

2020-2021



simon fraser
student society

ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES REP'S EXIT REPORT

Sude Guvendik
Simon Fraser Student Society



Executive Summary

Hello! My name is Sude Guvendik (she/her/hers), and I am the last Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Representative for the 2020/2021 Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) Board of Directors, given the fact that there is a new governance structure for the upcoming year. I focused predominantly on projects that would improve the well-being and experiences of SFU undergraduate students, particularly international and marginalized students. Some of the projects I worked on include; FASS panels, International Student Advocacy group, Cultural week, Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMX) Advocacy, and First-year engagement committee.

This report showcases various projects and initiatives I took part in while collaborating with many groups, organizations, and individuals. Since I was outside of Canada during most of my board term, I found it challenging to manage the nine-hour time difference; however, regardless of the unprecedented circumstances, I had to be highly motivated for the students I represented. I am more than grateful for having the opportunity to advocate for students. However, my journey does not end here as I would be continuing my advocacy work as the president of International Student Advocacy (constituency group)



Overview

Role Breakdown

As the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Representative, I am responsible for liaising with the Faculty — most notably the Dean of FASS and Departmental Student Unions—to convey student perspectives on student affairs. I regularly attended Departmental Student Union meetings, club meetings, or events and communicated with council representatives or DSU presidents. I convey information about my Faculty and student issues to other SFSS board of directors during our meetings.

It was also my duty to communicate information about SFSS campaigns and essential updates regarding SASS (Society for Arts and Social Sciences) and FASS DSU meetings, facilitate dialogue, and collect feedback. As a Board Member, I serve all undergraduates, and I center my work and decision-making around their best interests, which requires a lot of student consultation and communication.

This term, I liaised with the FASS DSUs about student-related issues such as the pass/Credit/No Credit Grading Scheme, Students Deserve Space, and Students Against TMX campaign.


The following are groups and projects I have worked closely with to achieve my goals;

- Faculty of Arts and Social Science Dean renewal/search committee
- The Society of Arts and Social Sciences
- SFSS External Affairs Committee

- 
- SFSS First-year engagement committee
 - Faculty and At-Large Representative Members (SFSS FARM) committee
 - The Students Against TMX campaign team
 - Research and Administrative Assistant Hiring Committee
 - FASS Engage (Arts Central)
 - International Student Advocacy, Migrant Students United
 - SFU Emerge
 - SFSS Campaigns, Research, and Policy Coordinator

Challenges

We had to start our term in the middle of a pandemic, and I had to leave Canada due to personal circumstances, and surviving through the time difference was one of the most challenging aspects. Although I had to join some of my meetings from the hospital, I made sure to participate as actively as possible, given that the internet connection was pretty much not stable. Another challenge of working with the university's largest faculty was connecting with more than 20 student unions. For that reason, I tried my best to connect with executives of almost all DSUs during and after meetings. Attending council meetings was also another way of keeping in touch with council members of FASS DSUs and supporting their advocacy projects. Although it was not possible to participate in every student union meeting, I



managed to reach out to more than half of the unions through SASS and FASS DSU meetings.

Learning Experiences

- Learning how to host panels and workshops
- Creating social media posts and manage accounts, learning how to promote events and SFSS resources
- Learning about techniques of lobbying effectively through the external committee
- Keeping up with emails and maintaining good work relationships with staff, board members, student unions and other stakeholders.
- Learning how to conduct interviews, prepare surveys and questions
- Chairing meetings and learning about Roberts rule of order and Rusty's rules of order

Key Contacts

- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Dean and Associate Dean - Dr. Jane Pulkingham fassea@sfu.ca
 - Lara Cambell - Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programming, Learning and Teaching, Student Experience fassadu@sfu.ca
- Brian Fox - FASS Student engagement Coordinator fasscse@sfu.ca

- Ekaterina Letunovskaya - Society of Arts and Social Sciences
sassexecutive@gmail.com

Projects and Initiatives


If I miss mentioning any projects I have taken part in on this exit report, I am attaching my semesterly report and all the biweekly reports.

All biweekly reports: <https://sfss.ca/reports/>

- Summer 2020 semester report:
<https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FASS-Rep-Semester-Report-Summer-2020-Sude-Guvendik.pdf>
- Fall 2020 semester report:
<https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Fall-Semester-Report-Arts-Social-Sciences-Rep.pdf>

International Student Advocates


The constituency group has been inactive for a few years, formerly International Student Group, advocates for the needs and rights of international students at SFU. Alongside other international students and SFSS Science Representative Weichun Kua, we rebranded the group and updated the group's constitution. 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. While I helped promote the election and amending the constitution, I was elected as the president of this constituency group. For the upcoming term, the executive team would be calling a general meeting, and since the Secretary and Treasurer positions remained vacant, we would be having a by-election.

FASS Panels

I thought of hosting workshops and panels for students to have casual discussions regarding university experience, involvement, life after graduation, etc. As I was a member of the first-year engagement committee, I had realized that not only first-year students needed these panels but any student who was struggling with adapting to the challenges of university life. Hence, the panels' purpose was to give pro tips, advice, and recommendations for students who were undecided majors, recent graduates, or first-year students. I created an excel sheet and promoted the panels on social media and during our DSU and SASS meetings. The presenters for each week's panels were signing up on the excel sheet, and I was also personally reaching out to some of the student leaders at SFU to invite them. I did not want these panels to be formal social events but more of an experience-sharing platform



with casual tea talks hosted by different panelists (mainly students) each week. In total, we hosted six panels with over more than fifteen panelists.

Faculty of Arts and Social Science Dean renewal/search committee

During the summer term, I volunteered to be on the research committee for the FASS dean. I represented the undergraduate students of FASS. My role on the committee was not limited to representing SFU undergraduate students but to be the voice of marginalized and financially struggling students. During our EDI training, I have voiced my concerns regarding the silencing and exclusion of indigenous and black folks and how there can not be effective EDI ambitions with the existing institutional racism and systemic inequities. I also took an active role in helping with the interview questions for the dean, such as her plans for advancing issues related to Indigenous initiatives within FASS and what she thinks the most important priorities are for FASS as it pursues decolonization. We held monthly and biweekly meetings with the deans, faculty, and graduate student representatives over my board term. During the interview, the questions were distributed among the committee members. Although I could not ask the questions I had prepared, other faculty-related questions were directed alongside questions regarding her efforts toward direct student engagement (communication) and the importance of including voices of Indigenous students in consultation processes.



Students against TMX


The Students Against TMX is a campaign launched in summer 2020 between the SFSS, 'Justice, No Pipeline,' and DogwoodSFU, demanding a stop to the Trans Mountain Expansion Project TMX in pursuit of a Just Recovery and respecting Indigenous rights and titles. Among other student leaders, we brainstormed for the campaign video, and I helped with the scriptwriting. The campaign video gained over 2.7k views on Instagram and 1.8k views on Facebook, and 600+ views on Twitter, while the letter was sent to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in September 2020. An email campaign was also started in which I took an active role in reaching out to FASS faculty, student unions, and community leaders to spread the email campaign and sign onto it.

Campaign Video: <http://bit.ly/3jsxi8q>

Letter: <https://bit.ly/SATSignOn>

Research and Administrative Assistant Hiring Committee

I joined the Research and Administrative Assistant Hiring Committee for the employer side, and I worked with Lawrence Jones, Shelly Durante and Sarah Edmunds in this committee. I have learned some valuable interview, resume, hiring and communication skills during my time on the committee. It was challenging to go through more than a hundred resumes and make comprehensive comparisons



between them to select my top choices. I had to memorize their names and resume points to decide, and I was thrilled with the person who got hired for this position. She was the right fit for the job!

Cultural Groups Welcome video and Cultural Week:


I worked with VP student life and At-Large Rep on this project to contact almost all of the cultural and religious groups at SFU, and the goal was to help incoming students feel more welcomed and included. Cultural groups were showcased in the video and promoted on SFSS social media. I reached out to many cultural groups, helped with the script and worked together to maintain the communication between them and Jennifer as she was collecting the clips. The eight-minute video was created featuring some clubs; SFU Taiwanese Association, Society of African and Caribbean Ancestry, Pakistan Students Association, K.Storm, Muslim's Students Association and First Nations Students Association and many more. This video was shared on the SFSS page as well as by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Here is the video: <https://www.facebook.com/sfss1/posts/3906535776030469>

Other Works

Emerge SFU

Introduction “about us video”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8yNuOS2UuY>




I took on the project during the summer semester as the Brand Ambassador. My role was to promote our workshops and global vision worldwide by connecting with educational institutions and students within the borders of SFU and high schools and universities overseas. I tried promoting the workshops and networking events on FASS DSU channels, and a lot of first-year students were interested in joining the team. Emerge SFU strived to instill valuable industry skills in students through a series of workshops over the course of four to six weeks.

These workshops were open to students from any discipline, allowing them to learn skills they might not typically be exposed to in their program. Through networking initiatives, students from different disciplines and countries were able to connect and share experiences on a relatively global platform. We tried to communicate with universities worldwide to start our international chapter just as we did in Pakistan with Habib University. I have established several networks with universities in Ghana, Lebanon, South Africa, and Turkey. I hope to spread our global vision of “ free coding, free education for all” as we reach out to more students dedicated to learning and teaching.

Recommendations

I would recommend Notion to create schedules, organize tasks and daily plans alongside google calendar. Talk to your membership, maintain a strong relationship with your



student unions and speak to the students in your classes- get to know and understand what they want from their student society. Be active on social media as it is one of the easiest ways to stay informed and promote advocacy projects and other events. Try to fill out your reports right after board meetings and take notes during the development sessions. Do take care of your mental health, prioritize your health and your education; although this is an elected role, that does not mean that your needs must be neglected for the sake of the greater good. Besides time management, strategic prioritization is critical; hence, acknowledge your workload and allocate time accordingly. Do not shy away from asking questions while attending orientations, development sessions, or any meeting, especially during your first board term.

Positional How-Tos

Make sure to attend the weekly FASS DSU meetings and read the consent agenda ahead of time in order to add SFSS updates. Establish good working relationships within the faculty, Arts Central, SASS and DSUs. Communicate information and consult with students using the Faculty email list, social media and Surveys. I utilized my faculty DSU facebook pages and groups, as well as their discords and class discords as a way to connect with students within the faculty.



Final Thoughts

Though my time in SFSS has come to an end, I would be continuing with my advocacy work with the International Student Advocacy group, and I hope that the work that we have started will continue with SFSS. It has been an honor to serve as the last Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences representative alongside the most inspiring individuals on the board. Since my first board term, I had made it a habit to write down brief reflection points at every board meeting where I note down what I had learned from each board member or staff during the meeting. Now that I look back, that bullet point list made me who I am today, and I had been lucky enough to expand my horizons by working with amazing board, faculty, and student unions.

Having a greater cause or purpose was fundamental in pushing my motivation further to initiate projects and support marginalized folks in my faculty and SFU in general. As the representative of the largest faculty, whenever I faced challenges in terms of my health condition or time management, I reminded myself of how the amazing students of FASS had put their trust in me to represent them. With that reminder, I motivated myself to reach out to more and more students through the projects I worked on to improve students' overall university experience. I hope that future SFSS boards would pursue the legacy this board is leaving behind in protecting marginalized student voices.

