

simon fraser
student society

**SFSS BOARD
OF DIRECTORS
SEMESTER
REPORT**



Corbett Gildersleve
VP Finance

Sep 2020 - Dec 2020

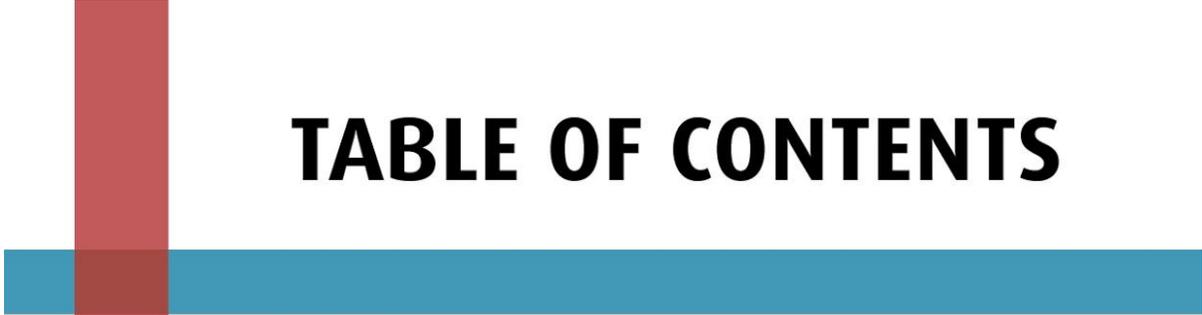


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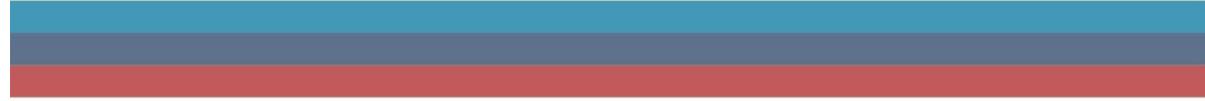
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Fall term has been incredibly busy and productive. I have been able to complete some previous ongoing projects, start new ones, and complete small projects in between. Much of my work has revolved around the Student Union Building, the 2020-2021 Annual General Meeting, and the bylaw reforms that occurred at that meeting. I'm proud of the work I have done, but it has been a challenge, especially with trying to juggle multiple projects and then dealing with unexpected emergencies or issues. However, I would not take back the structural changes I and others fought for in the summer term, as this has both been an amazing learning experience, but I have been able to fix a number of issues both small and large in the SFSS.

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Organizational Development Projects

Investment Plan

FAS Rep Harry Preet Singh and I developed an investment plan that shifts the around 75% of our restricted and surplus funds to fossil fuel free investment. This plan was approved by the Finance and Administrative Services Committee and later the Board of Directors. The plan involves shifting funds in three phases. Phase one was completed in the late fall and shifted surplus restricted funds like our reserve fund and space expansion fund. The next phases will occur in the spring term with shifting our unrestricted surpluses and accessibility fund. In total, just over \$5,000,000 will be moved into this new investment fund with interest revenue above inflation will be recovered to support SFSS programs and services.

SFSS Minute Progress Tracker

We had a significant minutes development backlog which was caused by losing a number of our administrative assistants within a short amount of time. This left a gap in services during one of our busiest times in the SFSS. This board has been significantly more active than past boards and that resulted in more minutes being produced. With new people hired, the backlog has started to be tackled. However, there was no centralized minute tracker that multiple levels of the SFSS leadership structure could see.

After talking with staff, admin, and relevant board members, I developed a dynamic spreadsheet to track the progress of both past minutes and current ones through the system. It auto updates sections of itself by entering data in other parts of the spreadsheet, which includes updated charts/graphs. This allows everyone to know where things stand at a glance.

Additionally, I tracked down the total committee hours reported in every board work report to see how many “minute hours” there was every month to help us better gauge the labour needs.

This led to speaking with staff to better understand the time requirements needed to produce minutes. This showed there was a gap between how many person hours we had of staff vs. how much work we were producing each month. This led to additional hiring of administrative assistants.

Over the fall term, I updated the tracking sheet with additional categories in the approval process for more granular information gathering. Additionally, I developed a minutes priority list for specific decision making bodies like Board and Council, as well as core committees that often spend funds like the Accessibility Committee and Events Committee. This has helped speed up the minute drafting and approval process for each. I have also reached out to different committee chairs to verify the tracker sheet's records and determine if there are any drafted or approved minutes not listed. By the end of the term, over 90% of minutes were drafted and ready for review and approval.

Student Union Space Tracker/Audit

With two student unions in the School of Environment losing their space, I asked staff if there were any historical tracking of past student unions losing their space, and what their space was. There wasn't any information, so I created a spreadsheet that let us survey/audit student unions to determine what space they currently had, if they lost any space in the space, and when. Staff reached out to student unions and updated the sheet. This helped us draft and engage with a new student union space campaign which received the support of Council.

Governance Projects

Administrative Restructuring

I served on the hiring committee for the Operations Organizer, an administrative position that focuses on the human resources and operations of the SFSS. This process took longer than expected, but we had a number of good candidates apply. We had held two rounds of interviews, debrief sessions, and in the end we recommended a candidate for hiring to the President. They are expected to start work in early spring.

Bylaw Reform

A significant amount of work was conducted during the fall semester for bylaw reform. We formed a working group that involved board and council members that reviewed and developed new bylaws. The new bylaws were divided into four different special resolutions organized along different themes: Society Act Compliance, Executive Committee Reform, Student Group Recognition, and Board/Council Reform. It was set up this way so that if any one vote failed, it would not cause the other pieces to be invalid. This caused quite a bit of challenge wording the special resolutions as it required doing overlapping bylaw changes and the language was not very newbie friendly. But, thanks to work by VP Student Life Jennifer Chou, who made a "Bylaw

Reform Cheat Sheet” it was easier for people to understand at the Annual General Meeting. All bylaw votes passed at the AGM and our board started up a transition committee and multiple working groups to work in the spring term to develop training, operations, communications, and policy changes for May 1st, 2022.

2020-2021 Annual General Meeting

AGM Planning and Campaign

I created the AGM budget, tracked AV and MECS support costs, and priced out raffle prizes with a range of low cost gift cards to high cost iPad Airs and Chromebooks. I also contacted relevant staff and board members to make sure everyone was on the same page concerning the budget to prevent overspending. For the campaign, I contacted SFU students to encourage them to attend, shared FB and IG stories and posts encouraging students to attend.

This took up the majority of my time during October and required that I pause other projects. The Board worked together to contact students, student groups, student unions, and others to attend and support the changes. Additionally, as VP Finance, it was my responsibility to develop the AGM script and slides for that portion of the presentation. And, I needed to coordinate with the auditor, who was presenting the financial statements and his report to the students for approval.

As a panelist, I was also required to learn how to use Zoom webinar and support the event the day of. This involved working the weekend and early Monday morning to finalize the script, develop scenarios for derailing of the event, and questions students might answer about the different resolutions. This resulted in working three 12-hour days (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday).

We had almost 1000 students register, and 600 attend, with most of them staying and voting throughout the 4 hour event. We gave out some great prizes and the after-event survey response was pretty good. There were some complaints of tech issues, and we provided feedback to SFU. At the end of it, we have a well developed and reproducible plan for future AGMs and encouraging students to attend them.

After the AGM, I helped coordinate the purchasing and mailing of prizes to the winners, and updated the budget after we obtained a final bill from SFU Meetings, Events, and Conference Services.

Finance Report

As part of my role as VP Finance, I compiled a report on the financial position of the SFSS over the 2019-2020 Board year. In the report, I give an overview of the student fees, the overall financial health of the society, a description and history of each fund, and some concerns from last year (for instance, the massive concert deficit). However, unlike previous years, I decided to provide additional historical context by showing the last 5 years of the society, including major fund changes such as the selling off of assets. I feel this will be more helpful to give students context as to where the society is at instead of a one or two year “snapshot” which has been the usual report.

Other Projects

SUB Projects

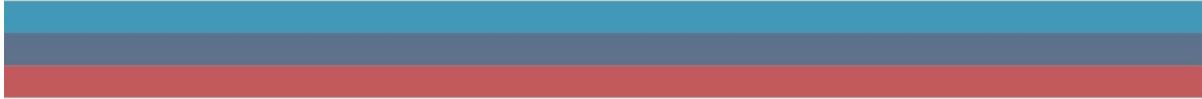
SUB Space Allocation

A final change to the space allocation was to swap CJSF and Embark’s suites as the radio station needed more space. Embark was amiable to this change and the Board approved it. Later, we also removed a storage room allocation from Embark as they did not need it. The SFSS has reclaimed that space for internal use.

SUB Insurance

SFU had issues with our SUB insurance in that it didn’t match all the criteria in the lease. John Walsh (Building Manager) and I had multiple email and zoom meetings with relevant staff to obtain detailed feedback. The main issue is that under the lease, SFU requires that the SFSS have full coverage for the cost of the building which is around \$50,000,000 on top of the operational and general liability coverage. That’s an uncommon request in our broker’s view, and so it took multiple months to obtain that level of coverage. They were required to “build” the coverage with multiple insurance companies. However, it was completed in the middle of December.

ON-GOING PROJECTS



Organizational Development Projects

Student Union Building Projects

SUB Subleases and Letters of Agreement

With the SUB's completion, I need to submit a draft of the leases to the independent student societies. However, the first draft we received was not in the direction that two SFSS boards wanted to go in. I have been trying to find a middle ground between readability and respecting the restrictions of the SFSS-SFU SUB Head Lease. Additionally these agreements also need to include language around institutional relationships, fee services, and other things that existed in past agreements with these groups but not present ones. This has been very time consuming and challenging as I have had to read about 7 different leases and agreements over the last 15+ years along with discussion and meetings with people, emailing, etc. At present, the FNSA and SOCA Letters of Agreement have been completed and signed. The rest will be finished in the spring term.

SFSS-Esports MOU Working Group

SFSS Esports would like to manage the SUB "Gamer Lounge". Like the SOCA, FNSA, and DNA giving dedicated space to a student group requires a Memorandum of Understanding or Letter of Agreement. The club presented to the Board and they tasked myself with leading this process. I formed a working group with staff and board members and assigned people into two teams: Operations Team that focuses on the costs and logistics of having the SFU Esports Association running the gamer lounge, and the Inclusivity Team tasked with exploring and fleshing out the rules and requirements to make the space inclusive to our diverse student body.

I took the lead for the Operations Team, and Jennifer took the lead for the Inclusivity Team. Each of us then canvassed the members for appropriate times to meet. My meeting will occur on October 19th. We have had additional meetings since then and will finalize the MOU in the spring term.

Governance Projects

SFSS Divestment Bylaw Referendum Question

SFSS currently has a policy that restricts investment in fossil fuels, however that policy can be rewritten or removed by future boards at any board meeting. So, SFU 350 has suggested a bylaw restriction that students could approve (or not) making sure the SFSS stays fossil fuel free in investments. I developed the bylaw and discussed it with both SFU 350 and our investment manager to make sure it is inline with their fossil fuel free investment policies. This was later approved by the Board in December for the spring referendum.

SFSS Admin Wage Cost Bylaw Referendum Question

I developed a briefing note outlining a bylaw referendum question putting restrictions on administrative wage costs. These restrictions put a soft cap on the total admin wage pool size as well as tying the highest admin wage to be no more than 2.5x the lowest wage which are student union staff. This will prevent future ballooning of admin costs as we saw from 2018-2020, as well as extreme wage disparity within the SFSS. This proposal was approved by the Executive committee in December for inclusion in the spring referendum.

Other Projects

Accessibility Bursary

This is a project that came out of the Accessibility Advisory Committee. They would like to develop a bursary that would help reduce the barriers for disabled students. The bursary would be supported by the Accessibility Fund, which has been historically underused as students don't generally know about the grant or what it could be used for. I have started to support this project by developing some options on ways to fund the bursary:

1. Use all the funds to maximize the number of bursaries in the short run
2. Use part of the funds to maximize the number of bursaries in the short run, and then use interest revenue to fund the bursary (in smaller amounts) in the long run.
3. Only use the interest and student fees to fund the bursary, which means generally less bursaries are awarded each year, but the fund will exist for much longer

I have presented this to the Accessibility Advisory Committee and they prefer option 3. However, I needed to talk with our auditors and a relevant lawyer on how this bursary would impact things

like disability benefits and if there are any tax considerations on our part (mostly in providing relevant tax forms for recipients). The auditors recommended a lawyer, who I contacted and received cost information. After presenting to the Executive Committee, I was given permission to start the engagement process with the lawyer.

SFSS 2021-2022 Budget Development

The start of developing the next fiscal year's budget starts with getting an updated operating budget after six months into the term. I requested this from the Finance Coordinators and working with them, we made changes to the original budget based on the administrative restructuring that included wage and severance payments and starting dates for the hiring of the Operations and Board Organizers. After six months, we saw that instead of having a predicted \$350,000 in deficit due to lowered expected enrollments at SFU ended up not occurring due to an increase in domestic student enrollment to offset the costs of lower international enrollments. FIC enrollments are lower, but the loss is absorbable. Due to the Student Union Building being completed this year, this was the perfect opportunity to think about how the SFSS will use the building, what changes or expansions to its operations, programming, and services might be required to utilize this new space to its fullest. This would require consulting with the Board, staff, and students in the spring semester. During December and the semester break, I searched through finance records to compile them for the initial meeting with the administration and the finance office in the spring. Additionally, I used those records to develop a rough draft budget for the following fiscal year along with current and planned positions to expand the SFSS's advocacy and student support areas. I also looked at the potential increases in board, council, and committee stipends to see how that could impact expenditures, especially if the following fiscal year continues to have lower FIC enrollments. This project will continue into the spring term where we will continue to draft multiple versions of the budget, consult with staff, students and the Board, and approve a preliminary budget by the end of the term.

SFSS COVID-19 Emergency Funding - Fall and Spring Term

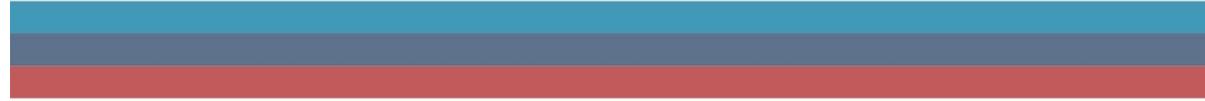
While comparing the updated budget along with the monthly spending summaries, I noticed that we were underspending in a number of areas of the SFSS. This led to the start of the Emergency COVID-19 Funding project. This underspending is due to a combination of fewer and cheaper events/programming initiatives. Some programming, like club grants, have large budgets (\$220,000). I compiled year-to-date spending (YTD) up to the end of October and compared it to the different line items across the budget. This showed that we could have as much as \$500,000 in unspent funds by the end of April. I consulted with staff and the Board about possible areas and amounts we could use for giving back to students in the form of emergency COVID-19 funding like we did in the spring term. I received feedback around what budget line

items might be used more or less in the spring term, which went into developing a briefing note. The note recommended that we distribute up to \$400,000 split equally between the fall 2020 and spring 2021 spring term. I contacted SFU Financial Aid and Awards to talk about distribution options and unfortunately, they were only interested in using their bursary system to distribute funds, which had already occurred in the fall term. The problem with SFU's bursary system is that it prevents part-time students from applying for them. This would go against the purpose of the funding which is accessible to all students. After discussing this with the Board in an in-camera session, I shifted the project to support the spring and summer semesters. I will continue research distribution methods including the SFSS doing it itself.

SFSS Participatory Budget Pilot Project

I developed a briefing note for the Board about launching a participatory budgeting pilot project. The goal of participatory budgeting is to have a more open and transparent budgeting process. Students will be able to vote on \$10,000 of SFSS projects in the spring, and the projects will be implemented in the fall term. This project and budget was approved by the SFSS Board in December. I will be working with interested staff and board members to develop and launch the project in the spring term.

PAIN POINTS



The summer term is often dominated by learning about your role, the SFSS's process, committee purpose, and planning out work for the fall term. The summer term presented additional challenges with the administrative and governance review and restructuring. I was heavily involved with both projects in the summer and that was such a time-intensive process that it delayed the start of many committees and effectively shifted everything by a few months. So, when the fall term started, I was already playing catch up. Additionally, the bylaw reform project became significantly larger due to the support of Council with restructuring the board and governance structure of the SFSS. This required significantly more work as we needed to develop more bylaws, develop the special resolutions and organize them in a way that would not cause conflict with each other, as well as get buy-in from Council. We were also hosting a virtual AGM which has never been done by the SFSS before. It was incredibly stressful and time consuming, where I estimated I worked 60 hours in two weeks just on the AGM planning, prep, and running of the meeting.

While I knew that the SFSS often has unexpected issues that require people to drop their current projects and work on it, I didn't realize how many or how long some of those issues would take to resolve. A prime example is the Student Union Building completion. There has been years of delays with deadlines being shifted. In this case, our first occupancy inspection failed. This resulted in having to quickly request an extension of the MBC lease surrender from SFU, check with the Building Manager to check with the city inspector, general contractor, etc. to get updates on correcting the issues, rescheduling office movers, etc. Some of this can be delegated, but there's still a lot of that has to be done by yourself. This is valuable experience and I would not trade it for anything, but it does make it frustrating or stressful as these emergencies can happen regardless of how many other projects or class assignments you have, or what your mental health is at.

RECOMMENDATIONS



There are two main recommendations I could make. One, delegate your project work more to staff and committee members. Because everything in the SFSS has a financial component to it, you might have to take on unexpected projects or issues, and giving yourself that extra space and time is important. Additionally, delegating more projects to your committee members gives them opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge. It also gives them a piece of making change in the SFSS. The only challenge is then guiding and managing them effectively. Two, give yourself both a dedicated “catch up” day as well as an early day each week. I actually prefer a light Monday instead of an early Friday because I have found that having committee meetings on Monday means I need to prepare work on Sunday. It’s okay to have a light week from time to time because you will have crazy busy weeks in others.