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SFSS Semester Report

Summer 2019



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Executive Summary

Beginning my term as VP Student Services was in most ways easier than when I began my term as the HSCI Rep last year. I think there would be potentially some value in restricting certain positions to incumbent members because it helps with the learning curve, especially when those in exec positions are expected to take on more work, and be able to guide other Board members to an extent. I did miss two weeks in May because of a family trip, but I found that it didn't really affect my ability perform because I was already familiar with all the topics that were being covered during development sessions that happened during my absence. Committee meetings also didn't begin until late May/early June, because it took some time for board members and at-large members to get selected and settled so there wasn't much to miss there.

For the summer semester I took on chairing two committees, Accessibility and Governance. Governance was easier to get the hang of since I had been a member on that committee last year. Accessibility has taken a bit more time to get a hold of since I did not have as much experience with that committee. My lack of experience with the Accessibility committee meant that I had to put a little more time into it than Governance. I also sit on two committees, the Build SFU Committee, and the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Lobbying Committee. Both those committees seemed liked good choices for me to sit on since I was a member of both of them last year, so that would make the transition into my new position much easier.

As a VP Student Services, I am also a member on a few joint committees with SFU. So far I've sat on the UPASS appeals committee, and the Ombudsperson Committee. Committees like these ones only meet once a semester and provide ample time for members to prepare for these meetings.

Projects Completed

Elections Policy Review

Summary

The Governance Committee worked on changing some elections policies so that we could fill in some gaps. We used the IEC elections report and our own experiences to inform some of the changes we made. Some of the highlights in terms of changes are ensuring student privacy when it comes to the collection of information. We wanted to make sure that those running in elections who requested information such as a emails, explicitly stated that it was for elections purposes. The policies were also updated to change some confusing language. There was also the development of a more robust policy concerning ties and run-off elections. In this year's elections there quite a few positions that had a only small difference in votes between candidate, with the HSCI Rep winning by only one vote. A policy for run-off elections would ensure no one would be caught off-guard by the process that would follow.

Outcomes

Revision of the updates went through a few meetings. The current draft is completed and will be sent to the Board table for approval.

Recommendations

The process for revision was reasonably simple. Doing it at the beginning of the Board term while elections are still fresh in the minds of the committee members made the process a lot easier

Studentcare Communications Plan

Summary

Every year the VP Student Services has to go over the communications plan for the Studentcare Health and Dental Plan. This year we wanted to make sure all materials are consistent with SFSS branding, so we requested a change the colours used in the print material. We also made a suggestion to include an end of coverage notice for our members. This would ideally be sent out in August, so our members know that their coverage period is coming to a close. My hope is that they take this opportunity to use the benefits they might have overlooked, and the ones that are only available once in a 12-month period – such as getting new prescription glasses. We also made a change to the communications that will be sent out in the month of February to include info for students on MySSP and the other mental health services available on and near campus. Studentcare initially mainly included info on Bell Let's Talk, but I

was of the view that we should personalize it to our membership so that it could provide some useful information as well.

Outcomes

Studentcare was comfortable with most of these changes, with the end of coverage notice still under consideration. There is still time to make some changes to the communication plan in certain areas if necessary.

Projects in Progress

Accessibility Policy

Summary

The Accessibility Committee spent a majority of the semester providing feedback to drafts of the accessibility policy written up by the CRPC. The policy was initially suggested by the Arts Rep in a Board Meeting. We brought the development of the policy over to the Accessibility Committee rather than Governance so that we could use the valuable input coming that would come from the Accessibility Committee. The policy will include many aspects such as meeting standards, physical space standards and communications standards. Since there is no provincial standard, like the one in Ontario, it seemed all the more important to make sure we had a document that outlined the expectations, processes and services the SFSS has to follow and provide. It is expected that there will be a policy released by the provincial government in the near future, however that will not cover all the aspects that we would require, so getting ahead would be beneficial for the society to ensure that we can begin to put standard laid out in the policy into practice.

Outcomes

The policy is nearly complete. During this process the CRPC was taking an online course so that they could develop the necessary skills to help the Board improve our Accessibility standards. The policy has undergone several revisions and the Accessibility Committee has given comprehensive feedback. We are currently receiving final feedback before the CPRPC gives a presentation to members of the Accessibility Committee on September 4th. It is expected that the policy will be completed mid-September, before the AGM. The Board will be updated on this policy and what it will mean for them and the way they communicate with our members and host meetings and events. The policy will take some adjusting for staff and board members, but the Accessibility committee is aiming to have the policy put into practice before the end of the next semester.

Peer Support and Health and Wellness

Summary

I carried this project over from last year. Progress was minimal last year because we didn't have a CEO and staff were stretched thin. My goal is to incorporate a Peer Support 'service' for our students. In general peer support programs tend to be helpful and successful because of its ability to service more people at once, and connecting students with those with lived experience in different mental health topics creates a more relatable and personable experience. This would also provide students who want to work in a mental health/services sector an opportunity to get some experience and support their peers. Ideally we would eventually have general health and wellness events and workshops hosted on a regular basis to support all of our students.

Currently there is roughly a three-month waiting period to see an HCS counsellor, which is not an acceptable wait time for our members. The long wait time also points to the other issue of not doing enough to support students before they get to a critical point in their mental health. Having consistent supports, resources, activities and workshops to target the behaviours and encourage healthy habits will help students before they reach a critical point and hopefully improve the overall health of our students.

Outcomes

Health and wellness initiatives such as this one has been added to the strategic plan. So far, we have had a meeting with Women's Centre and OOC to get feedback on the potential Health and Wellness Centre and a brief document was sent for them to use as a guide for discussion with other interested groups and students. There were also discussions had with a local pharmacist who would like to introduce a vaccine program with the SFSS. With the measles outbreaks now might be the most convenient time to remind students about the vaccines that need updating. This initiative is still in development because HCS has expressed interest and we will be waiting until our meeting with them to decide how we want to proceed.

This past year the ministry of AEST committed \$40, 000 for student led initiatives regarding mental health. The SFSS would like to use this opportunity to partner with HCS to look into the Peer Support system. We had planned to have the initial meeting about this in the summer semester and have the project initial steps under way by the end of the summer. The first scheduled meeting had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. However, one of the board members had been hasty with the Lennon Wall initiative (regarding the Hong Kong/China tension), and their lack of preparation and attention to process caused staff to be busy dealing with media outlets requesting interviews. This caused the meeting to move to a significantly later date because it is difficult to co-ordinate the schedules between myself, the ED and HCS. There is a meeting scheduled for the beginning of the semester so the project should move along nicely. In terms of Peer Support, "Nimbus" a tutoring platform has offered to further develop their app so that it might be useful to the Peer Support system.

This would be used for students to look of meeting times, sign up, and show up to the group sessions that will cover the topics that meet their needs. Currently I have a lot of concerns with their ability to develop this app to meet our needs, however that is something that could be explored next semester if I feel the need, but I do doubt anything will come out of it.

Pain Points

Pretty much the only issues we I found that I ran into this year was conflict with the President. The president left for an internship for pretty much the entire summer, which was not ideal. Other than that most of the semester was smooth sailing.

Recommendations

For board members in general I recommend not being afraid to ask questions, and to work on clear communication. A lot of issues this semester could have been avoided if people asked questions as soon as they needed help.