

simon fraser
student society

**SFSS BOARD
OF DIRECTORS
SEMESTER
REPORT**



WeiChun Kua
Science Rep

Sep 2020 - Dec 2020



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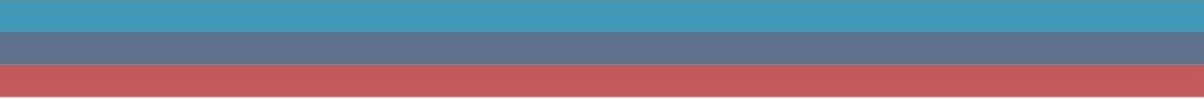
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Hello everyone! My name is WeiChun Kua (柯伟俊) and I'm your 2020-21 Faculty of Science Representative. I was able to work on some big projects and campaign this year such as the #StudentsDeserveSpace campaign, the SFSS 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) where we made significant organizational restructuring, and as well as continued some of previous projects from the summer. You can read more about the different projects in more details below.

I currently sit on the University and Academic Affairs (UAA) Committee, External and Community Affairs (ECA) Committee, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Committee, Faculty, and At-Large Representatives Members (FARM) Committee, and Governance (GOV) Committee. Additionally, this semester I'm also on the newly established Transition Steering Committee (TSC) that will handle the transition to the new organizational structure which will see Council and Executive Committee be the legal board of the SFSS.

This year has proven to be tough with everything still being online and it seems like it is going to be that way for the rest of our board term. Despite that, this year's board still managed to achieve some big wins for students, improved student [engagement](#), stood up to [systemic racism](#), and continues to fight for students on issues such as Pass/Fail grading, tuition increases, and eliminating the use of invigilation softwares. I'm immensely proud of our work so far as this year's board, and the different projects that I completed and others that I will continue to work on for the remainder of my term.

I hope you find the projects that I'm working on exciting and valuable to your student experience.

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COMPLETED PROJECTS

PILOT SFU FOOD HUB PROGRAM (BURNABY)



Summary

The pilot [SFU Food Hub](#) program on Burnaby ended in late October 2020 after running for three months since July 2020. This pilot was a collaboration between the SFSS and SFU, and was led by myself and Samad Raza (SFSS VP External), and Tara Flynn (Coordinator, Civic and Community Engagement) from SFU's Office Of Community Engagement.

The pilot program was overall successful, averaging around 55 applications per week with an average of 35 of those applicants coming up to the Burnaby campus to pick up their free groceries. Applicants included undergraduate, and graduate students who stated that the Food Hub provided a much needed relief during the pandemic where pre-existing financial stress is being exacerbated. It is clear that food insecurity continues to be an issue to both undergraduate and graduate students at SFU and there is a need to see this pilot program established as a permanent low barrier and accessible program.

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A survey has been sent out to applicants to collect feedback and will be incorporated into a report that will be presented to the SFSS Board to determine next steps and explore the potential of establishing a permanent Food Hub program.

Special thanks to our partners Burnaby Neighbourhood House, Offbeat Produce, Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society, and EMBARK, for providing fresh produce and non-perishable foods. Gratitude to volunteers who came to help out, including Matthew Provost (VP Student Services), Gabe Liosis (VP University Relations), Helen Pahou (Student At-Large, UAA Committee), Abishek Parmar (Student At-Large, Events Committee), and EMBARK's Food Rescue volunteers.

Goals

- To provide free weekly supplementary groceries to the SFU community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To provide fresh and nutritious produce to help students meet their nutritional needs.

Results

- The Food Hub received an average of 55 applications per week with an average of 35 of those applicants coming up to the Burnaby campus to pick up their free groceries.
- Fresh produce was provided by Offbeat Produce every week, and any leftovers were sent back to Burnaby Neighbourhood House. Less common produce were less likely to be picked up by applicants like Kohlrabi.
- The SFSS provided SFSS branded reusable bags for applicants and most of the time they brought them back to use for the next pick up so we reduced the use of plastic bags.

OPERATIONS ORGANIZER HIRING



Summary

The SFSS undertook an administrative and governance restructuring so we needed to hire an [Operations Organizer](#) that handled human resources and the operations of the SFSS to fit the model that we went with. I sat on the Operations Organizer hiring committee and we conducted two rounds of interviews with several candidates, and held debrief sessions. The committee recommended a candidate and the candidate is expected to start their term in Spring 2021.

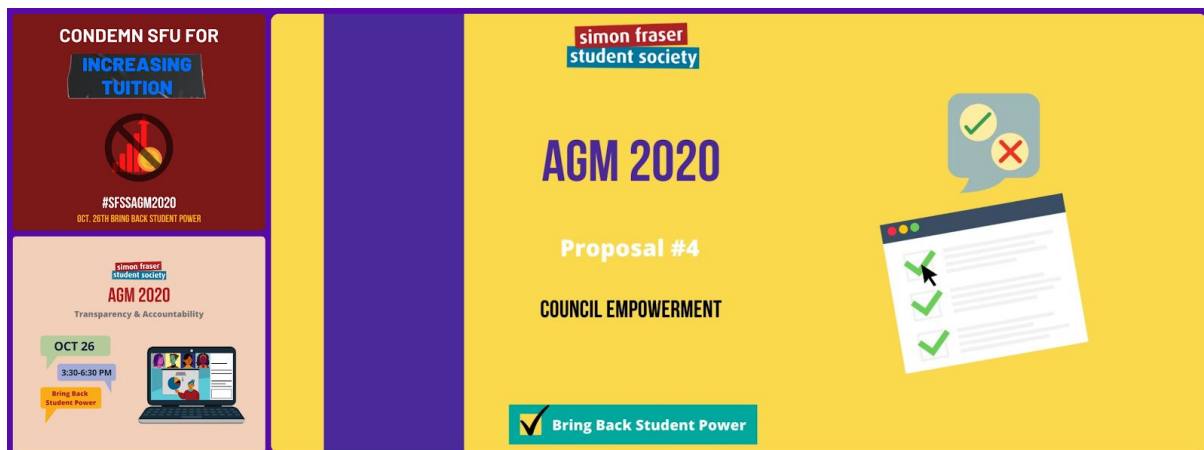
Goals

- To hire an Operations Organizer whose role is to handle the day-to-day staff relations and operations of the SFSS, and reports to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors through the President.

Results

- Successfully recommended a candidate to hire as the Operations Organizer.

SFSS 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Summary

This was the first time ever that the SFSS held a completely online Annual General Meeting (AGM) due to the COVID-19 pandemic so a substantial amount of planning was needed to tackle the unknown technical, and logistical issues. The AGM Committee handled the tech and financial side of the AGM such as getting a Zoom webinar from SFU IT Services, and writing a script.

The Board also met to discuss and brainstorm ideas on how to reach out, and get students to attend the AGM. We came up with a [campaign plan](#) that included promo videos, raffle prizes, and outreach goals. Our VP Student Services, Jennifer Chou also created an [AGM Cheat Sheet](#) to better help students understand the major [By-Law changes](#) that were going to be voted on at the AGM.

I reached out to students, Science students unions, and clubs such as SFU350 to promote the AGM and encourage students to attend. This meant a significant amount of time was invested into messaging individual students to attend and also making sure they understood the proposed By-Law changes that they were going to vote on.

Overall, the 2020 AGM was a huge [success](#), other than some tech issues, with over 600 students attending, all the proposed By-Laws being passed and as well as a [condemnation](#)

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[vote](#) condemning SFU for raising tuition fees in the midst of a global pandemic was also passed.

Goals

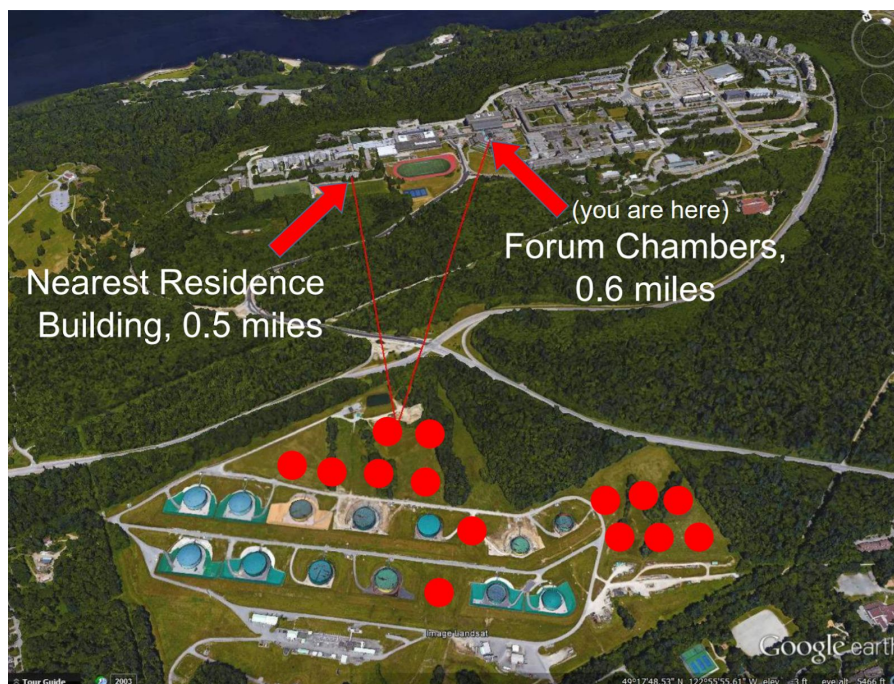
- Ensure all the proposed By-Laws changes, and condemnation vote are passed.
- Achieve quorum and get as many students to attend as possible.

Results

- Over 600 students attended and voted at the AGM
- By-Laws were passed that empowered Council, ensured compliance with BC Societies Act, new Executive Committee portfolios, and clearer definition of student groups.
- Condemned SFU for raising tuition in the midst of a pandemic.

ON-GOING PROJECTS

TMX BURNABY TANK FARM AWARENESS



Source: https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Council_2016-09-28.pdf

Summary

I was contacted by Angela Brooks-Wilson (Professor, Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology) to attend a meeting with SFU's Martin Pochurko (VP Finance and Administration), and Mark LaLonde (Chief Safety Officer) on Nov 19 to discuss the danger and safety of the Burnaby tank farm and it's on-going expansion due to the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project (TMX). The tank farm poses significant [risks](#) to the SFU community and SFU has not done enough to ensure the safety of its students.

Others in attendance as well were Samad Raza (SFSS VP External), Matt McDonald (GSS Director of External Relations), Pierre Cenerelli (GSS Exec. Director), Tim Takaro (Professor, Medical Doctor, Faculty of Health Sciences), John Clague (SFU Professor Emeritus, Earth Sciences, Officer of the Order of Canada), and Karl Perrin (Spokesperson for Burnaby Residents Opposing the Kinder Morgan Expansion [BROKE] and UniverCity resident).

Full minutes [here](#).

Goals

- To get SFU to reaffirm their [stance](#) on the unacceptable safety risk of the Burnaby tank farm and commit to educating the SFU community about the pipeline and the tank farm.

Timeline

Spring 2021:

- Meet with Joy Johnson (SFU President) and push SFU to reaffirm their stance on the pipeline and tank farm to align with [SFSS'](#) statement.

STUDENTS AGAINST TMX



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

Twitter: bit.ly/SATVideo

Campaign video: bit.ly/3jsxi8q

Sign on to the letter [here](#)

Email your representative [here](#)

Media Coverage:

National Observer: [Post-secondary students call on Trudeau to abandon TMX](#)

Burnaby Now: [SFU students get 13 student unions to sign anti-TMX letter](#)

The Peak: [Student groups organize anti-Trans Mountain Expansion letter](#)

Summary

The Students Against TMX is a campaign launched in summer 2020 between the SFSS, 'Justice, No Pipeline', and DogwoodSFU, in demanding a stop to the Trans Mountain Expansion Project TMX in pursuit of a Just Recovery, and respecting Indigenous rights and

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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.

The letter was sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in September 2020 but we didn't receive any response. An email [campaign](#) was started so students can send emails to their local representatives. We also launched the campaign video which gained over 2.7k views on Instagram and 1.8k views on Facebook, and 600+ views on Twitter.

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.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GROUP (ISG)

Summary

The [International Student Group](#) is a constituency group that advocates for the needs and rights of international students at SFU. The group has not been active in a few years so I'm in the process of starting the group back up again. SFU announced an increase in tuition fees for the next two years in the middle of a pandemic and international students already face high tuition fees with no cap on yearly increases. So there is a need for this group to advocate on behalf of international students among other issues that international students face such as the high cost of International student health fees.

Goals

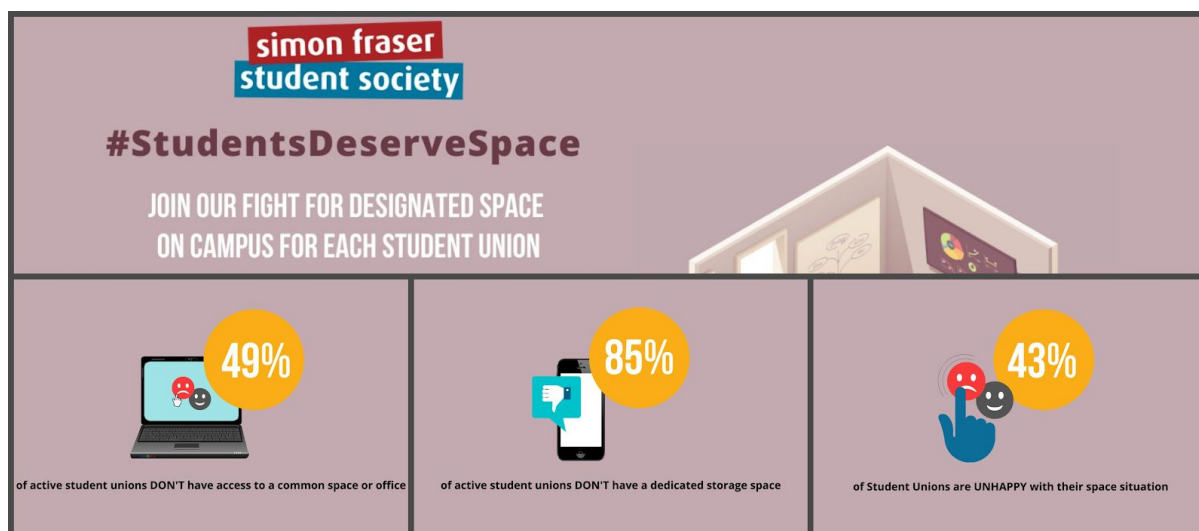
- Restart the ISG so international students have a voice on council and a group that advocates on behalf of their needs and rights

Timeline

Spring 2021:

- Amend constitution and run an election

#StudentsDeserveSpace



Summary

On October 31st, the Environmental Science Student Union (EVSCSU) and Bachelor of Environment Student Union (BESU) announced that the School of Environmental Science is [seizing](#) their current shared common room in TASC 7470 to be turned into a laboratory space by the end of the semester. Although the school has expressed commitment to find alternate space for both student unions, this was still done without any advance notice or prior consultation with BESU or EVSCSU.

The above eviction proves the needs for Faculty Student Unions (FSUs), and Departmental Student Unions (DSUs) to establish a formal agreement for their common room space or to look for one if they currently do not have one between their faculty/department. Student spaces on campus are vital and important to the well-being and success of students. They provide a collaborative space and where students can go to seek support from their FSU or DSU.

I worked with the Molecular Biology and Biochemistry Student Union (MBBSU) Council representative to prepare a [briefing note](#) for Council to launch a [#StudentsDeserveSpace campaign](#) for the purpose of securing long-term student union common rooms.

Goals

- Secure long-term common room spaces with departments and faculties.
- Establish written agreements between all DSU and FSU and their respective department or faculty.

Timeline

Spring 2021:

- Council to write a letter that aligns with the space campaign briefing note and to be sent to department and faculties
- DSU and FSU works with their respective departments and faculties to look for spaces that fit their needs and sign an agreement to secure them.

PASS/FAIL ADVOCACY

Summary

The SFSS and Student Senators on the SFU Senate have been lobbying the Senate to implement an optional Pass/Fail (P/F) grading scheme in recognition of the hardship that students are currently facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Myself and Gabe Liosis (VP University Relations & Student Senator) met a couple of times to strategize a campaign to mobilize students and pressure SFU to bring back P/F grading. Firstly, we needed to pressure the Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules (SCAR) to put the motion on the Jan 11th Senate agenda. Secondly, after the motion has been approved on the agenda, we need students to email Senators to tell them how the P/F grading would considerably alleviate a lot of their stress and anxiety. We came up with clear campaign goals and identified our targets. Gabe put together a [motion](#), contacted other student Senators to endorse this motion and sent it to SCAR for approval. A [call to action](#) was put out to SFU students to email the SCAR. It was a success and a follow up [call to action](#) was put out again to pressure the Senate to vote in favor of the P/F grading scheme.

The SFSS Board of Directors also discussed outreach to students and other student groups. Jennifer Chou (VP Student Life) prepared a comprehensive [document](#) addressing the concerns that Faculty and Admin Senators had with the P/F grading which was also sent to the Senate.

Goals

- Demand SFU to reinstate P/F grading for Spring 2021 in recognition of student hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To alleviate some of the stress and anxiety of students that letter grades place on them, especially in a new and unfamiliar online learning environment.

Timeline

December 11th to 15th:

- Email campaign to SCAR to approve putting P/F motion on the Jan 11th Senate agenda.

December 15th to Jan 11th:

- Email campaign to Senate to vote in favor of reinstating P/F grading for Spring 2021

#DearSFU CAMPAIGN



Summary

#DearSFU is a campaign for students to write about their experience of attending university online during a pandemic. Submissions will be printed on a postcard that will be delivered to SFU Admins. This is also part of a joint [campaign](#) proposed to us by Concordia Student Union to raise national awareness on the wellbeing of post-secondary students during the pandemic.

Students can send in their submissions [here](#).

Goals

- To raise awareness about students' well-being during the pandemic to SFU admins

Timeline

December 2020:

- Create [toolkit](#) and submission form
- Sort out printing logistics and graphics with SFSS staff

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- Promote campaign and collect submissions throughout the semester

PAIN POINTS

Burnout and Screen Time

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all of us to adapt to an online environment like never before, although there are benefits to that such as various aspects of meetings being more accessible to attend, it also comes with a lot of downfall with mental health and well-being. This was the first semester where I took a full course load (9 units) online while trying to balance that with being a board member. I constantly experience screen burnout due to excessive screen time watching lectures, doing assignments, attending SFSS meetings, and other board work which also means a more sedentary lifestyle.

I tried my best to take breaks and frequent walks when I can but being almost completely socially isolated with the addition of screen burnout, has taken a toll on my mental health. So there are times where I would want to just lay down and do nothing for the rest of the day or during my breaks.

Student Outreach and Mobilization

I ran for the SFSS board with a [platform](#) of reviving student activism and advocacy around issues such as student union common room spaces, and tuition freeze. Although we manage to still make progress on some of the major issues students are facing and rally support, the importance of in-person engagement and actions are still crucial to student mobilization, education, and raising morale. SFU announcing a tuition increase during the pandemic and for the next 2 years are having students rightfully feeling agitated and [ready to support](#) a tuition strike. There is much potential to pull one off if in-person tactics were available to use but we are currently limited to online organizing tactics to adhere to COVID-19 safety

guidelines. This is not a unique challenge as many grassroots organizations are also facing the same issue with mobilizing their base online and organizing impactful actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reaching Out For Support

I recommend reaching out to other board members for support and even student at-larges who want to get involved and help out with any campaigns or projects. Due to our governance model restructuring in the summer, we now have more direct communication and interaction with our staff than previous board years. So, reaching out directly to SFSS staff for support is also very important and useful. They've been nothing short of amazing throughout these eight months and provided lots of support with my work on the board. I could not have done my projects and initiatives without them.

Knowing Your Limits and Capacity

Since I didn't take any courses in the Summer, knowing my limits and capacity while taking a full course load and doing board work at the same time was very new to me in an online environment. I recommend trying not to take on too many projects at a time. It can be hard not to if you're passionate about making the most change you can in your 1-year board term and thinking you have more free time due to everything being online. Always remember that you should be passing on your unfinished projects and new initiatives that you didn't get to start on, to the next year's board. Therefore, you should pick a few projects that you want to work on and concentrate on those first before taking on more. This also allows you to take more breaks, which is particularly important to reduce screen burnout while working online.