

SFSS Board of Directors Semester Report

May 2019 - Aug 2019

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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Representative

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Executive Summary

Hi! I'm Jennifer, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Representative. This semester, I have been part of the Accessibility Committee, Events Committee, University and Academic Affairs Committee, and the Surrey Campus Committee.

Some projects I've completed include Mental Health Care Packages (Summer 2019), FASS Connections Mentorship Video, Mental Health Nurses Promotion, and more. I am planning on continuing the Mental Health Care Packages project for Fall 2019. I will also be working on the Accessibility Standard Policy, FASS Fest, various workshops (Financial Literacy, Sustainable Students), establishing FASS presence at the Burnaby and Surrey campuses, and more.

My biggest pain points this semester has been the learning curve as well as communication issues. Sometimes the lack of clarity around procedures made me confused about what I should be doing.

A recommendation I have would be to ask questions. If you're confused about something, ask someone! There are so many people and resources to help you.

Another recommendation would be to read documents. Reading SFSS-related documents is an important way to get a better sense of how the student society operates.

Overall, it's been a hectic summer of transiting up the mountain every day - I'm just glad I wasn't taking a full course load this semester!

Projects Completed

SASS Social (Paint and Pizza Night)

Summary

The Society of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS) had just recently had an election, and we wanted to host a social event. I was one of the two executives from last semester who still kept in touch with the new team, so I helped plan this event a little bit - however, I was in Quebec at the time so could not help out as much as I would have liked.

Outcomes

Connecting students in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

- SASS' involvement in the faculty in the past has been minimal - we've mostly held one big annual event, FASS on a Boat
- The new exec team wanted to host more events to establish a stronger presence on campus
- This event would be a sort of "trial run" for the new team

Getting the new exec team familiarized with hosting events

- The new team largely consisted of first years (and one other returning exec member), so they needed more experience with event-planning on campus
- Some of the exec team attended the event and posted pictures of it on our Instagram

Learning opportunity for future events

- After this first event, execs would know how to make future events better
- Execs familiarized themselves with the room-booking and grant request process

Results

Planning & Promotion

- The event came together quickly
- There were some difficulties creating a graphic for the Facebook event page on Canva
- There was some confusion about cords/projectors

Attendance

- The event was attended by some students who were from Departmental Student Unions (DSUs) such as Criminology Student Association (CSA)
- Some students were non-FASS students as this event was open to everyone

Post-event

- There were too many pictures posted on the Instagram account with non-relevant (non-faculty-specific) hashtags
- Some supplies were left over due to lower than expected attendance, so they will be reused for FASS Fest, the FASS kickoff frosh event

FASS Connections Mentorship Video

Summary

I had gone to all three days of FASS Camps in July to film videos of our FASS mentors connecting with incoming first-year FASS students.

To help promote the FASS Connections Mentorship Program, I put together the footage from those three days. This was posted on FASS' social media to encourage incoming first years to sign up for the mentorship program.

Video can be seen here:

<https://www.facebook.com/fass.engage/videos/390707658228955/>

Outcomes

Showcasing what the FASS Connections Mentorship Program is like

- This video captures the perspective of a FASS mentor and a FASS mentee - the narration is done by FASS mentors while the footage shows how mentors and mentees interact
- There is footage of both the mentees interacting with each other as well as the mentor team, showcasing our connection in the community

Promoting and encouraging sign-ups for the mentorship program

- By showing how well-connected the mentors and mentees of the mentorship program is, we hope to direct incoming first-year students to sign up for the program

Establishing FASS' presence on campus and online

- @fass.engage, the Instagram and Facebook page name is consistently shown in the video
- Video was shared by mentors to be seen by incoming first-year FASS students

Results

Widen FASS outreach

- Video was shared and seen by many FASS students

Mental Health Care Packages (Summer 2019)

Summary

This project received overwhelming support. The purpose of this project was mainly to promote mental well-being during exam season.

Overall, we went under the original budget - however, this may be because we took out some items and I overestimated the budget (added a 10% contingency). Also, we bought a lot of items in Canada in person, so we did not have to account for CAD/USD conversion or shipping costs.

Logistically, we need more volunteers to walk around campus locations for future iterations of the project. We also need to confirm our Wellness Booth earlier so we can promote the event earlier. Lastly, finding more sponsors, especially health food sponsors, would help cut down costs of the project.

The feedback for this project was very positive (from students, staff, and faculty). It helped strengthen community ties with student volunteers, SFU departments, and SFU students. This project also helped raise awareness for SFSS and what we do.

A more detailed public report (minus financial specifics) can be seen here:

<http://bit.ly/mwdreport> (includes student feedback!)

Outcomes

Making SFU students happier and improve their day

- Having food, friendly faces, and free stuff made a lot of students happy (as stated in the feedback forms)

Showing SFU students that there are people who care about their mental health & well-being

- One feedback sheet said that the student enjoyed how SFSS volunteers were so cheerful
- The departmental contact info postcard has resources and departments for SFU students to reach out to

Reducing stigma against mental health by openly conversing about it

- There was a roly board with sticky notes that students could add positive messages to
- The care packages were meant to help students de-stress during exams
- Care packages had resources and people students could reach out to if they needed to talk to someone

Raising awareness for SFSS and other SFU services

- There were informational handouts inside the care packages but not on the tables
- SFSS banner was out and the care packages are SFSS-branded. Volunteers were wearing SFSS t-shirts

Results

Reception

- The project was very well-received, both by students and staff
- Many SFU departments and SFSS student groups/clubs expressed interest in being involved in this project again next semester

Mental Health Nurses Promotion

Summary

Promoting mental health services and resources at SFU Health & Counselling was part of my platform. I wanted to promote Mental Health Nurses since not a lot of students are aware of this role.

Before my co-op term at Health & Counselling ended, I added information about Mental Health Nurses on the Health & Counselling website. I also designed and printed a Mental Health Nurses informational postcard (what they do, how to book with them).

Outcomes

Making more SFU students aware of Mental Health Nurses and what they do

- Postcards have not officially been released or given out yet
- Students have been referred to the Mental Health Nurse section of the SFU Health & Counselling website

Results

Reception

- Many SFU departments wanted the postcards to give out to students

Paperless Agendas

Summary

I submitted a motion, which was later amended and passed:

Be it resolved to discontinue the practice of printing paper agendas for each Board member, and instead only print 4 agendas per meeting for guests and The Peak for the remainder of the 2019/2020 Board year;

Be it further resolved to have 1 of those 4 agendas be a large print agenda for anyone with accessibility needs, and to promote this accessibility information on the Facebook event page for SFSS Board Meetings;

Be it further resolved to have Board members submit requests to the Chair for paper agendas, with the deadline being the day before the Board meeting.

Outcomes

Making SFSS more sustainable

- Paper agendas are usually one-time use
- Most Board Members already have the digital copy

Results

Implementation

- The Accessibility Committee has implemented this and also included a large print agenda, which made me SO happy

Email Signatures

Summary

I submitted a motion, which was later amended and passed:

Be it resolved to include optional pronouns and consistent territorial acknowledgements in SFSS email signatures.

Outcomes

Making SFSS more inclusive

- Adding pronouns was optional based on whether Board Members/SFSS staff would be comfortable including them or not
- Consulting with SFU First Nations Student Association (FNSA) about consistent territorial acknowledgement

Results

Implementation

- Some Board Members have pronouns and territorial acknowledgements in their email signatures
- Territorial acknowledgement wording is still being worked out

Projects In Progress

Accessibility Standard Policy

Summary

I brought this up to the SFSS Board of Directors and it was decided that Sarah, our Policy Coordinator, would do some more research on this and draft up a policy.

I consulted with the Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance (DNA) about this policy, and it's also been brought up in SFSS Accessibility Committee meetings.

Original briefing note: <http://bit.ly/accessibilitystandardpolicy>

Updated briefing note: <http://bit.ly/aspupdatedjuly>

Outcomes

Making SFSS more inclusive

- Showing that SFSS welcomes ALL the students we represent, including students with accessibility needs

Making SFSS' accessibility provisions more consistent

- In the past, accessibility information has been inconsistent and poorly advertised

Promoting SFSS' accessibility information more

- Having an accessibility section on the SFSS website
- Having a consistent and comprehensive accessibility statement and information on the SFSS Board Meetings Facebook event

Timeline

July 11th – August 13th, 2019: Background research, project proposal outline

August 13th – August 27th, 2019: Project document draft

August 27th – September 10th, 2019: Revised project document draft

September 10th, 2019: Accessibility Committee review and approval

By September 25th, 2019: Board review and approval

FASS Fest

Summary

FASS Fest is FASS' kickoff event (frosh). It will be an overnight event from Saturday, September 14th to Sunday, September 15th.

I am part of the Marketing & Promotion, Communications, Logistics, and Security & Risk committees. I have been working on graphics for Instagram posts, writing and posting on Instagram, contacting DSUs and departments to help with promotion, website edits, accessible activities, creating a security plan (where the AEDs and emergency exits are, important information to include in training volunteers), and so on.

Website: <http://bit.ly/fassfest>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/fassfest>

Facebook event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/322801405276177/>

Outcomes

Introducing incoming first-year FASS students to the faculty

- The schedule is packed with activities designed to facilitate connections between students

Get the new team of FASS Connections mentors more connected with each other and the students

- There are lots of opportunities for mentors to volunteer and get involved

Timeline

May – June: Starting planning (I was in Quebec at this time so I was working remotely)

June – July: Launching website, starting promotion on social media, working out more logistics, ticket sales start

July – August: Continuing promotions on social media (contacting DSUs to help), filming promotional videos, finalizing schedule, room bookings, supplies, etc.

August – September: Finalizing details, preparing for the event, buying supplies, last promotional push (DSUs)

FASS Associate Deans Meetings

Summary

I will be meeting regularly (once a semester or more, if needed) with the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. I will be in constant contact with Arts Central over the next semester.

I also brought up the FASS Futures survey with SFSS, because the faculty is planning on releasing a similar survey in November. The SFSS Board decided to use the same questions as last year to analyze time trends.

In the past, I've met with the FASS Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the FASS Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. I brought up a list of student concerns and the associate deans addressed them.

Meeting notes: <http://bit.ly/fassdeanmeetingnotes>

Outcomes

Communicating student needs to the Faculty

- Bringing a list of student-raised concerns to each meeting

Strengthening the relationship between the Faculty and SFSS

- Representing SFSS matters, taking Faculty matters back to SFSS Board of Directors

Timeline

July: First meeting with FASS Associate Deans

August: Brought up FASS Futures survey with the board at a meeting

September: Meet with Bettina and Brian at Arts Central

October/November: Possible meeting with Associate Deans?

Fall Kickoff Accessibility

Summary

As part of both the Accessibility Committee and the Fall Kickoff/Events Committee, the Vice-President Student Life asked me to be the liaison between the two committees, as well as with the Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance.

Outcomes

Ensuring the Fall Kickoff event is as accessible as it can be

- Being inclusive to all SFU students who would like to attend the event

Strengthening communication between committees

- Acting as liaison between the Events and Accessibility committees

Strengthening communication between SFSS and other student groups

- Communicating with the Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance to make sure the voices of students with disabilities are heard

Timeline

June - July: Separate meetings between SFSS Events Committee, SFSS Accessibility Committee, and Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance

August: Liaison role established, hope to have a briefing note sent out by Events Committee

September: SFSS Accessibility Committee and Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance give feedback and it is implemented

Projects To Start

Mental Health Care Packages (Fall 2019)

Summary

Because this project was so well-received in the Summer Semester, I want to do it again in the Fall (and possibly the Spring). I will be working on improving this project with each iteration.

Outcomes

Improving upon previous iterations of this project by taking feedback

- Using feedback forms (whether in print or electronic forms) for participants

Making SFU students happier and improve their day

- Having food, friendly faces, and free stuff made a lot of students happy (as stated in the feedback forms)

Showing SFU students that there are people who care about their mental health & well-being

- One feedback sheet said that the student enjoyed how SFSS volunteers were so cheerful
- The departmental contact info postcard has resources and departments for SFU students to reach out to

Reducing stigma against mental health by openly conversing about it

- There was a roly board with sticky notes that students could add positive messages to
- The care packages were meant to help students de-stress during exams
- Care packages had resources and people students could reach out to if they needed to talk to someone

Raising awareness for SFSS and other SFU services

- There were informational handouts inside the care packages but not on the tables
- SFSS banner was out and the care packages are SFSS-branded. Volunteers were wearing SFSS t-shirts

Timeline

August: Meet with SFSS Events Coordinator (Dipti) and SFSS Executive Director (Sylvia) to debrief the Summer 2019 iteration of this project, take recommendations for future iterations, and discuss next steps

September: Submit sponsorship forms for granola bars, planning logistics (table bookings), buying items with long shipping times, contacting student groups who may be interested in getting involved

October: Start the marketing process, promote on SFSS social media and website, posters around campus. Recruit volunteers. Possibly execute the event late-October/early-November?

November: Post-event report and debriefing Events Committee and Board of Directors

FASS Mentorship & Engagement

Summary

I have signed up to be a returning Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences mentor. I have been assigned 3 mentees, of which I will be reaching out to consistently throughout the year.

I have also signed up for mentor-mentee events, as well as Faculty engagement events and volunteer opportunities. For example, I will be walking around campus promoting the Faculty's resources during the first two weeks of school.

Outcomes

Strengthening connections between the Faculty and SFSS

- Becoming more familiar with those involved in the Faculty and act as a resource for anything SFSS-related

Spreading awareness of SFSS to first-year FASS students

- Making mentees aware of SFSS' services, resources, and roles

Timeline

August: receive mentee contact information, reach out to mentees

September: invite mentees to events, attend outreach volunteer opportunities, continue engaging with first-year FASS students, answer mentees' questions and give them advice

October - December: Continue sharing advice, knowledge, and opportunities/events with first years

FASS Presence at SFU Surrey

Summary

Over the summer (sometime in June or July), I met with Rose (the FASS coordinator at the Surrey campus), Jasmine (the president of the Society of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS), our Faculty Student Union), and Rayhaan (SFSS At-Large Representative). We discussed possible ways for SASS to get involved at the Surrey campus, and the SFSS Surrey Campus Committee was also brought up as a possible group to collaborate with.

Outcomes

Strengthening connections between the Faculty and the Surrey Campus

- Hosting more events at the Surrey Campus for first-year FASS students

Strengthening connections between the Faculty Student Union (SASS) and FASS students at the Surrey Campus

- Engaging FASS students (majors, minors, or other) through events hosted at the Surrey Campus

Timeline

June - July: Met with Rose Baik (FASS coordinator at SFU Surrey), Jasmine Padam (President of SASS), and Rayhaan Khan (SFSS At-Large Representative) to talk about the Fall semester

August - September: Plan events, seek collaboration with other groups such as the Surrey Campus Committee

October - December: Plan and host events at the Surrey Campus, post-event reports and debriefs

SFSS Financial Literacy Workshop

Summary

I first brought up this possibility at the August 8th SFSS Board of Directors meeting. Sylvia, the Executive Director, mentioned that Vancity could host these workshops. While that is a viable option, I also want to explore having a student-led workshop.

Outcomes

Strengthening connections between the Faculty and SFSS

- Becoming more familiar with those involved in the Faculty and act as a resource for anything SFSS-related

Timeline

July: First brought this idea to Sylvia at the SFSS Council meeting

August: Brought this idea to the SFSS Board of Directors, who were interested

September (option 1): Going ahead with a Vancity workshop, marketing the workshop, encouraging people to register, booking rooms

September (option 2): Finalizing a workshop plan from the student, booking rooms, submitting a communications work order to market this, encouraging students to register

October (option 1): Hosting the Vancity workshop

October (option 2): Continuing planning

November (option 1): Post-workshop report and debrief

November (option 2): Hosting the student-led workshop

December (option 2): Post-workshop report and debrief

Sustainable Students Workshop Series (Tentative)

Summary

This idea is very tentative since I am not sure I will have time to host something like this. However, this is something I would love to see happen at SFU, whether it's with SFSS, Embark, or another group (I could contact SFU staff who worked on the Reuse for Good initiative).

This workshop series could consist of three sections:

Reuse

- Ditching single-use plastics (having reusable straws, bags, cutlery, containers/jars)
- Thrifting (tricks and tips, best thrift stores in Vancouver)
- School supplies (excess notebook paper to be taken out and combined to make a new notebook with a decorated cereal box cover)
- Other (swapping clothes with family and friends, upcycling clothes/DIY, reselling items)

Reduce

- Bringing containers everywhere (instead of using takeout containers)
- Meal prep
- Buying in bulk
- Transiting/carpooling/walking/biking

Recycle

- Composting
- Growing vegetables from kitchen scraps (easy - all you need is a jar/container and water)

Outcomes

Getting students to be more aware of their environmental footprint

- Including facts and ways to reduce waste in each workshop, along with tips and tricks
- Sharing ideas from a student perspective

Highlighting sustainable initiatives and groups on campus

- Showcasing Embark's garden
- Talking about the Reuse for Good and Ban the Bottle initiatives

Timeline

September: Survey the SFU community to see if there is interest in a workshop series on sustainability from a student perspective, start planning

October - December: Compiling resources, speakers, materials (submitting a grant? Or going through the Events Committee). Reaching out to the SFU community (Embark) for advice, feedback, and possible collaboration/support

January - March: Set up registration and host the workshop series over the course of a few weeks

Bookbinding and Bullet Journaling Workshop Series

Summary

Having previously hosted this workshop as part of the SFU Knitting Club in the Summer semester, I have a better idea of how this can work in the Fall semester based on the feedback I collected.

This can be run as part of the SFSS Events Committee or part of the SFU Knitting Club again. I want to host more than one session (for example, one session for bookbinding and another session for bullet journaling). Currently there is no general craft/DIY/journaling club that I am aware of, which is why the SFU Knitting Club has been the one to host this workshop in the past.

Please see this post for pictures of the event that was hosted in the Summer semester: https://www.facebook.com/pg/sfuknittingclub/photos/?tab=album&album_id=321105862131564

Note that SFU Health & Counselling has done self-led bullet journaling as part of the Creative Collective initiative for the SFU Summit Program over the summer. It has been very well-received and students have been asking when it will happen again.

Outcomes

Connecting creative students

- These activities are geared towards introverts - however, anyone can join
- With events like pub nights, it may be difficult to engage SFU's more introverted student population. These workshops would give these students a chance to participate

Creating a positive campus environment

- Being patient and supportive of each other
- Having SFU be more than a "commuter campus" since students will want to stay on campus for these workshops
- Having students create something they can be proud of and use for years to come
- Giving students creative skills they can apply in future ventures

Timeline

September: Go over feedback forms again, discuss with stakeholders, finalize supplies list

October: Buy supplies (request a grant? If through Events Committee, talk to Dipti), prepare supplies, start advertising and promote the registration link

November: Host the bookbinding workshop first, then the bullet journaling one

December (optional): Post-event report and debrief, if it was hosted with SFSS Events Committee

Course Hoarding

Summary

After the August 8th SFSS Board of Directors meeting, I got in touch with the presenter from the Student Conduct Office to talk about the issue of course hoarding.

I will be continuing the dialogue with the Director of the Student Conduct Office, Michelle, to brainstorm ideas on how to better tackle this issue. I may bring any discussion items on this topic to the FASS Associate Deans meeting.

Outcomes

Increasing student awareness of course hoarding and how it is academic dishonesty

- Including this issue in orientation or training for student leaders as well as incoming students

Timeline

August: First contact with Student Conduct Office

September: Meeting with Director of Student Conduct Office

Pain Points

Learning Curve

I am not a governance person or a numbers/budgeting person. I'm in Psychology, not Political Science or Economics. It was hard for me to wrap my head around some of the things that the Board had to go over. I had to create a budget for one of my projects which was difficult for me even though I had a template. A lot of the time I was left confused because I wasn't sure if what I was doing was the right process since it changed from last year. It was also difficult to remember all the rules and policies from Board orientation.

Board meetings also intimidated me at first since I was not familiar with Robert's Rules of Order.

Communication Issues

Sometimes I felt like some things were not clearly explained - maybe because I was a Faculty Representative and not a Vice President. I have also noticed that some Board members do not communicate with each other as well as others.

At Board meetings, sometimes I won't always know what was discussed because I didn't hear what was said, and the minutes would not include it comprehensively.

Silence/Delays/Lack of Voicing Concerns Early

Over the course of the term, Board members (myself included) have either:

- Stayed silent on an issue until a few weeks later, when the issue was brought to the whole board,
- Delayed responding to time-sensitive messages/emails, or
- Did not voice concerns until the issue has been festering for a while.

My reasons for staying silent on any particular issue would be that I felt like I did not have enough information about the issue to make a decision or ask a relevant question. However, I believe that as elected representatives, we should speak up when we don't understand something and not delay responding until it is too late. Going forward, I will be asking more questions when I do not understand something.

Recommendations

Ask Questions

The biggest recommendation I would have (both for other Board members and for myself going forward) would be to ask questions. When I don't understand something, I need to be able to ask for clarification so I can be confident in the decisions I am making.

Know SFSS Staff

Getting to know Dipti (SFSS Events Coordinator) and Sindhu (SFSS Communications Coordinator) has been a huge help with the projects that I take on. They are a resource I can turn to for help and I ask them questions about how to proceed with my projects.

Read Documents

Being on the Board means having to read a LOT of documents. Whether it's committee meeting minutes attached to the agenda for approval or the Board financial statements, it is important to read these documents to get a proper sense of what the Board is voting on. Reading these documents will give you a better, more comprehensive understanding of the SFSS and will help you make decisions.