

2019-2020

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

REPRESENTATIVE

O S O B M O H A M E D

EXIT REPORT



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.

In my third term as a Board member, I've had the honour of participating in different events and initiatives that I am very proud of, and excited to see continued through the remainder of the year. My spring semester was eventful to say the least, and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to do it again in the coming year as the President.

I am more than grateful to the students for electing me, and I am grateful to my fellow board members for the good work they have put in over the course of the year. I have to give a special shoutout to the Progressive Caucus of the SFSS Board of Directors, who have been strong advocates for student rights and progressive values at the board table. This caucus was comprised of our President Giovanni, VP University relations Shina, Arts and Social Sciences rep Jennifer and FCAT rep Fiona. I am grateful to them for standing up for student rights with every decision they made. I would also like to commend the good work done by the board as a whole, such as hosting engaging events and representing the SFSS on different occasions.

I'll be outlining a few of the projects I've worked on throughout the year, and some that I'd like to continue in the coming year.



STUDENT ADVOCATE

Over the course of the Summer semester, Shina (VP University Relations) and I collected 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. We brought our proposal to the Board during the fall semester, and the project was approved by the Board of Directors.

We have budgeted to hire a student advocate during the 2020-2021 year, where I intend to take part in the hiring process, to ensure the right person is selected for the job

COVID-19 SURVEY AND RESPONSE

The storm that has been COVID-19 has taken us all by surprise, but we quickly learned that students need our help now more than ever. I've put together a survey to gather information on how undergraduates have been affected by COVID-19 and the transition to remote learning, and the response has been phenomenal.

There were more than 1000 responses in less than 12 hours! I am excited to have a report done soon, that will help with our support and advocacy efforts moving forward.

ISSUES POLICIES

Following the implementation of IP 1: Reproductive Rights, I have brought the development of further issues policies to the Governance Committee for implementation and review. For instance, in the 2015 Policy Manual of the SFSS, we had some Issues policies that can be reworked and re-implemented. Other Student Societies and Student Unions across Canada have very robust and thorough Issues Policies that we can use to guide the implementation of our own that will be relevant to the SFSS.


In the coming year, I will review with the Governance Committee the old Issues policies that I believe should be recommended to the Board to re-implement. I would also like to conduct a survey or add questions onto the General Membership Survey this year, so that the next Board has some guidelines regarding what kind of issues are important and relevant to students.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



Along with Shina (VP University Relations), I began to look into how the SFSS can lend a voice to the Open Educational Resource (OER) movement. Through working with the SFU OER Working Group and having the chance to attend the OpenEd19 conference to learn from the professionals in the field, I've developed a much more thorough of what open access material means, and what work has been done and still needs to be done to make educational materials as financially accessible to students as possible. This includes incentivizing instructors to create their own course material, use already created open source material, and stop making costly services such as iClickers and access codes mandatory.

We have partnered with the BC Federation of Students in order to execute the Open Textbooks Now! campaign, which I will hopefully be working on further in the coming year




MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS INITIATIVES

With the GSS, we had decided to take on the project of providing free menstrual products to students all over campus. We submitted 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

The Student Experience initiative has approved our request, and a pilot project to distribute free menstrual supplies throughout the Burnaby campus will begin in the near future.

We will assess the effectiveness of our intervention, and continue to lobby for permanent free menstrual supplies from SFU and the government..




AVPSI SEARCH COMMITTEE



I am currently sitting on the search committee for the next Associate Vice-President Students & International (AVPSI) for SFU, as the SFSS representative. My job is to ensure that undergraduate priorities are adequately considered in the development of a job description and the hiring for this position.

Considering that the AVPSI is a critical decision maker regarding the affairs of students and particularly international students, I will ensure that I am diligent in making sure that the student perspective is both heard and prioritized. I will continue to sit on this committee in May.



BOARD TRANSITION


I've spent the last few weeks preparing for the transition period between April and May, when the new Board comes in. There is a unique challenge there, as due to safety measures in place to protect ourselves from COVID-19, orientation will have to be online. I will continue to work on this with our Executive Director, and look into ways we can prepare the new board during these uncertain times.

BOARD TRANSPARENCY

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.

I wrote up a briefing note during the Summer semester, listing some options that we could potentially adopt. In January, I updated my briefing note with context and information I had gathered between Summer semester and January, and brought it back to Governance Committee to which it was initially referred.

The Board passed a motion to implement a ratio vote, which is a step in the right direction but is not sufficient. I intend to revisit this issue in May, with the new board.



CONCLUDING REMARKS



As I finally come upon my final year at SFU, I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have served as the Faculty of Health Sciences representative on the SFSS Board of Directors this year. A major pain point of mine was a disconnect with my faculty student union and the SFSS, which will definitely be an area for the next HSCI representative to work on. I would also recommend finding other ways to keep in contact with Health Sciences students, such as online mediums to keep students updated on interesting opportunities and relevant events. Being engaged as a board member is important, but faculty reps have the additional responsibility of being a liaison with their respective faculties, which is important as well! It is also a great position to take advantage of when pushing academic initiatives, as you will have a good line of contact with your faculty's deans and other important decision-makers.

Another pain point that I faced was being a part of a Board that was so severely disjointed. I tried to maintain a good working relationship with everyone on the board, but it came to a point where several board members would not even acknowledge me or make eye contact as I walked into the office or meeting room, while continuing to greet their friends and others. This was incredibly dehumanizing, and I found myself leaning on the members of the board who treated me like a person and a teammate. It was likely a product of incumbent board members wanting to keep the status-quo as is, and a desire for the typical resume-padders to collect their accolades and not do the work to earn them. I wish the environment would have been one of encouragement and collaboration, where we could work together to make sure initiatives were being pushed forward and responsibilities were being fulfilled. Directing a student union is not a job to be taken lightly! When you are elected, you've asked the students to entrust you with a huge responsibility. Please don't take advantage of that.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Despite some of the low points of being on the board, the overall experience of connecting with students and working on their behalf was incredibly gratifying and a great opportunity, and for that reason I ran for re-election in the SFSS 2020 General Election. I am super excited to continue with the society as President. I am confident that the coming year will be a transformative one for the SFSS, where we can begin to re-embodiment the spirit of strong, forward-looking advocacy on behalf of our members through consultation, community-building and activism. Our governance structures are outdated and are not serving us in the way we need them to. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, students are going to need strong advocacy now more than ever. I am excited to work with the new board to make these things happen.

A student movement has been brewing for some time now, and the time to build student power is upon us! I am excited for what is in the books for the SFSS this upcoming year, and for the years to come.

THANK YOU!

Osob Mohamed
Faculty of Health Sciences Representative
2019/2020

