

simon fraser
student society



VICE PRESIDENT EXTERNAL'S EXIT REPORT

2023-2024 | PREPARED BY: NANCY BRAR



Introduction

Hello, everyone! I am excited to share this exit report, reflecting on my term as the 2023-2024 Vice President of External and Community Affairs of the SFSS!! This report is put together to provide you with insight into our main initiatives and achievements throughout the year. This report is also essential to allow the incoming VP of External and Community Affairs to turn to if they need more information and for students looking for information on the role and how it has an impact.

This exit report will highlight some important projects and efforts the SFSS External Office has undertaken. This report emphasizes significant work moments throughout my time at the SFSS. Still, it is just a tiny fraction of the full scope of our efforts as your SFSS executive committee. If you have any further questions or require more details after reading this report, please do not hesitate to contact the incoming Vice President of External and Community Affairs!

During my term of office, I worked closely with other executive members on several collaborative initiatives and events. In this report, you will see examples of times when I have been part of projects that extend beyond the typical duties of my role as a way to help move the collective goals forward. While these contributions may not fall under the strict expectation of day-to-day responsibilities of the VP External, these nevertheless outline the nature and character of our active, supportive executive team. We are colleagues and a team where one finds help and shared victory.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who took the time to read through this report. I hope this report can offer more information and transparency about what I did during my time in this position.



ROLE BREAKDOWN

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) Vice President of External plays a crucial role in shaping the external presence and influence of the SFSS in areas that include advocacy, government relations, and community engagement. This position is important to the Society's mission to represent, connect, and aid the membership, especially SFU undergraduate students.

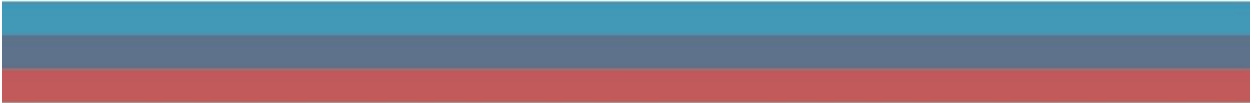
Objective and Scope of the Role:

The VP External's main role is to act as a chief liaison between SFSS and external entities that are comprised of governmental bodies, other universities, and community organizations. The VP's External job is as an "advocate," articulating the needs and interests of students at SFU to outside parties to ensure a voice is given and actions are implemented. This includes a strategic mix of advocacy, policy negotiation, and community outreach.

Main Responsibilities and Work:

The role will be more varied and involved, ranging across numerous activities targeting the enhancement of the student experience through external channels. The key aspects are:

- **Government Relations:** To interact and lobby policies and programs of the municipal, provincial, and federal governments that benefit students. This will include budget recommendations, advocating for changes in education policy, and ensuring that interest is taken of students' interest in priority in government agendas.
- **Media Relations:** Serve as the SFSS spokesperson to the media, overseeing PR efforts for and ensuring consistent, effective communication of SFSS messages and campaigns.

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- **External Events:** Represent the SFSS at any external event, such as Burnaby Board of Trade Events, where networking, discussions, or collaborations may help the student body.
 - **Advocacy:** Engaging directly with students to understand what they want and then transforming that into advocacy efforts.

Personalization of the Role:

Though the primary duties of the VP External are pretty unchanging, the way these duties are enacted can vary significantly depending on each individual's vision and priorities. Each VP External also has the opportunity to incorporate some specificity into the kind of advocacy priorities, initiatives, or nature of events that they focus on, shaping the role according to their perspective on the matter at that time. So, while it may seem as though every VP External advocates for the same things year after year, there are a few changes specific to that VP External.

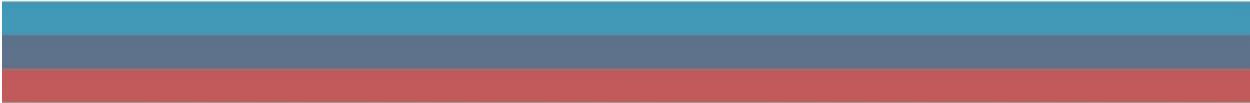
Importance of Teamwork and Collective Advocacy:

The collaborative approach indeed increases the effectiveness of the VP External. Close work with other executive team members increases efforts because their various initiatives become coordinated and mutually supporting. This position thrives on collective action and teamwork within the SFSS and with the many external organizations with which the SFSS partners. Through advocacy, the executive team can heighten their voices on a specific issue, pushing for long-reaching changes for the student community.

2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

BC Budget Consultation:

I'm delighted to report that the staff, VP UAA, VP Equity, and I contributed to the BC Budget Consultation. Three submissions were made on behalf of the Simon Fraser Student Society: bettering financial aid, enhancing health service coverage, and improving access to



affordable student housing. It is also crucial to note that aspects of all of our suggestions have been picked up in the final budget, from international student fee regulation initiatives to support mental health services and affordable housing near campuses.

BC Budget Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Increase financial access to post-secondary education.

This recommendation entails more disbursing of provincial grants, scholarships, bursaries, and subsidies to BIPOC, migrant/international, and low-income students. This is due to the sharp escalation in tuition fees, particularly for international students, and increasing dependence on these fees due to decreased provincial funding. By enhancing financial access, the recommendation aims to strengthen the number of students coming to the province for studies. Therefore, this enhances the local economy and supports sustainable development.

Recommendation 2

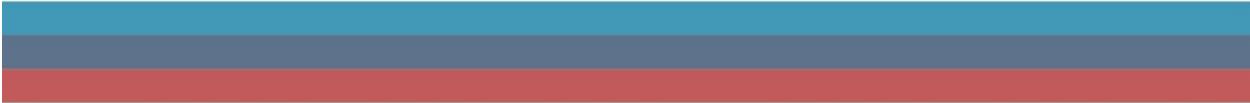
Expand accessibility to inclusive health services.

This recommendation seeks to include services such as trauma-informed sexual violence support, drug addiction support, gender-affirming care, and mental health services for marginalized student populations in the scope and availability of health services. This highlights the fact that services like these are most needed in light of their very high prevalence of use by students from disadvantaged backgrounds who suffer from mental health issues and high rates of substance abuse in British Columbia.

Recommendation 3

Provide affordable student housing.

The final recommendation is that there is a need to increase investment in student housing, including expanding funding for universities to build more residences and requiring developers to include affordable student units. While providing robust protections for student renters. What's clear here is the crisis of increasing rental rates and how much it is to the detriment of student's academic performance and well-being to force them to live off-campus. Affordable housing is framed as an essential way of reducing



student debt and anxiety, particularly for those individuals who live far from their support networks.

U-PASS BC ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

I was elected as one of the student representatives in the U-Pass BC Advisory Committee Working Group for the term. This working group will serve as a body to help shape the future of the U-Pass BC program, which is one of the critical components of students' transit needs across Metro Vancouver—finding ways for the program to provide student interest alignment and sustainability goals. This is something that the incoming VP External will be able to utilize for their term.

YOUTH & CLEANBC: A DIALOGUE FOR YOUNG LEADERS ON CLIMATE ACTION:

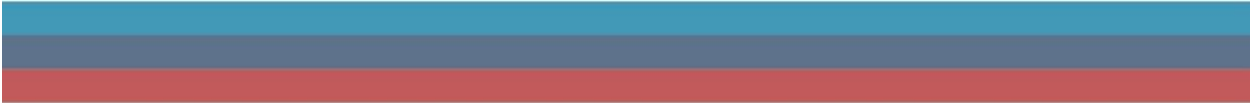
I had the pleasure of attending the *Youth & CleanBC: A Dialogue for Young Leaders on Climate Action* conference as a representative of the SFSS with our VP Equity, Priyanka Dhesa. It brought engaged youth from various backgrounds together to discuss and provide input on BC's climate plan, CleanBC. We learned from other youth organizations how we can take action to address climate change within our communities. This experience provided excellent discussions, which advanced our advocacy of environmental initiatives.

ALLIANCE OF BC STUDENTS LOBBY DAYS 2023:

I had the opportunity to be part of the 2023 Alliance of BC Students Lobby Days Conference with the VP Equity Priyanka. This was a significant event that focused on the training and direct advocacy of discussing key issues, such as student housing and affordability, with high-level policymakers. A highlight was the successful meetings that involved members from BC NDP, BC United, and the former post-secondary education minister.

SFU EXTERNAL LOBBYING TRIP:

I was invited to go on the SFU External Lobby Trip, where two other student representatives and I engaged in discussion with members of the BC Parliament. Our conversations were focused on issues, such as sex and gendered violence protections, that



we had the opportunity to discuss with the Gender Equity Office of BC. We also met with key members from the BC NDP, BC United Caucus, and BC Green Caucus to push on varied areas of student concern in legislative talks.

DIWALI UTSAV '23:

Our annual Diwali Utsav Event this year was incredibly successful. I had the fantastic opportunity to lend a hand in aiding in the planning of this event. I worked closely with the VP of Events in all aspects of the event, such as venue selection, collaboration discussions, and overall event work. The celebration was rich not only from the point of view of expression of cultural values but also appreciated by the students. I was incredibly pleased to see that the students had enjoyed the event that we had organized.

MUNCHIE MONDAYS:

I have enjoyed working alongside the VP Equity and VP University Academic Affairs on Munchie Mondays. The following event was created to increase engagement and improve relations between the SFSS executive team and the student body. Munchie Mondays open the door for students to meet their representatives in a less formal setting, exchange ideas on what they need, and, more importantly, be capable of voicing their concerns face-to-face. It will also mean that students, with such tight class schedules, can get something to eat between those classes, thus making campus life easier and more fun. This regular engagement has been proven to be one of the best ways to stay in touch with the issues at the core of students while fostering community and support at SFU.

SFSS COMMUNITY FRIDGE:

The Simon Fraser Student Society has continued the Community Fridge Initiative this year. It is found on the first floor of the Student Union Building (SUB) by the kitchenette. It forms part of our ongoing commitment to fighting food insecurity. The fridge is always set to be stocked weekly, and students can help themselves at no cost. This initiative aims to help reduce the burden of food insecurity that many students go through across campuses in British Columbia by providing a source of sustenance to ensure students do not study on an empty stomach.



MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS:

During my term, I had the great opportunity to meet with government officials such as the Minister of Education, Public Service Commission, and others to lobby for the student's interests and put their issues to the forefront. These included meetings with notables such as Mayor Hurley, Honourable Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Raj Chouhan, Minister of Housing Ravi Kahlon, and MLAs Katrina Chen and Janet Routledge. The meetings were instrumental in ensuring that SFU students' voices got to those who could make a difference, genuinely portraying our commitment to effective advocacy. These meetings form a direct line in the promotion of vital student-related issues: affordable housing, mental health support, and educational policies, among others, to make sure that the current members of government are adequately addressing the student body's needs and challenges.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT:

As Vice President External of the Simon Fraser Student Society, I engaged with many media and professional settings to advocate for SFU students. My activities ranged from interviews with local media stations on current campus issues to participating in Mayors Council Media Conferences and Burnaby Board of Trade Conferences. These engagements turned out to be critical in understanding Burnaby's developmental trajectory and how the needs of the students are being factored into these plans.

Apart from this, I was part of numerous discussions and meetings held with the other student societies and the SFU External Office. The purpose was to identify shared goals, increase mutual support, and further see how SFU's outside ties can assist our students. I strengthened existing relationships and established new ones, laying the strong groundwork for the next VP External to work from to achieve continuity and support for our students that can be even more effective.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCOMING EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- **Foster Government Relations:** Continue fostering excellent relationships with the government at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. As such, it is necessary that the student's voice be heard on issues relevant to them, such as funding for education and housing, as well as issues regarding their welfare, in order to ensure proper advocacy.
- **Engage in Media Relations:** Make inquiries into opportunities that will allow the SFSS to advocate its goals to the media so its concerns can be effectively communicated to the public. Be ready to speak as a spokesperson on different occasions, coordinating with communication so that the image of SFSS is always uniform and professional.
- **Enhance Student Advocacy Efforts:** Engage with the student body on a regular basis to measure their needs and concerns. Utilize tools such as surveys, town halls, and social media engagements to gather feedback and adjust advocacy strategies accordingly.
- **Collaborate Closely with Staff:** Expertise in Continuity and Institutional Knowledge brought to the team by SFSS Staff. In an organization, these factors can drive elements toward the effective execution and management of projects.
- **Promote Collaboration within the Team:** While it is important for you to focus on your role specifically, working with other executive members will most likely result in thorough solutions to the issues in discussion and a single front for all advocacy efforts. Develop a team orientation and shared objectives.
- **Professional Development:** Keep on seeking personal and professional development proactively. This should involve attending workshops, networking, and professional education sessions to build your leadership and advocacy capacity.



Key Contacts

All the essential contact information can be found within the VP External Google Drive.

CLOSING REMARKS

Looking back on my journey this past year as vice president of external and community affairs, I am grateful. Serving and representing our community at Simon Fraser University has been a rewarding and honoured experience.

During my term, I had the great chance to work with passionate and dedicated people. From the students to the staff and even to the community members, we worked together to ensure your needs were being addressed. Together, we have faced challenges, sometimes with success and sometimes not, with the vision to improve the SFU student experience. A huge thank you goes to every student who supported and believed in my vision. You were the momentum that has kept us going and resulted in many of our shared achievements.

Though the term has come to an end, the memories and experiences that have been shared will be carried with me forever. I leave this job feeling happy, knowing that we made good progress and established the foundation for much greater success in the future.

Thank you once again for this unbelievable year. It has been one of the most remarkable chapters of my life, complete with learning, growth, and connection. Here's to continuing the journey of making SFU more than just a place to learn but a vibrant community we can all enjoy.

Warmest regards,

Nancy Brar 😊