This document provides guidelines to Board and its directors on how to fulfill their obligations under Society bylaws and regulations.

Board Candidate Orientation Manual

The Simon Fraser Student Society

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1. Introduction to the Role of an SFSS Director

1.1 The SFSS Policy Governance Model

Imagine joining a construction team, and seeing a big pile of dirt next to a giant hole, with oh so many of your teammates rushing about busily at their respective tasks. It is easy to imagine oneself saying, 'Oh my goodness! Someone is going to fall in this pit and hurt themselves! Clearly, no one around here has time to focus on safety. I must help the team and fill the hole as quickly as possible, so that none of my teammates hurt themselves!' An eye for risk and safety would likely be a great contribution to the team; but, helping to improve safety by filling the hole wouldn't be much help if the team were trying to build the foundation of an exciting new building. It's easy to imagine how upset the whole team would get if one of its members were trying to help by inadvertently undoing six months of work. A few moments to learn what was going on and what everyone was doing would have been sufficient to avoid this mistake.

This is, of course, a rather silly story; but, it's surprising just how many of us make this mistake.

The role of the Board is, arguably, the most important role in the organization. With a good board of directors, the goals of the organization are clear, monitoring the organization's progress towards those goals is rigorous, and ensuring that those goals are what the members need is ongoing.

To ensure that it is working effectively in a complex environment, the Simon Fraser Student Society Board of Directors has implemented Policy Governance. Policy Governance is a way to do governance work that is becoming dominant in the not-for-profit sector. It helps ensure that an organization, including its board, future boards, management team, and staff understand precisely what is expected of them. Better yet, it provides each individual director with the tools they need to be effective no matter how much or how little experience they have.

Policy Governance

To properly grasp Policy Governance, and the task of a board and its directors, it is important to understand a number of concepts that may be new and unfamiliar. Rather than speaking in the abstract, these concepts will be presented in the context of the SFSS.

With this approach in mind, we will have to answer a few questions:

1. What is the SFSS?
2. What is governance; and, what is the role of the Board?
3. What are operations; and, what is the role of the CEO?
4. Why separate governance and operations?

The Simon Fraser Student Society

The Simon Fraser Student Society is a not-for-profit corporation, owned by all undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University, registered as a society under the Society Act of British Columbia. Simply put, the SFSS is a group of people with shared interests, doing something together that they couldn't do alone.

Canadian provinces, including British Columbia, provide a means for such groups of like-minded people to work together; that is, they provide their citizens with a means of establishing themselves as a legally existing organization. Along with that opportunity, they also provide a set of rules to which they must adhere when acting as an organization. In British Columbia, the Society Act is the piece of legislation that formally provides that opportunity and the rules to which organizations are subject.

The SFSS is precisely such a group of like-minded people acting in concert. It is a society incorporated under the Society Act. Consequently, it benefits from all the rights attributed to a society, as well as all its obligations. For instance, as required by the Society Act, its name and purposes are provided for by its members in its constitution.

The SFSS Constitution

1. The name of the Society shall be the Simon Fraser Student Society.

2. The purposes of the Society shall be:
   a. To represent and advocate for the interests of undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University.
   b. To coordinate and promote all undergraduate student activities, of, by, and for the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University.
   c. To promote, among other goals democratically determined by the Society, the principles of public, universally accessible, high quality post-secondary education, and of meaningful undergraduate student participation in all aspects of University governance.
   d. To facilitate collective action by undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University, within the Province of British Columbia, and elsewhere in support of these principles.
   e. To acquire or hold any lands, buildings, facilities or other assets for the use or benefit of the Society or the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University.

Happily, if the SFSS has set itself an ambitious task, it has a lot of dedicated volunteers, members, and staff at its disposal. Ironically, while many hands may make light work, the larger an organization gets, the more complex it gets; and, the more complex it gets, the harder it can be to mobilize towards a common goal. Consequently, given the number of dedicate staff and volunteers, cooperation, communication, and coordination are paramount if the Society is to be successful.

While there are many individual roles that make up the Society, it is possible to separate the Society into two key groups: governance and operations. Governance is a function performed by the Board and operations is a function performed by the staff.

GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF THE BOARD
The role of governance in any organization is threefold: engage the membership, establish the strategic goals, and evaluated the progress towards those goals. For the SFSS, that means that Board, the executive body of the SFSS governance structure, must determine what the members want and need, prioritize amongst those needs, and ensure that the organization responds effectively to those needs.

Member Engagement
In the first instance, it must be clearly understood that the owners of the SFSS are its members – the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University. The role of the Board, therefore, is to ensure that the organization is actually serving the needs of its members. This means, first and foremost, understanding what those needs are.

This is not a process that ends with the results of the election. The Board must constantly be engaging with all segments of its over 24 000 members to learn what they want, what they need, and how well they think the SFSS is doing at what they already do. Moreover, it must be able to communicate the results of those engagement processes back to the members so that members can see clearly that they are being heard.

Strategic Planning

While it's important that the SFSS listen to its members, listening isn't enough. It must take that feedback and make some very hard decisions about how to invest its limited resources in delivering services back to the membership. That is to say, the Board must determine what the Society will do on the basis of those needs.

This is difficult, because there will invariably be more needs than those to which the Society can effectively cater. In order to fulfill its purpose as established in the SFSS Constitution, and in order to help it prioritize amongst the needs communicated to it by its membership, the Board has established a set of ends policies, that together form a vision statement for the Society. They have established an ideal end state for the Society and its members to which it can always refer when making hard decisions about setting organizational priorities.

Ends Policies – The SFSS Mission and Vision Statements

The Simon Fraser Student Society exists to improve the academic, social, financial, and health and wellbeing aspects of the undergraduate student experience, as comprised of the following aspects:

Members have the highest quality academic experience.
1. Members are provided with sufficient and appropriate study space.
2. Members have access to responsive academic support services.
3. Members have adequate libraries and research tools.
4. Members have access to their required courses.

Members enjoy a rich social life.
1. Members are able to find and connect with other students.
2. Members have access to appropriate space.
3. Members have the resources available to support their activities.
4. Members are informed about the social activities at Simon Fraser University.

Members can afford their education.
1. Members can afford their tuition and fees.
2. Members have access to financial support on the basis of:
    a. academic standing, and
    b. financial need.
3. Members have access to affordable student loans.
4. Members have access to lower-cost educational resources.
5. Members have access to income generating opportunities on campus.

Members pursue their studies in health promoting conditions that contribute to their wellbeing.
1. Members have access to the services and supports necessary to achieve their optimal mental health.
2. Members have access to the services and supports necessary to achieve their optimal physical health.

With this understanding of the ideal end state of the organization, and with the members communicating their needs to their representatives, the Board can use the Ends Policies to help it establish the short term, medium term, and long term priorities of the organization.

Performance Evaluation

Having engaged the membership to understand its needs, and having made some difficult decisions setting priorities for the organization, the Board also has to evaluate whether or not the organization is in fact attaining the goals it has set for itself.

While it may seem intimidating to try and evaluate the performance of an organization that involves the work of hundreds of individuals, Policy Governance and its separation of operations and governance, provides a very straight-forward strategy for doing this transparently and effectively. Having set the short term, medium term, and long term priorities of the organization in a strategic plan, all it has to do is review whether or not the goals established in the plan were met on time and on budget. As will be seen in the next section, this is possible because Policy Governance clearly distinguishes between the role of governance (i.e. Board) and gperations (i.e. staff).

Cycling through the Stages

While the roles of the Board have been separated for the sake of clarity, they do not proceed linearly. Member engagement is an endless task. After all, once the strategic plan is set, it is important to communicate that plan to the membership and seek feedback to learn whether it responds to the needs that informed its development. Governance work then, is an endless cycle of engagement, strategic direction setting, and evaluation.
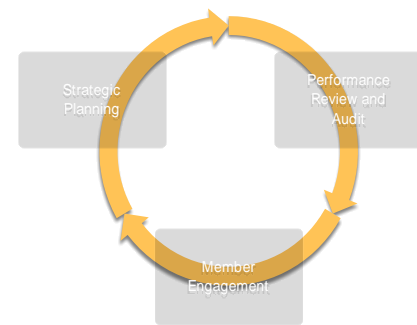
OPERATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE CEO

Simply put, operations are the implementation of the strategic goals set by the governance structure of an organization.

The SFSS currently provides a host of services such as a health insurance plan, a universal transit pass, a food bank program, a legal clinic, a $65M new student space project, a space booking program, a pub, a host of restaurants, a vending program, a full-service print centre, a centre and programming for self-identified women, and a centre and programming for the LGBTQ+ community, to name only a few. These programs require a significant amount of logistical and administrative support, such as finance and budgeting, policy development and review, event planning, communications, IT, human resources, and customer service. A great deal of work goes into ensuring that the cost of this programming remains as low as possible to the membership, and service levels remain as high as possible. Ensuring the quality and accessibility of SFSS services is very labour intensive, especially with such a diverse and dynamic membership. This is further complicated by the need to provide said services across three geographically distributed areas (i.e. Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver).

To this end, the Board has hired a management team to help it direct, manage, evaluate, and report on the Society's projects and programs. While the Board determines what the Society does on the basis of member engagement, management oversees the logistics of implementing those priorities, projecting and monitoring their costs to ensure that the members get as much as they can from their Society.

Perhaps most importantly, management constantly evaluates SFSS projects and programs to help the Board determine whether to continue to invest in those services, to dissolve the existing programs and reinvest organizational resources in others, or to seek additional resources to increase the scope of the services already provided. These are extremely difficult decisions that require balancing member needs against each other to ensure that Society resources are invested where they are needed most.

To render the Board task of strategic direction setting and organizational review feasible, Policy Governance vests the accountability for, and authority over the implementation of Board-established goals in its Chief Executive Officer (CEO). That is to say, Policy Governance strictly separates the work of determining what to do (Governance), from the work of determining and managing how to do it (Operations).
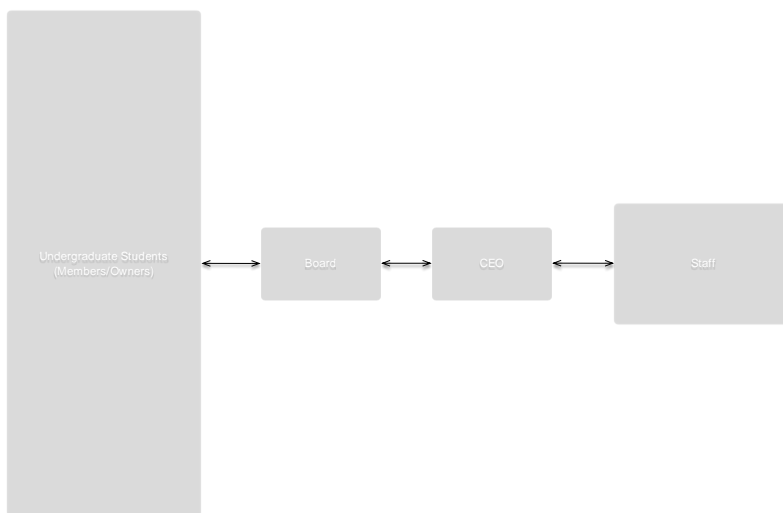
For instance, the Board, in striving to provide for the best possible social undergraduate experience might seek to host a large scale concert, or even an annually recurring large scale concert. While the Board and its committees will have to determine when the concert will be held, what the theme and purpose of the concert is to be, and who the performer or performers will be, it is the staff's responsibility to ensure that all requirements around hosting a concert are understood, planned for, and effectively executed. For instance, hosting a concert requires agreements with the SFU facility services, security, and vendor services. It requires external vendors such as fencing contractors, staging, lighting. It requires appropriate insurance. It requires protocols for ticket sales and access control, all of which represents an investment of the fees paid by the members of the SFSS and a great deal of time. Consequently, there are accounting, liability, budgeting, cost, return on investment, vendor negotiations, and timeline considerations that must be made clear to the Board prior to investing the required resources. Society staff is here to help ensure that everything needed to support such an event is provided, and that the Board, the Society, and its members are protected from any risk. Staff is here to ensure that when the Board makes a decision about what to do, it is making an informed decision and has everything it needs to succeed.

POLICY GOVERNANCE AS ACCOUNTABILITY

The Allegory of the Back Seat Driver

Imagine being hired as a professional driver to a high powered executive of a property management firm. This executive is busy, and has a great deal of work to do. She works nearly every moment of the day, nearly every day, and takes her job very seriously. Over the course of the day, she often has to run around the city visiting different locations, ensuring that there is no discrepancy between what is reported on paper, and what is on site. If she had to drive herself or take public transit, she would either lose too much time driving, or spend too much time traveling. Consequently, she has decided to hire you, an outstanding driver and consummate professional. Now imagine what would happen if the executive spent all of her time telling the you which routes to

take, how quickly to drive, how to shift gears, when to use the car's day lights, etc. Clearly, you would get frustrated being told how to perform the job for which you were hired, and a job in which you take pride. Imagine how much more frustrating it would be if, after following the executive's instructions, you were criticized for getting her to her appointments late, and for keeping her from her work. 'How,' you would no doubt wonder, 'can you blame me for being late and keeping you from your work, if you spend all your time doing mine? Either let me drive and blame me if I fail, or tell me how to drive and blame yourself if you're unhappy with the results. In the first case, I'll show you how good I am; in the second, you should drive yourself and save yourself the cost of my salary.'

This story is meant to illustrate why we can only be held accountable for the things over which we have authority. If the Board involves itself in operations, providing direction to staff directly, then the CEO can no longer be held accountable for the performance of the organization, because the CEO no longer has authority over its operations. The Board, or one of its members will have short circuited the chain of authority, and, as a result, the chain of accountability. The consequence of breaking the chain of authority is breaking the chain of accountability. Breaking that chain means that if something goes wrong, everyone is to blame (which also means that no one is to blame).

Moreover, the organization has invested a significant amount of resources in its management team, and it has done so for good reason and according to best practice. Management is a crucially important piece of an organization's operations. However, that investment can only provide a meaningful return on investment if it is allowed to perform its function. Why bother investing those resources in management if the managers aren't authorized to manage organizational operations. It would be like buying a sports car having your friends push you around an empty parking lot in neutral.

With a strong Chief Executive Officer, the Board can expect the delivery of regular, timely, and quality reports on the performance of staff, as well as Society finances, projects, and programs. With these reports at its disposal, Board can have informed, considered debates about the direction the Society should take. In fact, this reporting is the condition of effective and meaningful governance. The interesting result of empowering the CEO over staff and operations, therefore, is an empowered Board.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE BOARD AND A DIRECTOR
Given the importance of the Board of Directors to any organization, the work of each individual director is crucial. However, it is extremely important to distinguish between the authority of the Board, and the authority of a director.

While the Board has a great deal of authority, individual directors do not. Board exercises its authority by passing or rejecting motions presented at Board meetings. Board members distinguish themselves from any other member by the opportunity to submit and vote on such motions. Board, therefore, is the source of organizational authority, not directors.

A director that sits on a Board of 16 individuals like the SFSS, does not have 1/16 of Board authority. They have, like every other director, only have the authority to make motions and vote on motions at Board meetings. Directors, therefore, serve the Board, and Board can only ever be as effective as its members are able to work together.

With this in mind, being an effective director mean caring and nurturing your relationship with other directors. Only insofar as you serve the Board can you be served by it.

1.2 GOVERNANCE SUPPORT STRUCTURE

If the idea of being responsible for knowing and balancing the needs of over 24 000 members seems like a lot to ask 16 directors, don't worry. You don't have to do it alone. The general election is not the only tool you have to find out what the membership wants.

Over its 60-year history, the SFSS has built a large representational governance structure. That is to say, there are a number of other engaged members that can help you understand what the membership needs from its organization.

The governance structure includes student unions and informal representational groups sometimes referred to as constituency groups. A representative from each of these groups is provided a seat on Council, where issues affecting the members may be shared and discussed. Council's role is to provide a forum for representatives from each of these groups to share the concerns, problems, or successes of their members. If the same problem is shared by a number of these groups, it is Council's role to report that it up to Board, and request that Board report back to them how they plan to address that need.

Reciprocally, when Board makes decisions and sets goals for the organization, they must report these to Council, so that the representatives from the student unions and representative groups may take this information back to their groups and the students they represent. If those students have feedback, it is the responsibility of those representatives to then report that back to Council and Board. As can be seen in the figure above, each arrow points in both directions.
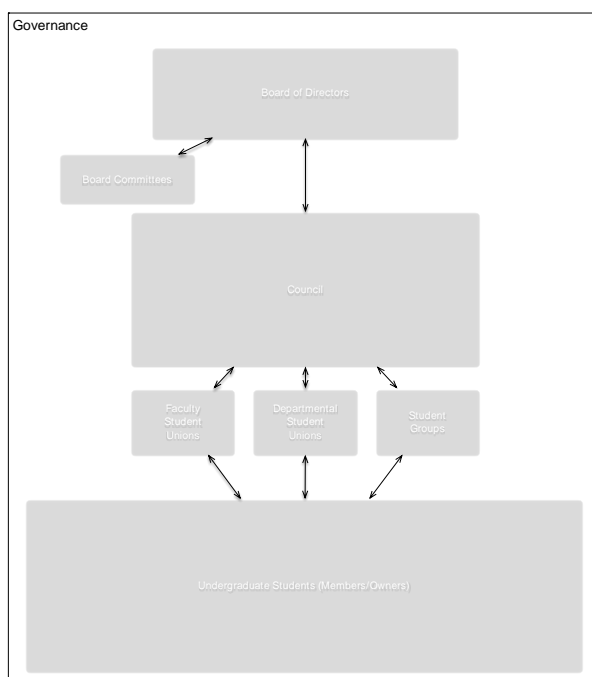
Understanding the needs of the members is, therefore, something that the Board can do with Council and student groups. If Board needs help with some of its engagement initiatives, it should remember that Council and student unions are available to help it.

2. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIETY SERVICES

2.1 U-PASS
The 'universal' pass giving students access to bus, Seabus, and SkyTrain services across the Greater Vancouver Area. The collectively negotiated contract between Translink, post-secondary institutions, and student societies across the Greater Vancouver Area means that public transit is made available to all students at a significantly reduced price. Students vote on the renegotiated terms of the U-pass contract via referendum every three years.

2.2 HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN
All undergraduate students registered for three credits or more are automatically enrolled into the Enhanced Health and Dental Plan, excluding summer semester, providing them with coverage beyond provincial health care. Coverage includes, but is not limited to, full or partial coverage of the cost of prescription drugs, physiotherapist visits, eye exams, travel benefits, and basic and preventive dental services.

2.3 WORKSHOPS AND CERTIFICATIONS
Every semester, free and partially subsidized professional and personal development opportunities are made available to SFSS members, including workshops and certifications in first aid, mental health, food safety, and financial literacy.

2.4 LEGAL CLINIC
During the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters, the SFSS makes a lawyer available to the membership nearly every second week to help with any legal issues or questions members may have. Visit are scheduled in advance and last up to fifteen minutes. The lawyer may provide legal advice and information, as well as notary services. Telephone appointments can also be arranged. Appointments are made through the General Office.

2.5 WOMEN'S CENTRE
The Women's Centre provides the SFSS membership with a safer space for self-identified women to build community on campus. The Centre is cofounded by the SFSS and Graduate Student Society (GSS) on a proportional basis. Women's Centre services include a special feminist library, a resource area for folks of all genders, a 24/7 lounge for self-identified women, free safer sex supplies, peer support, crisis referrals, and volunteer opportunities. The Centre is an anti-oppressive space for celebration and healing on campus.

2.6 OUT ON CAMPUS
Out on Campus is an LGBATQ+ centre that provides a safer space on campus for people of all genders and sexualities. OOC is cofounded by the SFSS and Graduate Student Society (GSS) on a proportional basis. OOC services include a resource library, free safer sex supplies, a lounge space, educational workshops, social events, peer support, and crisis referrals.

2.7 FOOD BANK
The Emergency Food Bank Program is intended to replace a traditional, physical food bank. To a maximum of three requests per semester, SFSS member may request vouchers of up to $25 each ($10 at Burnaby Dining Hall) redeemable at the following locations:

- SFU Burnaby: Nesters Market, SFU Dining Hall

- SFU Surrey: Surrey Safeway, 10355 King George Highway)
- SFU Downtown: Nesters Market, 333 Abbott

Requests are made online via SFU Web Survey tool, where a student need only provide they student number to have a voucher set aside for them confidentially at the Burnaby or Surrey general offices.

2.8 STUDY AND LOUNGE SPACE

A variety of space is provided to the SFSS membership by the Society free of charge. Available to any undergraduate student free of charge (a refundable deposit is required for weekend bookings), the SFSS offers a variety of very functional spaces.

- The MBC Conference Rooms, features folding walls which permit a number of configurations from 4 x 25 people, 2 x 50, 1 x 100, or other variations. Just beyond the Copy Centre, the rooms are hard-floored, have 6 foot tables with chairs, and have windows on three sides.
- The MBC Food Court can host well over a hundred people and has a covered patio immediately adjacent.
- Forum Chambers, our multi-purpose room near The Peak, features a sliding mirror / whiteboard wall and a high fidelity Sony ceiling projector, a sink, and music / microphone input.
- The Undergrounds is a medium-sized meeting space with booths, small tables and an iPod / MP3 input for house sound.
- The Surrey Lounge is a space provided for the members at Surrey.
- The Harbour Centre Lounge is a space provided for the members at Vancouver.

2.9 SPACE BOOKING

Very nearly any room at all three campuses may be booked by students. Rooms may be booked through the Surrey and Burnaby general offices, as well as online. Some costs and regulations specific to various bookings may apply.

2.10 EQUIPMENT BOOKING

A host of equipment is made available to member and member hosted events, including flip chart, data projectors, televisions, podiums, tables, chairs, fencing, and catering to name only a few. The Burnaby and Surrey general offices administer all equipment booking requests.

2.11 VENDING

For a fee, members and non-members alike are provided with vending opportunities at the SFU Burnaby campus in the southeast wing of the Academic Quadrangle. The Burnaby general office administers the vending program. Vendor guidelines, prices, bookings are done on the SFSS website.

2.12 COPY CENTRE

The SFSS Copy Centre is member-owned service offering high quality printing and copying at affordable prices. Services include, but are not limited to, self-serve copies, laser printing, and finishing (folding, binding, and stapling).

2.13 GRANTING PROGRAMS

The SFSS currently has two granting program provides: and events grant program and an accessibility grant program. These provide members with the opportunity to gain financial support for their advocacy, social, and academic initiatives, as well as ensure those initiatives are accessible to students with disabilities. It has been used to subsidize Frosh weeks, career fairs, undergraduate conferences, career nights, disability awareness campaigns, and seminars. The Board of Director has approved a pilot project that will make the granting process open to the entire membership, including external organizations and staff, ensuring that the membership is put first, and that all members are provided with equal access to Society resources according to a fair and transparent process.

3. ELECTIONS PROCEDURES

The SFSS elections are run by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), with support from the SFSS staff. The IEC is responsible for the administration of SFSS elections, and are required to ensure they are administered according to all SFSS bylaws and policies. The principle work of the IEC is developing and administering student engagement initiatives, which are intended to ensure that all student are aware of the upcoming election, that they can run and vote, and how to do each of these. 'Moreover, they perform an auditing function, ensuring that any work performed by staff is performed in a manner consistent with the bylaws and policies. Additionally, the IEC also administers the complaints process during the campaign period, host office hours to answer questions, and acts as the primary point of contact for members seeking information on the election.

Staff support the elections by ensuring that a basic plan for meeting the minimum obligations under the bylaws and policies are met, providing updates to the IEC demonstrating the progress of this work, and providing support services to the IEC in their engagement initiatives.

All candidates are required to know and abide by the electoral regulations. Any breech of those regulations may result in the following:

1. a formal censure,
2. a reduction in the available reimbursement for campaign expenses,
3. disqualification.

3.1 ELECTORAL PERIODS

There are 6 general periods required by any SFSS election:

1. Appointment of an IEC
2. Notice of election period
3. Nomination period
4. Campaign period
5. Voting period
6. Post-election period

Each period is regulated by a set of policies, ensuring that all SFSS obligation under provincial law, and its own bylaws are met. Moreover, elections policies provide a basic framework for the conduct of good student elections. All candidates are subject to all SFSS regulations at all times. Any candidate who breaches and any SFSS regulation risks being declared ineligible by the IEC.

3.2 ELIGIBILITY TO RUN IN THE ELECTIONS

To be eligible to run in an election for a position on the Board of Directors, a person must:

1. be an active member in good standing of the SFSS,
2. submit a complete and accurate Nomination Package, and
3. attend an Candidate Orientation Session.

Where a person wishes to run for a Faculty Representative position, that person must be a member of that Faculty.

3.2 CAMPAIGN REGULATIONS

The following are the regulations for the campaign period.

1. Campaigning will not start before the beginning of the Campaign Period.
2. Campaign materials must not be defamatory or discriminatory.
3. Campaign Literature must be printed at the SFSS Copy Centre, indicate the authoring candidate, be approved by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and be collected and discarded before the start of the Voting Period.
4. Campaign Literature must not be posted in Society offices.
5. In Surrey, campaign literature may only be posted on the designated wire boards. The Surrey Campus Coordinator may be contacted for details.
6. Only Members may campaign on behalf of candidates questions.

The IEC, may, at any time, establish new regulations. Candidates are required to adhere to all regulations, including those communicated to the candidates by the IEC during the elections. Failure to comply may result in censure, a reduction in campaign allowance, and/or disqualification.

3.3 FILING COMPLAINTS

Where a candidate feels that an electoral regulation is not being followed, they are required to submit their complaint in writing to the IEC, using the form provided on the society website: http://sfss.ca/elections-and-referenda/forms-and-documents/. The IEC will determine on the basis of the information submitted whether or not to act on the complaint in a manner consistent with the elections policies, specifically CP-3.

3.3 VOTING PROCEDURES AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

Voting is conducted electronically using the SFU Web Survey system. Results are communicated by the Chief Commissioner to Society staff and candidates. The Society Communications Office will then communicate the results of the election to all undergraduate students via all Society communication channels.

3.4 POST-ELECTION TRANSITION AND NEW BOARD ORIENTATION

Following the notice of results, newly elected directors are encouraged to reach out to exiting Board members to learn as much as they can from them before they take office.

The Board is provided with a formal 2- or 3-day orientation session.

3.5 KEY DATES FOR THE 2017 SPRING GENERAL ELECTION

1. Appointment of an IEC: January 4 – February 4
2. Notice of election period: February 5 – February18
3. Nomination period: February 19 – March 4
4. Campaign period: March 5 – March 19
5. Voting period: March 20, 21, 22
6. Post-election period: March 23 – April 8

4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These additional resources are available on the SFSS website at http://sfss.ca/about/documents/.

1. SFSS Constitution
2. SFSS Bylaws
3. SFSS Elections and Referenda Policies