

Semester Report: Summer 2016

Introduction

The transition from my previous role as Environment Representative to Vice President External Relations went relatively smoothly. My previous experience on board was a huge asset and has helped me be more equipped for holding an executive position. This report is a summary of the work I have done in the summer 2016 semester of the 2016-2017 Board term. This report includes, but is not limited to major projects and key activities that occurred over the semester.

Committee Work

Advocacy Committee

The advocacy committee has been very busy over the summer semester in terms of identifying key issues for students at SFU. The committee began the semester with the generation of the first ever advocacy survey for the membership. The survey was focused on the 4 pillars of the society (health and well-being, social, financial and academic) and under each pillar were a list of often heard student issues. The survey also offered students the opportunity to provide their own input in the form of an additional text box. The creation of the survey was a rather lengthy process, as committee members strived to ensure all issues were noted in a relatively easy to complete format. The committee then focused on developing an outreach plan for ensuring students filled out the survey. Outreach took the form of tabling with ipads so students could complete the survey on the spot. We also handed out freezes, sent emails and utilized social media. Although outreach efforts were primarily targeted to the Burnaby Campus, the Surrey and Vancouver campuses were also reached out to.

The survey was well received overall and generated 529 responses from students. Although the committee would have liked to have received more responses, this was a good start number considering it was the summer semester. After the survey results were compiled, the committee began research on how to meaningfully

address the top areas of interest students identified. These top areas of interest included Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Measures and Mental Health and Well-being (Health and well-being); Translink and creating an accessible SFSS for all members (Social); Open Education Resources and Lower Tuition (Financial); Quality and Consistency of TA' and increased Study Space on Campus (Academic).

Although the consultation process was long winded, taking up the majority of the summer semester it has provided invaluable information for upcoming campaign creation. I commend all of the committee members for the amount of dedication and persistence they showed over the summer semester in both data collection and research. This survey has given the committee a clear idea on which issues they should be advocating for on student's behalf, and we will be working in the coming semesters to address these issues.

Governance Committee

Having sat on the governance committee in the previous year, I was already well equipped to continue working on the large governance changes the previous board had initiated. These changes include the separation of operations from governance, providing role clarity amongst board and staff leadership and re-writing the bylaws to align with the BC Societies Act.

This past summer the committee focused its efforts on reviewing the society's policies to eliminate unnecessary language and items. In doing so, the committee ended up re-housing many of the policies into different documents including by-laws, policies, and procedure manuals for council and the IEC.

The committee spent a large amount of time re-working the society's by-laws. The current by-laws are comprised of language which is difficult to interpret and extremely rigid. The committee approached the bylaws by reviewing other by-law models and brainstorming new ways of governing. The committee set about rewriting the bylaws with the intent of instilling flexible, easy to interpret language and ensuring there are no inconsistencies within the document.

Accessibility Fund Committee

The committee spent the majority of the semester reviewing the accessibility audit report identifying key insights and recommendations. The committee brainstormed ways for possibly implementing some of the recommendations from the audit. The

committee also spent time reviewing the accessibility workers job description. The committee also reviewed proposals from a few different groups, and received a presentation from SUDS. The main item I worked on over the summer was reviewing the Hi-Five Project Coordinator position with SFU Health and Counselling. The proposed MOU from last year's position required some updating, so we worked on specifying the roles of the partners more clearly. This was done to ensure that the project coordinator would have adequate supervision and reporting mechanisms in place throughout the position.

Nominations Committee

The nominations committee is a new pilot committee for the board. The purpose of the committee is to promote, recruit, interview and make recommendations to the board of directors regarding at-large positions available on SFSS committees. This committee completed the bulk of its work at the beginning of the term, determining the application period, developing an interview process and promoting the opportunity to students. Positions were promoted to students during clubs days and through tabling at the different campuses. Overall, I think having this committee worked well, as we saw a great number of applicants for open positions.

Working Groups

Alcohol Policy Working Group

This summer the board of directors created an ad-hoc working group to look into the amount of money DSU's and FSU's were spending from their core allowances. The working group was created to analyze the situation and create recommendations for ensuring effective use of core spending. The committee ended up recommending that spending of core funding on alcohol would be limited to 30 percent. Based on further recommendations and consultation, the committee recommended that an appeals process be set up for student unions wishing to host large scale events. The committee was dispersed once the recommendations were approved by the board.

Work with Other Student Societies

U-Pass BC Program

Over the course of the summer semester the student caucus of the U-Pass Advisory committee met multiple times to discuss the expiration of the U-Pass BC agreement in April 2018. The committee decided that lobbying efforts should begin now, given there is a Provincial Election this year. The committee began by drafting a briefing note on the status of the U-Pass BC program, which was to be delivered to local MLA's and city council to discuss the matter. Additionally, the committee decided to begin developing a lobbying plan for the upcoming year for all student societies to be working towards.

Rents with Rights

In partnership with the University of Victoria student society (UVSS), and the UBC student society (AMS) we have begun work on a housing campaign that targets resident housing contracts. This campaign came to light after reviewing the differences current residence contracts in comparison to rental housing agreements. The three student societies have been working together to identify cross institutional issues with current residence contracts. The student societies then worked together to develop a lobbying document outlining 9 recommendations. A supporting document for the recommendations is also being compiled between the societies. Lobbying efforts for this campaign are to begin in the fall semester.

Events and Engagement

SUB Ceremony

Over the summer I worked with the Build SFU department to plan a celebration ceremony for the beginning of construction on the SUB. The Build SFU manager, Communications coordinator and myself worked on brainstorming possible event ideas, developing proposals and determining guest lists. As time progressed the event took on many different objectives and continued to grow in size. Eventually, we decided that the scope of event we were planning was more appropriate for the SUB's actual opening versus a countdown event. We opted to instead partner with the event SFU was planning to host for the SUB, and got more involved in their planning process. Although the event ended up being much smaller in scale, some

great ideas were generated and documented during the process. My hope is that these ideas can be returned to at a later date, when the SUB opening festivities begin to be planned.

Events

Over the summer semester I was fortunate to participate in a number of events. Clubs days was a major event, with tabling opportunities for informing students about the SFSS. Other SFSS events attended include the SFSS Summer Pub Night, and the staff going away party. I also presented at SFU's Info Eve, Faculty of Environment presentation. Given no Environment representative was elected, I attended in order to ensure potential students were still receiving information regarding the SFSS. Additionally, I attended the Student Union Development Summit hosted by the UBC AMS. This conference was excellent as it allowed me to learn a lot during the sessions, and engage with student representatives from all across the country. I and the other representatives compiled a report on this conference, and we hope the recommendations made will be taken into consideration by next year's board.

The board of directors was also invited to attend a meet and greet with SFU staff, which introduced us to key SFU personal and provided an opportunity to learn more about their positions. I also was invited by SFU's VP External to attend the Annual General Meetings for both the Burnaby Board of trade and Vancouver Board of trade, which were excellent networking opportunities with members of local government.

Engagement and Office Hours

Over the summer semester I held weekly office hours at the Burnaby campus on Tuesdays (12pm-2pm) and Thursdays (9:30am-11:30am). I rarely had people available to visit during these times, so I ended up scheduling a lot of appointments at different times of the week. Another engagement initiative I advocated for was the creation of press releases from the Board. Over the summer, I was able to write a few press releases and I hope this practice can continue over the coming year.

Conclusion

Overall, the summer semester was a busy time for the SFSS Board of directors with many ups and a few downs. For myself, it took a bit of time to adjust to some of the differences associated with an executive role over a faculty representative. The executive position so far has been much more demanding in terms of day to day tasks, preparing for meetings, compiling agendas and ensuring that committees stay on task. My main goal for the upcoming semester is to continue work on developing campaigns which students will value, and working with other student societies for larger cross institutional initiatives. I am very excited about the coming fall semester and the work the society will be undertaking!

The information included in this report is not exhaustive as it is meant to serve as an overview. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Christine Dyson
Vice-President External Relations
Board of Directors