director of External Relations Mark Perry and with the Director of University Relations Abhishek Nanjundappa.

Major Projects (Build SFU, AGM, Fall Kickoff)

Build SFU

The Build SFU project was one of my primary focuses this semester. Being the largest project that the Society has ever taken on, there came with it many complications, with the most noticeable ones being the failed financing referendum question from last board, and the many outstanding contracts and agreements. My work this semester was in seeing the project's success, as well as ensuring the best outcome for our student membership during our negotiations with the Bank and with SFU.

The Build SFU Working Group, established in the summer semester, met for the last time to provide recommendations on moving forward with the project to the board. The main focus was the need to have an engagement campaign to prepare for the upcoming AGM, where we would be presenting a referendum vote on Build SFU financing for the third time. The last SGM vote had failed, so this time we were in a “make it or break it” situation.

We struck an informal Engagement Outreach Working Group to come up with engagement strategies and schedules which would then be relayed back to the Board. As Chair, I worked closely with the group, and with the Communications Coordinator Irma Arkus and Executive Director Martin Wyant in the creation and implementation of an extensive Board Engagement Plan. Through the weeks of September, we set the plan into motion, and we engaged thousands of students through public outreach, classroom presentations, club and student union presentations, and many more activities. I was able to include

Build SFU in many of my speeches, and spoke to countless students about the project and answered many questions. In my role as a Student Senator, I also worked with other dual-role board members to move and approve a motion for academic amnesty that allowed students to attend the AGM without punishment. This all resulted in the both referendum questions passing, which meant that the society could then finally proceed with the financing of both the Student Union Building and the Stadium project.

Following the AGM victory, the board then appointed three board members (VP University Relations Brady Yano, VP Student Services Darwin Binesh, and myself) who would act as representatives of the board during negotiations and committee meetings.

We met weekly to discuss the progress of the project, and reviewed many contracts and agreements. Certain documents such as the Building Lease required extensive review, and we spent many hours at the negotiating table working out the best possible outcome for our student membership. As we took a strong stance on various items, it was challenging to be at the same table with many senior level university admin members. We were able to see progress, and saw the Build SFU project much improved compared to previous years. Much work still needs to be done to advance the project, and we will be aiming to come to terms with SFU on the outstanding agreements by next semester.

Annual General Meeting

Much work was done in preparing for the AGM, and I commend Darwin for the work he did in ensuring the AGM went smoothly. My work included the preparation of AGM Messaging, and the writing and delivering of the President's "State of the SFSS" Speech. Along with Brady, I sat the the front to answer and respond to questions during the discussion part of the referendums. All presented motions were able to pass with majority, and we maintained quorum throughout the meeting. For the future, I recommend looking into ways to make the AGM more accessible to all students.

Fall Kickoff

As most of my attention was focused on Build SFU and the AGM, my role in the Fall Kickoff was primarily as a project consultant. I regularly checked in with the Project Manager Deepak, and helped review legal documents, project update reports, and budgets. Much work was spent reviewing the contract between SFSS and Blueprint with Deepak, as well as working with Hanguie in ensuring low budget variances as we experience fluctuations in expenses.

As I was on the 50th Celebration Steering Committee, I was able to obtain monetary sponsorship and access to SFU's online portals and media channels. Deepak and I also had many meetings with various SFU Administration to ensure the project was successful. We worked with Student Central, and piloted the volunteer program underneath the Student Ambassador Program banner. More details can be found in the Fall Kickoff 2015 report, which includes improvement recommendations for future events.

Student Engagement

One of my main focuses from last semester was to increase SFSS interaction with our membership, and to create more opportunities for student engagement. This semester we worked on improving the engagement initiatives created last term, and set our targets higher. We expanded the Club Executive Meet & Greet event to also include FSU's and DSU's, which led to us coining the term "FDC" (Faculty, Departments, Clubs) in unofficially renaming the event to the FDC Meet & Greet.

The networks and communities built by these FDCs are quite extensive – and I aimed at connecting with as many groups as possible to encourage cross-collaboration. Much engagement was focused around Build SFU and the Strategic Plan, and you can refer to those respective sections for more information.

I also turned my focus onto Surrey, and worked more closely with the Surrey Campus Committee on events and town halls this semester. The Surrey Campus-wide Ideas Exchange was one such example of success, where we had over twenty students, staff, and professors come together for an evening of dialogue and planning. I highly encourage this event to be a semester occurrence, and for the Burnaby and Vancouver campus to host their own events.

Administrative Work

I received hundreds of emails weekly, ranging from student concerns, to emails from MLAs, to project submissions, to HR work. Much of my time was spent tackling each email one at a time due to the uniqueness of each one.

I also kept an open door policy, and met regularly students regarding concerns and comments about the SFSS, and their experiences as an SFU student. I was able to resolve many situations, and help refer students to the appropriate resources (such as Health & Counselling, or the Ombudsperson).

One last thing was in formulating Board Schedules, which supposedly was a simple task that ended up being very frustrating due to it being hard to accommodate all 16 board members calendars. My recommendation is for there to be scheduled Board meetings set up well in advance of the term, or perhaps even included in the orientation for incoming Board members.

Formal Representation/50th Anniversary Events

One of the roles of the President is to formally represent the SFSS as a public figure. As this semester was the focus of SFU's 50th Celebration, there were many pillar events that I was honored to have spoken at and participated in. The following is a short list of some key events I attended.

Notable Events

- SFU 50th Anniversary Kickoff
- Celebrate and Savor Gala
- New Student Orientation (Welcome Day)

- Welcome Leaders Training Orientation
- Peer Educators Training Orientation
- Terry Fox Run Celebration
- Burnaby Business Excellence Awards Gala
- President's Seasonal Reception
- SFU Downtown Open House
- Campus to City Conference (Hosted by SFU Public Square)
- From Vision to Action for a Healthy Campus Community at SFU with President Petter
- Hi-5 Friendship Bench Unveiling

Other Projects

I was involved in many projects this semester, both new and continuing from the previous term. The following is a short list of some of these projects.

- Health and Counselling Services
 - Worked with Associate Director Counselling Erika Horwitz on data collection and reports of student usage and concerns with the Counselling Department
- Society Sponsorship Package
 - Discussions with Hangu and Martin about SFSS Sponsorship Programming
- Student Central: SAP and MyInvolvement Portal
 - Successfully worked with Deepak and GO staff to obtain SAP status for SFSS Events
 - Obtained access to Myinvolvement Portal for SFSS Events
- Vancouver Campus Engagement
 - Conversations with Salathiel, Brady, Martin, and the GSS
- Multi-Campus Student Recreation Pass
 - Meetings with Hangu and SFU Recreation
- Council Support
 - Many meetings with the Council Chair
 - Worked with Martin and Pierre on support of Council Chair
 - Began planning and reviewing elections processes for the upcoming Board Elections

Closing Words

This semester was very stressful and demanding with all of these major campaigns overlapping, but overall I feel that the work was able to go quite smoothly. I did my best to lead and motivate the team towards accomplishing our set goals, and regularly checked in with everyone to ensure that we stayed focused on our priorities. I am so proud of the work our Board was able to accomplish, especially in seeing the passing of the Build SFU Financing Referendum questions, the successful Fall Kickoff, our continued work towards Governance Reform, and preparing for a long-term Strategic Plan for the SFSS.

Thank you for taking the time to read my report, and please feel free to contact me at president@sfss.ca if you have any questions or comments.