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**EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER'S  
SEMESTER  
REPORT**



**Corbett Gildersleve**  
**VP Internal &  
Organizational Development**  
**May 2021 - Aug 2021**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This term has been incredibly busy due to a sudden pivot to opening the SUB by the end of summer, transitioning to a new governance structure, and sooooo many hiring committees. This has resulted in a lot getting done, but not a lot related to my portfolio. I believe our bylaws are missing some key factors that relate to general “executive officer” work like administrative and managerial responsibilities, hiring committees, joint SFSS-SFU/GSS/Etc meetings and such that don’t always fit nicely into our individual roles. Because of that, I feel like while I have accomplished a lot this term, I am still behind on core things that I campaigned on and promised students. Additionally, I’ve seen many of my fellow executive officers taking leave of absences due to a variety of personal reasons. More than what occurred last year. So much so that a change in the leave policies are needed to allow for more flexibility and options for Councilors (not just Executive Officers). In relation to the above, I’ve found that with this new environment, that it’s vitally important that we respect the time commitment for the role, not only for your own energy and mental health, but so that you can also be a student, friend, family member, and other things not related to the SFSS and just as equally important.

# COMPLETED PROJECTS



## Council Support

### Council Forms and Registration

As part of the annual transition of new Board members (now Council), it's important that specific forms are filled out to assist in registering the members with the BC Government as well as our own financial processes. I worked with staff in Members Services and the Finance Office to update the forms and send them out councilors. I acted as the go-between for the different departments to monitor progress. While the majority of councilors are now in the SFSS system, this will be an ongoing process throughout the summer months as additional student groups hold by-elections to fill their Council seats.

### Council Planning

As the VP Internal, it's my responsibility to ensure that Council committee seats get filled and that they get up and running. The first step is to fill the Council seats in the committee. I consulted with the President and sent a work order to our communications department to create a Jotform for Councilors to fill out. A few updates were sent to Councilors over the May 15-16th weekend, and then they voted on who should be on the committees on Monday and Tuesday before ratifying the results at the Wednesday May 19th Council meeting.

This project involved developing the process to select councillors for each seat. I worked with the comms assistant who developed the jotform giving people the opportunity to motivate/apply for each committee they were interested in. All councillors are required to sit on at least one committee as per our bylaws. Motivations were compiled and used to develop a websurvey for council members to vote for who should be selected for each committee, but only for the competitive committees. Some were filled up, some had vacancies. Afterwards, I developed a report for Council as part of the motion to appoint members to the committees.

The majority of committees had councilors seated to the point that we started to run out of seats for newly added council members.

## Council Orientation Sessions

I coordinated with the Finance Office over the content and logistics of two orientation sessions. I also developed a powerpoint presentation that gave a financial overview of the SFSS while Kurt (Finance Coordinator) discussed the budget.

## Council Registration

Every year the SFSS has to file a form when the directors of the Society change. This process is a bit different due to the new Council structure as there are many more people to register. Forms were not fully centralized, so the process was slow. Additionally, due to lack of a full-time coordinator, the work was mostly handled by a part-time staff member. This slowed down the communication and completion of the task. Finally, the online portal provided by the government does not allow for batch uploads of directors information for registering. Because of this, each name, address, etc. has to be manually entered. During that process we found out that the process had to be redone under a new account (the old one was not transferable). The staff member was able to contact customer service and find a way to speed up some of that task.

## Council Development Sessions

Developed a powerpoint for how to read and understand the SFSS's annual audit. I also compared it with the SFSS annual budget to show the differences and similarities.

## Organizational Development

### VP Internal and Organizational Development Annual Plan

I developed an annual plan that takes into account my role's responsibilities as laid out in the bylaws, as well as the campaign promises I made when running for Council. I included a summary of each project and a rough timeline of what I would do and when.

## Updated Staffing Models

Updated the SUB staffing models based on the SFSS-CUPE LOA around building operating hours as well as the SFSS's organizational chart for staff. This reflected the new hires and reporting structures.

## Work Report Software

I tried to find a way to have work reports be less manual, so that they can take less time to create. I looked at a tool that took your calendar information and exported it into a spreadsheet. Then I could just copy/paste over info like meeting name, date, length, and descriptions. The tool is more designed for generating invoices than work reports, so it wasn't as convenient as I had hoped.

## Researching the University Act and Societies Act

I researched some specific aspects of the Society and University Acts as it related to membership, resignation, and fees for student societies in response to a member's email.

## SUB Access Guidelines

Develop Guidelines for SUB Access transition period for Council and invited guests. This involved reviewing the changes to our safety plan and provincial health orders, as well as taking into account earlier feedback from staff about returning to work. I drafted the guidelines for an upcoming exec committee meeting and they were passed.

## Staff Training Budget

Drafting a briefing note for Council about increasing the staff training budget. This involved coordinating with multiple admins, reviewing their budget, writing the briefing note, and receiving feedback. This budget increase was approved by Council.

## Clubs Terms of Service Review

I reviewed the club terms of reference, SFSS policies, and bylaws, as it related to member misconduct. I developed a list of actions and processes that could and could not be taken.

# ON-GOING PROJECTS



## Organizational Development

### Council Drive

The President created a specific Council Google Drive that we can start using as a central document storage and “working drive” for Council. I’ve started to develop a folder structure and transferred files over. This will be a long term project with the help of the Board Organizer and staff.

### Tech Resource Pool

Planning on purchasing a pool of tech items like laptops, desktops, webcams, etc. to replace current hardware and expand our options for hybrid work. I used older inventory lists to compile a summary of our tech resources to start pricing out new stuff. Due to our agreement with SFU for desktop support, we’re required to use their procurement process and recommended equipment. Additionally, I have been researching where we would pay for these purchases.

### Steps Forward - Student Activity Fee Research

I looked at letters sent to the SFU Board of Governors concerning fee changes that had occurred since the 70s to try and find out why we did not charge students auditing undergraduate classes. This is important as a student is considered a member if they’ve paid their fees, but the Steps Forward students are auditing undergraduate classes. This rule to not charge students was believed to be an SFU thing and not an SFSS decision. However, it appears that it might have been something that was approved by the SFSS 40+ years ago. I’m still searching for the specific year this came into being. We will have to discuss this with our lawyer as to a way to fix this without causing all students who are taking audited courses to be charged a fee (for instance, graduate students)

## SFSS Executive Coops

As part of the process to have SFSS Exec positions count as a possible SFU Coop, I had to develop and submit job descriptions for each position to SFU Coop. This involved going through our bylaws and reformatting them into the form of the SFSS's job description format. Due to scheduling difficulties between myself and the SFU contacts, we were not able to finalize this project by the end of the summer term.

## Governance Annual Plan

I developed the skeleton doc for the Governance Committee's Annual Plan and sent it to the committee. This will be finalized in the fall term.



# PAIN POINTS



## Administrative vs. Project Work

While the list of completed projects is rather long, many of them did not require a lot of time. While looking at my work reports, the vast majority of my time is split between meetings and administrative work. Admin work consists mostly of... emailing. I receive, on average, 100 emails a week, many of them “actionable” in that they’re not just there to keep me in the loop. When serving as the VP Finance last year, I still received many emails, but I also had the time to be highly responsive and rarely ever had a backlog. I also worked more on projects that allowed me to make improvements to the SFSS. Now that I’m in a role that directly works with making internal improvements to the SFSS, not being able to do that regularly is very frustrating.

I classify project work as something that I take the lead in coordinating but also work considerably on myself. Examples include developing a new tracker for SFSS equipment, or researching a policy. This role can feel highly managerial at times, however, because no one officially reports to me, I sometimes feel like a team lead without a team. Work is still being done, projects are still being finished, but it’s a very different role than I expected and I have had difficulty transitioning to it.

## Mental and Physical Health

My mental and physical health have been better this term compared to last year. While the executive committee had to suddenly pivot or drop everything to respond to an emergency situation (usually to do with SFU), it hasn’t had the same impacts on my mental health and physical health. Last year, I had my first burnout within the first 6 weeks. I haven’t had that yet this term. I think part of that is that I try very hard to take my weekends off from SFSS stuff, to the point where I don’t even look at social media or emails. I also schedule external activities that I commit to, to provide me with something non-SFSS related. I also tried hard to stick to the 120 hours a month policy requirement. That works out to around 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. There were times at the start and the end of the term where I had to

work additional hours due to filling in for someone else or an emergency situation, but if I can get back onto more “regular hours”, then I think that will help me in the long run. I serve students and the SFSS if I’m burnt out, have severe anxiety spikes, or depressive episodes. Those aren’t always in my control, but sleep and being able to “unplug” regularly (along with medication) has helped me mitigate some of it.

## Pivoting

The SFSS is bureaucratic, but it’s not nearly as bad as SFU. We can shift our targets, respond to SFU actions, and other issues quite quickly. However, when we have to go “all hands on deck”, it’s often at a bad time and projects/emails/etc get dropped. If it’s a short emergency, then it’s not a big deal, but if we have to pivot for 2 months to quickly work on opening the SUB for the fall term, well that has consequences. Sometimes those things that get dropped are things that students are relying on to not drop. It’s hard and apologizing never feels good enough especially when you have to do it repeatedly.

## Hiring Committees

Last year was like relaying the foundations of the SFSS. Shifting the organization towards public advocacy, working on integrating equity and justice into every area of the organization, and restructuring both the administrative and governance structures to put elected students back in charge. This year it’s building on that foundation, and one of the ways is through hiring people that represent that new foundation. And hiring we did. Over the summer term, we not only had to refill three positions that were vacated near the end of the spring term and early summer, but we hired for new positions as well. These included the building coordinators and student assistants to support the SUB, but also a campaigns mobilizer, administrative coordinator, and numerous assistants (who are often undergraduate students). Some hiring committees completed their task relatively quickly, others took a long time. Some even had to extend into the fall term. However, most were finished near the end of the summer thankfully. Normally an organization only has to have one or two hiring committees a year, we had around 10 in the span of 4 months.

## SUB Opening

With SFU announcing that they were going to fully open for the fall term, we had to suddenly shift gears and work towards doing the same for the SUB. This shift involved a massive effort by staff, admin and executives, who worked together in multiple working groups to

organize everything from building projects, services, communications, operations, hiring, events, and other areas to analyse the SFSS and develop a plan to get us to a soft opening on August 23rd. We developed a plan and implemented it. We were able to have a soft opening on time, we held multiple events and tours, and it worked quite well. The fall term when there's 20,000+ students will be another matter, and look forward to my fall report to learn how that goes. However, like mentioned above, this was a highly time consuming task which resulted in a lot of other things, like my annual plan, committee activation, and other things, to be dropped or delayed significantly. That combined with the hiring committee needs and a few emergency situations resulted in me feeling that I was doing the job of an executive, but not of the VP Internal and Organizational Development.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## Full-Time Commitment

Due to the administrative and governance changes enacted last year, the executive officer roles (President and VPs) require a full-time commitment. Our policies require an average of 60 hours per stipend period, not to just have a number on a page, but that the work requires at least that much time to be contributed. That's with having admin, staff, committee, and associate VP members to provide support. The reality is that you can't be a full-time student and be an executive. If you go beyond that, you'll have to sacrifice your physical and mental health because you'll need that extra time to allow for personal, academic, or work emergencies. That's why I have been working on getting the SFSS executive positions recognized as an SFU coop to allow students who are required to maintain full-time status for scholarships, permits, or other matters so that they have an option to maintain that status without having to take 9+ credits. It's why I also worked hard on redeveloping our stipend system to be modeled on a living wage so that all of the council could get a much needed pay increase (the last one was in 2008). For any future executives reading this, I sincerely hope you listen to my advice and take the coop option or take only one class per term. Try to maintain the 60 hours per period for as long as you can, as the SFSS is more of a marathon than a sprint.

## Physical and Mental Health

Every executive except myself has had to take a leave of absence this term for a number of reasons. They all invariably involve mental and/or physical health, either as a direct factor or as an after-effect of the need for the leave. It's why I have started to develop better language around the leave of absence policy to allow for more options and flexibility. Currently, it's all or nothing and that's not fair for students who are relying on their stipend to pay bills, rent, support their family, or other life costs. I've gone through this period better than others, which has allowed me to take on other people's responsibilities for a time. But there have been periods where the strain affected myself. Mostly now I just feel like I'm completely behind on almost everything, and so I expect I'll start letting people down. My recommendations are to prioritize your physical and mental health by trying to do just your regular hours to give

yourself some “buffer” for when an emergency happens, or that assignment suddenly becomes due, or you need to shift gears due to a dumb action by SFU or the government. You can't serve others (in your role or in supporting another executive) if you're burnt out, depressed, and/or having anxiety spikes. You can't help yourself, your family or friends either. Energy can be replenished, but it takes time, which is a finite resource.