

SUMMER 2016 SEMESTER REPORT



LARISSA CHEN
VP Student Services
Interim President

This report is a summary of my work from May 1, 2016 to August 31, 2016.

INTRODUCTION

The first term as a returning Board member was faced with successes and challenges. Last year, I served as the Faculty of Health Sciences Representative and this year, I had the privilege of being elected VP Student Services. I had undergone a thorough transition process with the previous VP Student Services and gained knowledge of key priorities through my interaction with students.

Due to extenuating circumstances, I also assumed the role of Interim President until the vacant position could be filled. Due to the operational function of the VP Student Services role, the Society was in the process of shifting the responsibility of operations towards SFSS staff, whilst I was to serve the governance role in establishing objectives based on student consultation and Board endorsement. As a result, the unanticipated role of President was manageable, but definitely had its own challenges.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the aforementioned challenges, successes and recommendations I have for my successor, as well as other Board members. As we continue to develop methods and processes for the Society to represent our membership well, I want to ensure future Boards will be able to utilize the knowledge I've gained. The role of being a Board of Director is an important privilege and responsibility that students voted me into. Despite the obstacles and difficulties that may arise, I am hopeful and assured that I am able to do my best to address their concerns, recommendations and interests.

Despite the fact I'm only one semester into my year-long term as VP Student Services, I've already gained a great extent of knowledge and skills that I have found useful in my dual role. This has been the result of the challenges I faced, but also those who supported and assisted me. Thank you to the current SFSS Board of Directors, SFSS Staff & all those who continue to support and trust me throughout the process.

Cheers,

Larissa Chen
Vice President Student Services
Interim President
Simon Fraser Student Society

SERVICES

U-Pass

The SFU U-PASS BC Program is a student advocated program and participation is mandatory for all eligible members of the SFSS and GSS. This program provides unlimited, all zone access to public transit in Metro Vancouver. Students voted in favor during the SFSS, GSS and U-Pass BC referendum. My focus for the U-Pass was to ensure value for students, which deems difficult as we have a diverse range of student demographics and needs. I receive emails from students who wish to be exempted or have questions about the U-Pass program. Due to the 5% limit of exemptions that Translink has permitted, I bring student concerns to our colleagues at SFU and if it is widely shared, I can approach the U-Pass Advisory Committee to advise on problem areas.

SFU is currently the only post-secondary institution that practices the usage of discretionary criteria. As a result, I sit on the U-Pass Appeals Committee and we review the exemption applications. During the summer, our meetings were focused on the likelihood to change the eligibility criteria and the possibility of conducting a survey to obtain student feedback. Furthermore, we identified inaccuracies in the SIS system, as ineligible students who were to be exempted from the program were automatically enrolled due to errors in course location. These errors have been corrected. For the upcoming semesters, I aim to proactively inform students of the exemption deadline so they are aware and able to submit their applications if they choose to.

Health & Dental Plan

The SFSS Health & Dental Plan is a service that we provide, in partnership with Studentcare. Students have the option to choose between the Enhanced or Basic plan, to allow them to customize their plan as they need it. During the summer semester, I regularly met and corresponded with our contacts from Studentcare about plan updates, usage of benefits and preparing materials to be distributed to our membership. I also coordinated an introductory presentation at Board, where a summary of the plan was presented. This was vital as there is an upcoming possibility for a Spring referendum for students to decide if they want to decrease benefits or increase plan fees, as the costs for the service has increased.

I also coordinated tabling sessions for Studentcare in welcome back events so they're able to spread awareness of the plan, answer questions and inform students of what their plan enrolment allows them access to. I aim to continue raising awareness so students find value in this SFSS service and inform them of the process of opting out if they choose to. We are in the process of developing the student feedback survey and looking into other means to provide more benefit to users of the plan.

Food & Beverage Services

The SFSS Food & Beverage Services (FBS) includes the Ladle, Higher Grounds Coffee Shop, catering services and the Highland Pub, all located in MBC. Last year, the Board decided to decrease the deficit by exploring profitable means to increase attendance and revenue. Given that this service has been reassessed as an operational role, the FBS Manager and SFSS CEO have been developing a report and business plan to meet the Board's decision to increase value and interest from students. The role I played is remaining in conversations about what students want from these services. We had brainstorming sessions for the pub space, diverse events and how we can attract students, as well as the rest of the SFU community. Furthermore, we spoke with individuals from the SFU community who wished to implement a program that will promote scholarship opportunities for our members. This is still in progress as we seek approval from the respective stakeholders.

COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

Accessibility Fund

Our committee prioritized the development of consistent processes for submitting and reviewing applications for accessibility accommodations. Using the accessibility audit report from 2015, we also reviewed the recommendations from external student groups to identify ways of ensuring SFSS remains accessibility-friendly. As chair of this committee, I facilitated conversations about the purpose of the fund, job description of an SFSS accessibility worker and methods to inform students of clear procedures to submit grant proposals. We also discussed possibilities for government sponsorship for physical accessibility accommodations.

Furthermore, I welcomed student groups to attend meetings as the Students United for Disability Support (SUDS) came and presented feedback about the grant proposal matrix, IEC election process and accessibility of the upcoming SFSS Student Union Building. They also expressed they wished for Board members to be involved and potentially host an accessibility-friendly event during Disability Awareness Week. This is still in progress. Another group that approached our committee was Hi-FIVE, a group focused on spreading awareness and mitigating stigma towards mental health issues and disorders. We successfully extended our support and Memorandum of Understanding for the jointly funded position of a Hi-FIVE Program Coordinator.

Build SFU

Given my unanticipated role as Interim President, I was faced with intaking a great deal of information to prepare for the meetings and discussions we would have with SFU regarding the Build SFU project. As a Board member last year, I felt well-equipped with a thorough understanding of the project, leading up to the 2015 Annual General Meeting. Since then, select Board representatives had provided a basic update of critical points in the development of the contracts, schematic designs, agreements and discussions. However, I would be remiss to claim I easily learned all the logistics by myself. With the assistance of the Build SFU General Manager and the rest of the Board-selected representatives, I quickly realized key priorities and project deadlines, and the requirement to remain consistent with the mandate students had given us.

The financing for the Student Union Building was secured and we hosted the groundbreaking event on June 1, 2016. The construction is underway, as the first phase is the excavation of the area. Our SFSS Build SFU committee regularly meet with the SFU representatives and contacts, as we receive regular updates about timeline, budget and operations. The projected completion date is Fall 2018 and it is exciting to share the news with current and incoming students. The Student Union Building Celebration Event is another project that was in progress during the summer and will be included in my Fall semester report.

Another one of our group's focus during the summer was to secure the financing for the Stadium portion of the project. However, there were many pieces that needed to be finalized before we could confirm with Scotiabank. We required a schematic design, cost estimate report and agreement between SFSS and SFU prior to approaching the bank about financing options. However, after we received the cost estimate report for the first schematic design, the estimated \$30 million cost (hard + soft costs) was deemed to be outside the financial scope of the project. Faced with the September 21 deadline to secure a debenture, we underwent a brainstorming session to identify how we could return to the original sketches shared with students and lessen the scope of the project to match the existing budget. At the August 11 Board meeting, the Board approved the motion to cancel the Stadium portion of the project as it remained outside of our financial scope and we had failed to meet the deadline to secure Scotiabank financing.

When we received the cost estimate report for the second schematic design, we were presented with the option of a \$13 million and \$16 million stadium with the main difference being the included excavation portion for the latter. Since then, we've received both support and opposition to our August 11 decision and have been working with relevant stakeholders to clarify information and identify ways to move forward. The SFSS Board of Directors remains committed to the mandate previously given by students. These discussions are ongoing and I hope outcomes of these conversations and meetings will be fruitful in the Fall semester.

Governance

Given the new BC Society Act coming into effect November 2016, the SFSS is required to review and revise the bylaws, as well as bring in student feedback through referendum. The Governance committee has been dedicated to redrafting the current bylaws. We also assessed the implications of bylaw changes on existing policies, especially those that apply to distinction and recognition of student groups. In my opinion, student interest groups, clubs and unions are the highlight of the SFSS structure. These engaged members of the student population are consistently motivated to organize, advocate and engage with their respective club participants. As a member of the governance committee, I hope to be able to accurately reflect their interests through our governing structure and policies, as well develop clear terms of reference and procedures to be adopted.

We also discussed the discrepancy between SFU and SFSS in clarifying Student Society fees. By law, the University Act requires all fees to be collected by the SFU Board of Governors. This is still in progress as we consult legal counsel about our bylaw changes.

Sexual Violence Policy Development Group

All post-secondary institutions are mandated by BILL 23 to have a stand-alone sexual policy within this academic year. As the Board representative elected to serve on the Sexual Violence Policy (SVP) Advisory Group (AG), my role was to lead community consultations, provide feedback to the SVP Working Group (WG) and research successful methods at other post-secondary institutions. Along with the rest of the AG & WG, we hosted some university-wide town hall sessions on all three campuses, as well as specific consultations with campus stakeholders, diverse SFU groups and front-line staff who are often approached when members of our SFU community face these issues.

Given SFSS' role in facilitating and organizing student events and community engagement, the group was interested in consulting with student representatives. I organized a consultation session for SFSS Board of Directors, staff & Council to provide their feedback and advise on the existing resources and awareness campaigns. To provide context to the consultation session, I also arranged for Health and Counselling to present on campus services, bystander involvement and awareness of the issue.

I regularly attended AG & WG meetings, as we presented our consultation findings, responded to student concerns, explored service provision options, institutional responses and development of policy. As an AG member, I contributed by researching and compiling documents to highlight existing services and campaigns on the SFU campus.

The upcoming Fall semester will be filled with more research, university-wide consultations. We are currently in the process of developing a comprehensive policy that we can present to the SFU community for feedback, as well as the Board of Governors for approval, as mandated by Bill 23. One key issue I will personally be advocating for is the active dissemination of awareness campaigns and information/resources for survivors, through SFU and SFSS' communication channels. For more information, please visit <<http://www.sfu.ca/sexual-assault>>.

Strategic Engagement

Based on the Strategic Plan survey conducted last year, this committee arose from student feedback in order to research and test alternative and effective ways of engaging with our membership. This committee identified and analyzed effective engagement strategies that we had done in the past, as well as researched other creative means to engage with the membership. Many initiatives are still in progress, as we hope to create a proposal for outreach and office hours. We also reviewed and developed a proposal for effective tabling and will be testing it with various controls to ensure we can identify what combinations of tabling tactics will be most successful and well-received by the membership.

We continue to research member initiatives and how we can establish frameworks to support SFSS and our student groups in engagement within and beyond the SFU community. Personally, I'm interested in efficient ways to disseminate information, so I will continue to research effective engagement through social media, videos, contests and surveys.

Strategic Plan

Last year, I was part of the committee as we developed the strategic plan for the SFSS for the upcoming next three years. This was the first strategic plan the SFSS created and I feel lucky to have been part of the process in receiving student feedback and developing the key objectives. This year we remain committed to the 2016-19 plan with a primary focus on the priorities that were allocated for the 2016/17 term. Currently, the committee is focused on having a multicampus presence, especially ways in which we can engage our satellite campuses in Surrey and Vancouver. We are also developing and reviewing the service evaluation matrix to ensure students are receiving value and providing feedback for respective services.

I have a specific interest in increasing communications and membership engagement, so I participated in the subgroup that worked on developing a Society-wide communications plan. We have also recognized the need to standardize our SFSS brand and allow for students to be cognizant of what they receive in return for their Student Society fee.

Web Development Working Group

As noted previously, one of my key interests is how our membership receives information and how we disseminate this information. As a result, I joined this working group to advise our SFSS Communications Dept on how we can make our SFSS.ca website more accessible, visited and comprehensive. We currently upload many files, reports and updates on our website, but often hear from website users that they are more likely to visit if the information is clearer and direct links for what they're looking for.

As a result, we underwent a "Discovery" phase with Ballistic Arts, an external group that has been evaluating the need of the primary website users, as well as the rest of the membership. Our working group developed a survey and reviewed the questions prior to presenting to Board. I assisted in reaching out to respective student groups and campus stakeholders to inquire about feedback. Currently, we are developing a survey for the entire membership and hope to administer it in the Fall.

PROJECTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

SFU Week of Welcome & Welcome Days

The back-to-school events always experiences a high volume of excitement, activities and attendance. The SFU Student Retention & Transition Office and I met regularly throughout the summer to coordinate SFSS involvement in the activities, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities. Given that we expected a large-scale attendance at our events, sponsorship was secured from Nesters Market, Grimm's Fine Foods and Mr. Mike's SteakhouseCasual. I am also glad to note of the ongoing conscious effort to have a presence on our satellite campuses, such as the events organized on the SFU Surrey campus. We hope to continue these efforts and build consistency on our SFU Vancouver campus as well.

We were involved with the following August events, organized jointly with SFU. The September events will be articulated in my Fall semester report.

- SFU Surrey Welcome Day
- SFU Burnaby Welcome Day & Navigate SFU
- SFU Burnaby Residence Move-In

SFSS Communications

Last year, I appreciated working with our SFSS Communications Department. One of our key goals in our 2016-19 Strategic Plan is to strengthen communications with membership, by condensing important information, rebranding for consistency and inviting student involvement to generate content. I am particularly interested in social media and used that as a main focus to disseminate effective information. I also worked with the SFSS Communications Coordinator to develop pamphlets to be handed out during Fall welcome back events. I realize that students are often handed materials that they do not find meaningful, so we brainstormed what information we can include to ensure students are willing to retain their pamphlets for future reference.

In terms of SFSS communications with campus stakeholders, our VP External Relations introduced formal press releases as an effective way to present our organization's stance on various student issues. Given my presidential role, I worked alongside her to finalize the message as I sign off on those statements. Furthermore, the presidential role is currently one which speaks on behalf of the Board and required to summarize the stance of the collective Board. This is a responsibility that I believe is critical for the President to understand clearly. The privilege of speaking on behalf of the Board comes from the authority of the SFSS Board and/or its members. Over the summer, I've participated in interviews with The Peak, the official SFU student newspaper, and I am appreciative for their coverage of SFSS activity to ensure our membership remains informed and engaged. From these interviews, it is important to distinguish between what is the SFSS' stance versus personal opinion.

Fall Kickoff Concert 2016

The Fall concert was approved by the Board in the summer and remained a top priority, amongst many other SFSS responsibilities. This large-scale event often attracts 2000 students and is widely anticipated every year. Last year, I played an active role as Creative Director and had an understanding of what was required to organize a concert. This year, I played a supportive role, especially when interacting with the university. The VP University Relations and I finalized sponsorship from SFU as it was agreed this would be a large-scale event that would draw a great deal of SFU student-specific attendance. I was also involved with the university's organizing committee meetings, in terms of confirming logistics, finalizing contractual components and

clarifying operational roles. The extent of my participation was focused on support through logistics and communications, both internal and external. More information in Fall semester report.

2016 Annual General Meeting

The planning of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is regularly a joint project assumed by VP Student Services and SFSS staff. Given the shift towards separating governance and operations responsibilities, the staff took a large role in researching options for time and venue. The governance role was to decide what items the Board would like to put on the agenda, as well as making key decisions about the presented options. Given the significant portion of the meeting dedicated to finance reports and updates, VP Finance and I worked together to organize the meeting itself. The meeting was planned for September 30 3:00PM in the SFU Burnaby Diamond Family Auditorium. We looked into alternative options, such as hosting our first Surrey campus AGM, but was deemed unfeasible as suitable venues wasn't large enough to accommodate to a 250-quorum meeting. Many action items will be completed in the beginning of September and will be included in the Fall semester report.

MISCELLANEOUS

Changing the Conversation on Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions

University of British Columbia (May 30, 2016)

Given that I was selected as the SFSS representative for the SVP advisory group, I realized the importance for me to be well-versed and have an institutional awareness regarding the issue of sexual violence and misconduct. I attended the UBC conference for professional preparation and also personal interest; this issue has been silenced and overlooked for too long in the post-secondary institution setting. The conference was to set the stage for the upcoming policy development that would be taking place at each of our campuses and the consultations that would be done with our respective student demographics. The report has been shared with the AG/WG and will be made available to the membership upon approval by the Board.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this was a busy and exciting semester at the Simon Fraser Student Society. Despite the responsibility of dual roles, I find myself comforted in the fact that we have a strong Board of Directors this year. We each bring in a variety of skills, experience and perspectives that allow for us to provide the best projects, events and initiatives for students. Furthermore, our SFSS staff continue to provide their input and act as a valuable continuity piece in our Society and I am consistently reminded of their dedication to students.

I had the privilege of being elected as a Board member and despite the specific portfolio that I am assigned, it is important to note that once becoming a Board member, you do everything you can and provide assistance and feedback in anything that brings value to students. I look forward to the upcoming semester and for the projects and events Board members and involved student groups will be bringing to life after a busy summer of planning. This last semester, I had the opportunity to do a great deal of engagement through attending different SFSS and student group events. Given the President title, students often approach me when they have recommendations, have concerns or are simply curious about SFSS and the ways to get involved. I feel very lucky to be in the position where I can possibly influence some change, and I know many other Board members share the same sentiment.

I look forward to the by-election this upcoming Fall to see what possible candidates are interested in fulfilling the role of President and the Faculty of Environment representative. I appreciate and deeply care about our existing Board of Directors team, and I hope that our new additions will be equally appreciative and caring (just like how I hope they will feel appreciated and supported as well). It is a rare opportunity to be able to represent a group of students with such diverse demographics, interests, talents and skills. The SFSS exists for our membership, and every single SFU undergraduate falls under this category.

In the Fall semester, I will continue the ongoing projects and initiatives, as well as support my fellow Board members for a collective effort to improve the SFU undergraduate student experience. I also hope to assume a greater claim to my VP Student Services title, as I have recognized important ways to strengthen services that students want, know and need. Thank you all for your support and if you have any questions, feel free to email me at [<vpsservices@sfss.ca>](mailto:vpsservices@sfss.ca) or arrange for a meeting with me.