

Semester Report: Summer 2019

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Health Sciences Representative

Simon Fraser Student Society

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Executive Summary

My name is Osob Mohamed, and I am the Faculty representative for Health Sciences for the 2019/2020 board year. Currently, I sit on the University and Academic Affairs (UAA), Governance and Surrey Campus (SCC) committees.

I have taken on a variety of projects throughout the summer semester including a collaboration with the GSS to provide free menstrual products to students through a project proposal submitted to the SEI. I have also been working with Fiona (FCAT rep) to improve how the Board of Directors (BoD) take our meeting minutes, and how we can make them more comprehensive to reflect the nuances of the conversation we have at the board table. One project I will speak more on in the following sections of this report is the development of Issues Policies, particularly a policy focusing on the reproductive rights of our membership, and how we will support them in our work.

Some other endeavors I have taken on during the summer semester include participating in Welcome Day activities with my faculty, enrolling in the FHS Peer Mentorship program as a mentor, organizing FARM meetings on a monthly basis for updates & support, and preparing for Week of Welcome festivities in both Burnaby and Surrey.

Some pain points I've experienced are difficulty in connecting with my faculty. I can attribute some of this difficulty to the fact that the beginning of my board term occurred during the summer semester, when students are relaxing after a long school year. Another pain point that I can assume that we're all feeling is how disjointed the board is. It is very evident that there are some strong voices on the board, and my hope is that over the course of the year that

professional relationships can improve overall.

To the next student who takes on this position, I recommend that you take the time to review the Society's policies and bylaws, as well as familiarize yourself with Robert's rules of order. Additionally, try to create functional working relationships with the other board members, as they can become your best supports. As a faculty rep in particular, I would certainly recommend the next person taking on my role to get on top of things by meeting the HSUSU team as early as possible and stay in the loop as best as you can. If they feel that you are someone who is well-invested in the faculty, they will be more likely to form good relationships with you as well.

Being a board member is unlike any endeavour that I have ever taken on in my life. In terms of personal development, I am very grateful that I was able to take on this position, and I intend to make the best use of the opportunity that I can. It would be difficult to rate my personal experience on the board, as I have experienced moments of great satisfaction and hope, but also moments during which I feel as though my contribution to the Society has been minimal. I will hold off on making any judgements until I am able to complete some of the projects I have been working on.

In a professional sense, I have had the opportunity to take part in an environment that I was completely unfamiliar with at this point. As a Health Sciences student, being part of the governing team of a not-for-profit organization is completely out of my range of expertise. Over this last semester, however, I have had a chance to become familiar with the policies and bylaws of the society, as well as move wide-reaching documents such as the Societies Act of BC. I am

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excited to continue on this learning journey over the course of the next two semesters as well.

Projects in Progress

Project One

Summary

Development of Issues policies for the Society, which would clearly outline where the Society stands on various issues pertaining to undergraduate student life. The first of which are the issues policy, which would clarify our pro-choice stance, in light of student concern around anti-choice clubs being funded by the SFSS.

During the course of this project, I have consulted Sarah (CRPC) who has been immensely helpful in the drafting of this document. I have also consulted with Paola from the Women's Centre, as she has been a great source of information on how we can make this policy as clear and comprehensive as possible. I have also had a chance to work with Ashley from Out on Campus, to ensure that we keep in mind that it isn't only women who menstruate, and our language and actions should reflect this knowledge. Sylvia (our ED), has been a part of drafting and reviewing this policy, to ensure that it is as comprehensive and air-tight as possible.

Outcomes

Desired outcomes:

- The development of a comprehensive policy on reproductive rights on campus, that

would help us solve the issue surrounding what kind of groups are entitled to SFSS resources

- The consulting, drafting and passing of other policies pertaining to student life and wellbeing at SFU

Timeline

So far, there is a draft of the policy that has been completed by Sarah, with some edits and input made by me. Currently, before bringing it to the board, Sylvia has suggested that we get a legal opinion around the functional aspects of the policy, and how it will affect the operations of our clubs.

Project Two

Summary

With the GSS, we have decided to take on the project of providing free menstrual products to students all over campus. We have decided to submit a proposal with the Student Experience Initiative, which is a program funded by SFU solely for the purpose of improving the lives of students on campus. Ideally, by providing menstrual products all over campus, we would be able to alleviate some of the financial burden associated with menstruation, but mostly to help students who may need a pad or tampon urgently.

Outcomes

Initially, we would like to see the SEI fund the installation and maintenance of menstrual products dispensers, with the help of SFU Facilities services. Since the SEI is a limited time project, we hope that success in this project would give us the leverage we would need to seek

funding elsewhere, perhaps from the provincial government.

Timeline

Subject to change

July-August 2019

- Student Experience Initiative Project Development

September-October 2019

- Community Consultation

November-December 2019

- Develop Installation Plan & Timeline with Simon Fraser University Facilities

January 2020 – April 2020

- Installation of 1st Round of Dispensers
- Pre-Trial, Assessment of 1st Round Installations, Trouble-Shooting, Community Feedback and Refinement of Future Installation Plans

May 2020 – August 2020

- Installation of Remaining Dispensers at Selected SFU Campuses, with Refinements

September 2020 – December 2020

- Official 'Launch'/Announcement of Completion of Installation [September 2020]
- Ongoing Maintenance & Restocking

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January 2021 – April 2021

- Community Consultations
 - o Feedback Regarding Program
 - o Polling & Consultations Regarding Long-Term Future
- Advocacy for Long-Term/Permanent Solution utilizing Feedback and Data Collected.

Project Three

Summary

A topic that has come up at the very beginning of the board term was the quality and consistency of the minutes we post to the SFSS website. As of right now, our minutes neither list how the board members vote, nor provide much context for people who are unable to attend our meetings but want to stay updated on the affairs of the society.

Sarah was able to write up a briefing note for the governance committee, listing some of the ways other student societies and student unions take their minutes, and some recommendations that we may adopt. Fiona and I also wrote up a briefing note, listing some options that we could potentially adopt.

Outcomes

The main outcome of this goal would be to find a way to provide more context in our meetings, that the board would agree to. We have considered using some kind of transcription software, that would allow us to take the minutes down word-for-word and edit them as we see fit.

Timeline

Thus far, we have not made any hard and fast decisions, but my intention is to bring it back to the governance committee for further review, and also to come up with a resolution to take the board. I would ideally like to see this done in the first couple months of the fall semester. I will be bringing it back to the governance committee for further review.

Projects to Start

Project One

Summary

Over the course of the last few weeks, Shina (VP University Relations) and I have been collecting information on how different student unions in our area provide one-on-one support to their students through a student advocate position. We met with staff from the GSS, BCITSA and AMS, learned more about their jobs and how they've impacted students thus far through the work that they do.

Outcomes

The desired outcome would be to find out if this position would be a good fit for the SFSS, and how to incorporate student feedback, which can be difficult if students are not aware that such a position could exist for them.

Timeline

There is currently no particular timeline, however my intention is to continue researching this initiative to not only find out if a new position such as a student advocate would be a good match for the SFSS, but also if students would like to see it happen.

Pain Points

The main pain points I had to deal with regarding my role on the board as a faculty representative included having difficulty in connecting with people in my faculty over the summer semester. My hope is that as we move into the very active fall semester, that I will have an easier time engaging with the other students in my faculty.

The main pain points I had to deal with in terms of being a board member in general was trying to maintain a good work-life-school balance. During the first couple months of my board term, I was taking a full course load along with working up to 30hrs a week at my part-time job. I quickly found that it became a huge strain on my physical/mental health, and I did not want to take on a position on the board and not give it 100%. I also found that it really limited my availability during working hours. While I eventually had to resign from my job, I think it was the right decision for me.

Another issue I faced, while I wouldn't necessarily call it a pain point, was learning

how the board operates and how to get things done when the line between governance and operations isn't always clear. I believe this is a learning process that we are all still going through, so I am glad that staff have been a good resource to turn to and have been more than welcoming of my requests for support.

Recommendations

To the next health sciences rep, have fun! Do not be afraid to engage in board conversations, as it is the job you signed up to do. Also, consider the other commitments you have in your life, and see how you can make them work while prioritizing your position, and also prioritizing your own wellbeing.

As a faculty rep, my recommendation to you is to try and get on good terms with people who work with HSUSU, as FHS is a very small faculty and having strong connections will make your job a lot easier when it comes to faculty engagement. Also, take part in events like Welcome Day and FROSH, and initiatives such as the Peer Mentorship program. If they know and trust you, they'll be happy to work with you. Other than that, just enjoy this opportunity and make the best of it.