



August 2019

SFSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS SEMESTER REPORT

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Vice President of External Relations



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INTRODUCTION

Disclaimer

The purpose of this report is to provide the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) membership a high-level overview of the work performed by the Vice President of External Relations from May 1, 2019 to August 31, 2019. This report is not exhaustive, and additional information can be provided upon request.

Vision Statement

Students thriving everywhere.

Mission Statement

To support students reach their full potential by providing resources and services that represent, connect and benefit our membership.

Guiding Principles

In all its activities, the members, employees, and guests of the Society will act to uphold the Society's guiding principles:

- Equity: active practices that involve all people regardless of differences
- Community: spaces where everyone feels accepted, safe and a sense of belonging
- Empowerment: advocacy and amplifying students' voices for better outcomes, especially for those in marginalized conditions
- Integrity: consistency, clarity, and honesty in all we do
- Sustainability: long-term future-oriented thinking, planning, and delivery
- Accountability: pro-active reliable leadership that delivers on organizational plans and promises

Executive Summary

As Vice President of External Relations my portfolio includes:

- Keeping the Board informed of plans or actions of external organizations and governments which affect the Society or its members
- Representing the Society at conferences or events held by external organizations other than the University
- Liaising between the Student Society and student unions of other schools as the formal delegate of the Board
- Serving as the Chair of the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Lobbying Committee

During the Summer 2019 term, I have had the opportunity to be a part of the following committees:

- Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Lobbying Committee (Chair)
- Finance and Audit Committee
- Governance Committee

The following is a brief list of the events, projects and initiatives that I have contributed to this term:

- GP-44 MOU
- BC Budget 2020 Consultation Submission
- Federal Budget 2020 Consultation Submission
- 2019/2020 Lobbying Plan
- Student Care Annual Meeting
- BCFS Annual Symposium
- UBC Student Union Development Symposium
- BCFS Knockout Interest Campaign
- Fall Kick-off After Party

In addition to the projects and duties listed above, I have also been serving as the Point Person during the President's absence from the Board. The responsibilities of this role included:

- Coordinating the day-to-day communication between the Board and management
- Aiding management in strategic decision making
- Maintaining Board presence during regular business hours
- Keeping the Board informed on any urgent matters that concern the Society
- Providing briefings to the President on relevant Society matters
- Having weekly meetings with the Executive Director to address Society matters
- Supporting Board members in their role as required

Some of the pain points of this summer term have been trying to balance my portfolio with my role as Point Person. These additional responsibilities have taken up majority of my time this term. Since this is my second year as VP External Relations, I have managed to rely on the schedule I built for myself last year to guide me in accomplishing the main tasks under my portfolio. Moving forward, I will be focusing a lot more of my attention to my external duties as the President returns to his role.

Projects Completed

GP-44 MOU

Summary

The SFSS has been working with SFU Student Services to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding the GP-44 policy on sexual violence and prevention on campus. This work has been going on for about 2 years. This May we were able to come to a consensus on what will be included in the MOU and both parties signed off on it. The goal of this MOU is clear some of the grey areas that existed with this policy and SFSS space and Board members.

Outcomes

The process of developing this MOU allowed for some very important conversations to take place between the SFSS and SFU Student Services. There was a lot of discussion on how to improve the existing services and awareness we have around campus on sexual violence prevention and student safety. This MOU is seen as a positive step forward in developing more open communication channels with SFU Student Services and the SFU Sexual Violence and Prevention Office.

2019/2020 Lobbying Plan

Summary

The 2019/2020 Lobbying Plan has been developed by compiling some of the advocacy topics we are carrying forward from the previous Board term, and some new initiatives that have been identified as priorities for our membership. The following list of topics is comprised of the federal, provincial and municipal lobbying priorities for 2019/2020:

- Capping residence and housing fees
- Eliminating federal student loan interest (BCFS Knockout Interest)
- International student tuition affordability
- Needs-based grants
- Off-campus living allowance
- Refugee rights
- Tank farm safety (SFU Gondola Project)
- Increasing investment in advanced education
- Investing in the BC Student Housing Loan Program
- Revising the Tuition Limit Policy to provide a 4-year cost estimate
- Rental rebates for geared to income
- SkyTrain extension from Surrey to Langley (SLS)

Outcomes

This plan will be used to approach external student societies and organization for potential collaboration opportunities and to prepare for the upcoming Fall Provincial Lobbying trip.

Projects in Progress

Fall Kick-off After Party

I am currently working with Alejandro, Dipti, Nick and Pratit on the Kick-off After Party subcommittee to help organize the logistics of this event. The after party will be taking place at The Study and will be the first official event the SFSS is hosting at this venue. We are working alongside SFU staff and representatives from The Study to iron out details regarding DJ, tickets, security, coat check and promotion of this event.

A full summary of details for this event can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iGgytSk82IPDR_tfYFmm37aHc3mdW_-P7ZferedxFGI/edit?usp=sharing

Fall 2019 Provincial Lobbying Trip

This summer I have been in conversation with AMS, UVSS, BCFS and ABCS to determine what priorities these organizations will be advocating for during provincial lobbying days. We have a great relationship with AMS and UVSS and we tend to have similar needs and priorities since we are the larger institutions in the province. Last year, we had a very positive experience partnering with the BCFS as well, so we are open to exploring whatever partnership makes the most sense for our membership this year. The fall lobbying trip will be taking place during the last week of October this year.

Get the Vote Out Campaign

This year is very important for membership outreach because of the federal election. As a student society, it is important for us to provide information to our membership, and to encourage them to go out and vote. A portion of this campaign will be messaging through social media that will provide information on when, where and how to vote. These posts will be mixed with information on the different party platforms so first time voters and those unfamiliar with politics can have easy access to information.

The University Committee has been working on organizing engagement opportunities on campus that include tabling, engaging local leaders in a debate, and organizing pop-up voting booths in which students can practice how to vote.

Upcoming Plans

After the federal election I will be focused on outreach to the newly elected or re-elected members of parliament to ensure we continue building relationships with key community players. This outreach will be consistent across municipal, provincial and federal representatives so that we are hitting the mark for our list of lobbying priorities. The Spring semester will include a follow-up trip to Victoria when BC Budget 2020 is released, and a federal lobbying trip as well.

Pain Points

The following are some key pain points that I experienced this summer:

- I had a hard time focusing on the VP External portfolio after taking on the role of point person. My attention was certainly divided which extended the timeline for some of the projects.
- The Board is still in its' storming phase of team building which has made it difficult to create a positive synergy in the office. There is certainly a lot of tension between different Board relationships which still needs to be addressed through leadership development.
- We have developed a new organizational strategic plan, however, I can foresee that the change process is going to be difficult. There are many procedural changes that need to take place in order be in line with the new work flow that we have decided on.
- There has been a lot of challenges with communication this summer. This has contributed to a lot of confusion, misunderstandings and conflicts. I believe these challenges are associated with misunderstandings of policies and procedures, and again the point that the Board has not completely meshed yet.

Recommendations

A lot of the challenges that the Board has experienced as a collective have been due to personal conflicts, miscommunication, lack of understanding of policies and procedures, and the steep learning curve that new Board members are experiencing. Sylvia has been very helpful in managing these challenges, however, I do believe professional leadership development would be very helpful for the Board as a team. We have a session scheduled soon with a professional third party, and I am hopeful these development opportunities will lead to more positive outcomes moving forward.