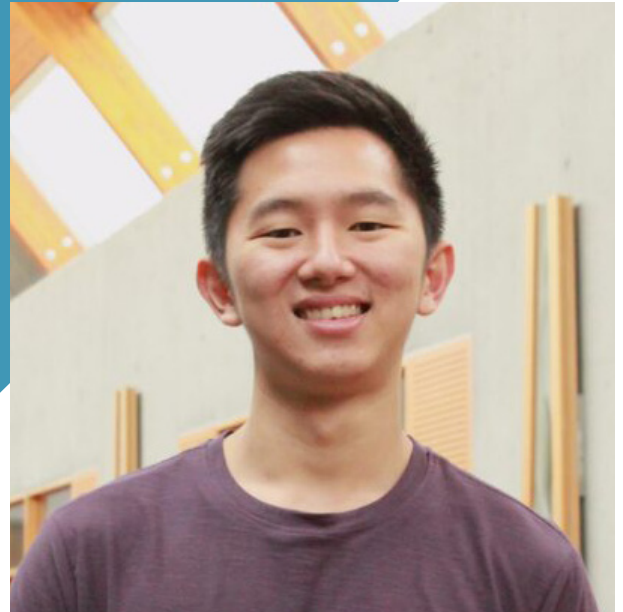


simon fraser
student society

**SFSS BOARD
OF DIRECTORS
SEMESTER
REPORT**



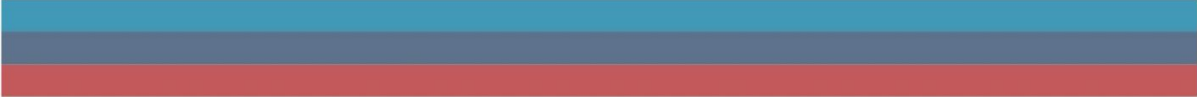
WeiChun Kua
Science Rep

May 2020 - Aug 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



My name is WeiChun Kua, and I'm the Science Representative on the 2020/21 SFSS Board of Directors. I sit on the Governance (GOV) Committee, University and Academic Affairs (UAA) Committee, External and Community Affairs (ECA) Committee, Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) Committee, and Faculty, and At-large Representative Members (FARM) Committee.

This is my first time on the board, and I was motivated to run for the board because I truly believe in student power and that has been lacking for quite some time now at our student society. But the board definitely did not expect to be starting our term fully online and it is looking likely to be online for the rest of our term due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has posed significant challenges and difficulties in trying to get projects and initiatives done efficiently.

Nonetheless, I think our board adapted as well as we could and accomplished a lot in these past few months. We reviewed our administrative structure and governance model, and made some much needed changes so the society can function better for the benefit of our members. Along with the upcoming by-law review that will be on the next Annual General Meeting on Oct 26th, I believe these changes all together make the building blocks of empowering students and making our student society more democratic and accountable to its membership — the students.

I hope you enjoy reading and learning about some of the projects I've completed and the ones that I will continue working on into the Fall semester. Some of the projects include, Students Against TMX, SFSS Food Hub, and the By-law Review. My bi-weekly report where more details can be found along with information about the meetings I attend, can be found [here](#).

COMPLETED PROJECTS

[Summer Lab Courses Survey](#)



Summary

As the entire Summer semester shifted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students who are transitioning into a whole new and unknown online learning environment, are missing out on valuable lab experience and as well as facing barriers with not having access to required/recommended software that they would otherwise have access to with on-campus computers. Myself, and Harry Preet Singh (Faculty of Applied Science Representative), put together an online [survey](#) to gauge these barriers faced by students and incorporate the results into the SFSS COVID-19 survey [report](#).

Goals

To understand what are the challenges students face in online lab-based courses and if they are adequately addressed by the instructor

- Sent out the survey on May 8th on SFSS social media accounts, and posting in SFU Facebook groups like “SFU Must Know Courses”

- Questions in the survey included why students are taking lab courses despite knowing it's online, if they should be paying less tuition for these courses, and if the instructor provided accommodations.

Results

Results were compiled on May 14th with 61 responses, and published on the SFSS [website](#).

Students were not properly informed about how online labs were being conducted

- 57.4% of respondents did not receive any updates from their instructor on how their labs will be conducted

Students felt that tuition for courses with remote labs should be reduced to match the reduced quality and lost of in-person lab experience that is crucial to the course

- 96.7% of respondents think they should be paying less tuition
- 23.0% of respondents have one or more courses that require software that they do not have access to while working from home, or the software is incompatible with their computer's operating system
- 77% of respondents are taking lab courses because it's required in their degree, and 74.7% wanted to stick with their degree planning and be on track to graduate

Students gave their suggestions on how their department can better accommodate these courses:

1. Reduced tuition fees for semesters with remote lab work
2. More clarity and communication from professors (e.g. more office hours and earlier communication of the course syllabus)
3. Restructured lab formats (e.g. offering additional time slots, creating lab tutorial videos, and using "breakout rooms" with smaller instructor-to-student ratios)
4. More course options (e.g. courses without lab requirements)
5. Pass/Fail grading options continued into the Summer and Fall 2020 semesters
6. Free learning resources (e.g. textbooks and software)

[Brief on Canada's COVID-19 Response](#)

Summary

Balkees Jama (Student At-large Representative) and I submitted a [brief](#) to the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, to provide comments on the Federal Government's "Canadian Response To The Covid-19 Pandemic". Our brief highlighted students' financial and mental health struggles in this pandemic, especially international students who are often left out, despite contributing a significant amount to Canada's economic, and job growth.

Goals

To ensure students concerns and hardships are taken into consideration as the Federal Government put together their COVID-19 recovery plans

- From February to March 2020, the number of postsecondary students in the workforce, aged 15-29, decreased by 28%
- Students who have graduated or who are nearing graduation will likely face difficulty in finding employment in their field of study as Deloitte Insights forecast a deep recession which will be more detrimental than the 2008-09 global financial crisis
- According to the SFSS COVID-19 [survey](#), almost 50% of students reported that they are experiencing mental health issues as a result of COVID-19

To call on the Federal Government to commit to a Just Recovery for all

- Urging the government to create their recovery plans based on the Just Recovery [principles](#) that is endorsed by over 400 organizations
- The SFSS has also passed a [motion](#) to endorse the Just Recovery Principles

Results

The brief is submitted and is publicly available on the House of Commons [website](#). This ensures students' concerns are heard and taken into consideration with upcoming and future COVID-19 recovery plans. We will continue to make sure students have a voice and are not ignored in these tough times by meeting with politicians, lobbying not only the Federal government but all levels of government, and through advocacy campaigns.

Reflection on canada day



Summary

At the SFSS we acknowledge that we are working and operating on the unceded and ancestral territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), S^kwx̌wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Selílwitulh (Tseil-Waututh), k^wik^wəł̓ əm (Kwkwetlem) and q̓icəy̓ (Katzie) Nations. But we must do more than mere land acknowledgement, so I put together a [statement](#) along with educational [resources](#) compiled by Iulia Zgreabă (SFU Undergrad), Jane Kim (SFU Undergrad), and Matthew Provost (VP Student Services) in order for our communities to reflect on canada day, and start respectful conversations about what it means to [decolonize](#).

Goals

To urge our community members to reflect and start respectful conversations as they celebrate canada day

- Encourage the student society to be more mindful of what we celebrate and consider the harm and violence that we may perpetuate with this celebration
- Acknowledge that the creation of canada is intrinsically linked to the continued genocide of Indigenous people, and oppression of Black and People of Colour
- University of Victoria Students' Society chose not to support the celebration of canada day this [year](#)

Results

There were really good educational resources compiled by community members for community members to educate themselves on Canada's colonial past and present. Making

anti-colonial narrative a normal conversation, especially at the student society level, is really important in making sure we decolonize every aspect of the student society. We must consider our Indigenous communities on campus, and how we can support them, amplify their voices and show solidarity with more than just mere land acknowledgements.

[SFU C-19 Coalition Student Town Hall](#)



Summary

The Simon Fraser Student Society collaborated with [SFU C-19 Coalition](#) (C19C) to organize our own student town hall, "[The Future of SFU Education](#)". This was in response to SFU's own [lackluster](#) student town hall where there was minimum interaction between students and SFU admins, which resulted in students' concerns not properly addressed or answered. The project was led by Balqees Jama (Student At-large Representative), and grassroots organizers from C19C. I provided tech support and helped moderate during the event.

Goals

To provide an interactive and accessible platform for students to ask questions and express their concerns with online education

- Integrated Zoom into [Slido](#) that provided interactive polls and upvoting questions
- Had an amazing live volunteer captioner that made the event accessible
- The town hall was streamed on Slido, Facebook and Youtube

Opportunity for students to ask questions to a diverse panelist who had different insights into the future of SFU education during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Panelists included representatives from SFSS, C19C, the Graduate Student Society (GSS), the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU), and Tuition Freeze Now (TFN).

Results

Overall, the event was a success with 350+ live attendees and the recording on Facebook has over 5,900 views. The interaction and dialogue with students helped us better understand the major on-going concerns and barriers students face. We will continue to lobby and escalate actions against SFU's belief that the quality of education remained the same if not better in the transition to online education. The student town hall brought students' voices to the forefront and provided us with more leverage to push the university to do better for students.

Watch the recorded live stream [here](#)

[Science Welcome Day Event](#)

Summary

I presented about the SFSS at one of the Science Welcome Day Events planned by student Senior Welcome Leaders as part of SFU Virtual Welcome Day.

Goals

To welcome our Fall 2020 new undergraduate Science students to SFU and educate them about the SFSS

- Presented about organizational structure, constituency groups, independent student groups, activism, services we offer, our lobbying & advocacy work, and how to get involved with the SFSS

Results

It was a good opportunity to let new students know about the SFSS and to let them know that we are here to advocate for and represent them. Student Senior Welcome Leaders planned it well but it definitely felt kind of rushed and there wasn't a lot of back and forth with attendees that we would otherwise have if it was in-person.

ON-GOING PROJECTS

Students Against TMX



Instagram: [instagram.com/p/CFZ43rtAL_F/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CFZ43rtAL_F/)

Facebook: bit.ly/3jsxi8q

Twitter: bit.ly/SATVideo

Sign on to the letter [here](#)

Summary

The Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) project poses a huge [risk](#) to the SFU community in addition to violating Indigenous sovereignty, and does not align with Canada's goal of being a climate leader. In collaboration with Anuki Karunajeewa (Environment Representative), SFU350's working group, '[Justice. No Pipeline](#)', and [DogwoodSFU](#), a [letter](#) was sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in demanding a stop to TMX in pursuit of a Just Recovery, and respecting Indigenous rights and titles. The letter has signatures from 14 student unions which represents over 680,000 students across Canada and the United States, and as well as allied groups and unions such as the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), and SFU Faculty Association.

Goals

To advocate for the safety of our students

- TMX comes with the expansion of the Burnaby Tank Farm which is located right below the only intersection off the mountain, Gaglardi Way.
- It is also 800 m away from the closest SFU Residence building

To get the Federal Government to commit to taking *real* climate action and transition away from fossil fuels

- The expansion will add [approximately 400,000 tonnes](#) of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere per year.
- [Canada is warming at twice the rate](#) of the rest of the world.
- Invest in Indigenous-led green infrastructure and green job-retaining initiatives

Immediately cease TMX and commit to honouring Indigenous sovereignty

- Call for the immediate ratification and legislation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in present-day Canada.

Timeline

- May to July: drafting letter and consultations from Dogwood and student unions
- July to August: contacting student unions, and allied groups to sign on to the letter
- September: letter sent to Prime Minister and campaign video release
- October: Email campaign to MPs and collaborate with other anti-TMX groups

Pilot SFU Food Hub Program (Burnaby)



Summary

Students are in a financial bind due the pandemic as it caused a depression in the job market, for some the pandemic only exacerbated pre-existing living conditions. As a result, students are forced to work precarious jobs that puts them at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus, just to have enough money to feed themselves or their dependents. Tara Flynn (Coordinator, Civic and Community Engagement) from SFU's Office Of Community Engagement reached out to the SFSS to collaborate and establish the SFSS Pilot Burnaby Food Hub Program.

The program aims to provide students with weekly grocery every Wednesday from 12:00 to 2:30 PM in Convo Mall. Students would have to pre-register 1 week before for pick-up the following week. Special thanks to our partners United Way Lower Mainland, Greater Vancouver Food Bank, Burnaby Neighbourhood House, Off Beat Produce, EMBARK, and SFU Sustainability Office for providing funding and food to run this pilot program

Goals

To help relieve the financial burden of students, and ensure students are not compromising their health in order to save money

- Some students have said they have had to ration their food due to their limited budget

- Fresh and organic produce are purchased each week from our partners so students have a healthy variety of foods, in addition to canned foods

To make this a permanent program for our students

- Would need to a consistent number of students showing up each week to justify putting money into making the Food Hub a permanent program
- Our goal was to reach at least 100 students but as of September, we have 40+ students showing up each week with 70 people signing up.

Timeline

July: official launch of Food Hub

July to September: promoting and looking for ways to improve the program

October: End of pilot program and evaluating whether to make the program permanent

[By-laws Reform](#)

Summary

The governance committee have been revising the SFSS by-laws so that it is updated and compliant with the new BC Societies Act that was passed in 2016. The committee has also proposed changes to the power structures of the society to empower council and hand over some of the responsibilities from the current board, and portfolio changes to the Executives roles. Additionally there are also some small changes such as revising some of the definitions with constituency groups and student unions

Goals

To be compliant with the new 2016 BC Societies Act

To empower Council and for them to have actual legal authority

- This would give council actual power to hold the Executives of the Board accountable instead of the current model where Council is just an advisory body to the current 16 board members with no actual legal authority or power to do anything

Timeline

- June - August: review and making propose changes to by-laws with the involvement of council members
- September: speaking to faculty/departmental student unions about proposed by-laws and for council to vote whether to support the changes.
- October 26th: membership to vote at the SFSS Annual General Meeting on whether to pass or not pass the proposed by-law changes

SFSS Rebranding

Summary

The current logo and branding of the SFSS currently has no meaning or message behind it. As a student society that is about advocating for students and empowering students, we need a logo that reflects that. This project will look into the history of progressive radicalism and activism of the SFSS and develop a logo around that theme. Myself, Samad Raza (VP External), Matthew Provost (VP Student Services), Jennifer Chou (VP Student Life), Haider Masood (FCAT Representative), and Sindhu Dharmarajah (Communications Coordinator) are part of this project.

Goals

To incorporate student power and activism into our logo and branding

- SFU was once known as the "[Radical Campus](#)" and that was due to student activism and protest that fought for progressive change on campus
- Students should feel empowered looking at our logo

Timeline

August: first group meeting and delegating tasks

Rest of the Fall 2020 term: research, develop a logo and conduct focus groups with students

Science All-DSU Meetings

Summary

These are bi-weekly meetings with Science Departmental/Faculty Student Unions' Presidents or Executives to discuss student unions related issues such as common room space issues, online invigilations, or anything to help make their student unions be more inclusive and effective in advocating for the members.

Goals

To give updates on what's happening with the SFSS and at Board meetings

To help Science student unions be better advocates for their members

To share ideas and advice between all the different Science student unions in a collaborative space

Timeline

Continuing until the end of my board term

[SFU C-19 Coalition](#)

Summary

The C-19 Coalition formed when the lockdown happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the goal of uniting and advocating for workers and students on campus. The coalition consists of grassroots organizers from different groups on campus such as the SFSS, Teaching Staff Support Union (TSSU), Graduate Student Society (GSS), and Tuition Freeze Now (TFN). The coalition have been fighting back against SFU on issues such as the untrue narrative of quality of education staying the same to the major issue of increasing tuition during a pandemic.

<https://www.sfuc19coalition.com/>

Goals

To advocate for the collective struggle of workers and students at SFU

- Teaching assistants have seen increased workloads with the same pay
- Students are experiencing a major decrease in quality of education while paying the same fees
- SFU is only providing less than adequate response and continues to act as if everything is normal and fine and have shown unwillingness to listen and take any suggestions

To mobilize students

- Students may feel helpless when it comes to decisions that SFU make such as online invigilation and tuition increases.
- The coalition shows that if workers and students organize together, we can make meaningful change and push the university to do better

Timeline

May to August: Petition, Student Town Hall, and strategizing
Fall 2020 term: Recruiting organizers and organizing teach-ins

PAIN POINTS



Working Online

We have a board this year that is very passionate about building student power, activism, and reviving the radical campus that was once SFU. As much as our amazing board has accomplished and adapted, communicating and being collaborative online continues to be a challenge. Not being able to see each other in-person and having small chit-chat without scheduling a video call, made it more difficult to bond and work together with other board members. Being on video calls and the computer all the time is also exhausting and can cause fatigue, especially with long board meetings, multiple committee meetings, and scheduling calls to sort out details for a project or working groups. So I definitely felt fatigued after video calls and find it hard to then still sit in front of the computer and do more work.

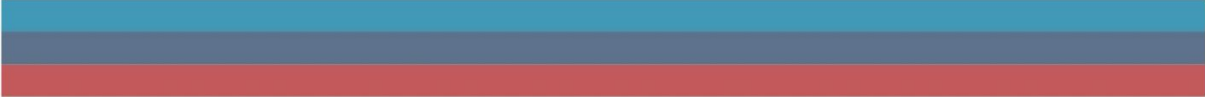
Burnout and Time Management

As it is my first time being on the board of a student society, I chose to take the summer semester off and not take any classes so I can get a feel of the amount of work and responsibilities I would have to do on the board. But that didn't prevent me from being burned out. New issues keep arising due to the extenuating circumstances we're in with the COVID-19 pandemic. So we have had to figure out how to get the university to take the students' concerns we're bringing forward seriously, while also performing my responsibilities as a Faculty Representative and working on my own projects. It definitely feels like a full-time or part-time job.

Mobilizing and Connecting with Students

A big part of the student society and building student power, is to connect with the students and for them to feel empowered being a member. This hasn't been easy as it would've been in person. Not being able to just set up a table in the AQ or Convo Mall to talk to students, or hold rallies and protest, is hindering our ability to connect with our members. This has made us learn more about digital organizing and different ways to connect with students online. The SFU C-19 Coalition Student Town Hall was a successful event and something to learn from. We're hoping to hold more town halls in the Fall term and hold more online actions with the help of our new [New/Mode](#) subscription.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Being on the board is very rewarding because we know the work we do is important to help advocate for students and make sure their voices are heard at the university, and at all levels of government. If it is your first time being on the board I would recommend putting aside a significant amount of time at the start of your board term to get a feel of the workload and board responsibilities so you know what you're able to manage on top of doing board work. It is a significant amount of work and important work at that.

Keeping track of your mental health is also important. I found myself having trouble concentrating and getting tasks done, while staring at the screen the whole day. As well as having my work, school and personal space all mix together at home is not ideal. This has prompted me to think about why I have trouble concentrating and realizing that I have always had this problem but the pandemic exacerbated it and threw off my coping mechanism. Don't be afraid to seek professional help and get diagnosed if you have to! I realized that having a dedicated work space is important to me and I recommend doing just that but I also recognize that not everyone is privileged to have adequate space at home. Corbett, our VP Finance, has done a great job with checking in with us, being open about his mental health and being compassionate with deadlines of work reports.

Learn to take days off! It can feel like there's always so much to do and I ended up doing SFSS related work even on weekends. I have started to take the weekend off and not looking at emails or reply to any messages relating to SFSS. You can't be helpful to students if you don't take care of yourself first. Lastly, talk to other board members and ask for help or support. A lot of times it can feel like you have to do everything on your own with your projects, but other board members might have the capacity to help out or have helpful advice.