

Candidate  
Orientation  
Manual

2017-2018

Simon Fraser Student Society

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**simon fraser**  
**student society**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction to the SFSS Board of Directors</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 The Allegory of the Hapless Helper.....	3
1.2 What is Policy Governance? .....	4
1.3 What is the Simon Fraser Student Society? .....	5
<i>The SFSS Constitution</i> .....	5
1.4 What Is Governance and What Is the Role of the Board? .....	6
<i>Member Engagement</i> .....	6
<i>Strategic Planning</i> .....	6
<i>Performance Evaluation</i> .....	7
<i>Cycling through the Stages</i> .....	7
1.5 What are Operations and What is the Role of the CEO? .....	8
1.6 Why Separate Governance and Operations? .....	10
<i>The Allegory of the Back-Seat Driver</i> .....	10
1.7 Distinguishing Between the Board and a Member of the Board.....	11
<b>2. Election Procedures</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Nomination – February 27 <sup>nd</sup> to March 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2017 .....	12
<i>Eligibility</i> .....	12
<i>Submitting your Nomination</i> .....	12
<i>Participating in the Candidate Orientation</i> .....	12
2.2 Campaigning – March 13 <sup>th</sup> to March 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2016.....	13
<i>Regulations</i> .....	13
<i>Submission of Campaign Materials</i> .....	14
<i>Reimbursement of Campaign Expenses</i> .....	14
<i>Cost of Print Campaign Materials – SFSS Copy Centre (Prices Subject to Change)</i> .....	15
2.3 Election Period – March 27 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2016.....	16
<i>Regulations</i> .....	16
<b>3. Additional Resources</b> .....	<b>17</b>
3.1 Society Act and University Act .....	17
3.2 SFSS Constitution .....	17
3.3 SFSS Bylaws.....	17
3.4 SFSS Board Policies .....	17
3.5 Robert’s Rules.....	17

# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE SFSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

So, you want to be a member of the SFSS Board of Directors? Great! You deserve both a hearty congratulations and thank you. If you are elected, you will be joining a large team with a long history that has been working hard to improve all aspects of the lives of undergraduate students.

Before starting off down the campaign trail, it is important to understand the job of a director so that you can tailor your campaign to a Director's role and responsibility. As with any job, it is possible to work a lot or a little as a director; but, unless you work well, it's hard to do any good. ***This manual is intended to help you understand how to work well with and for the Society as a Board member.***

## 1.1 THE ALLEGORY OF THE HAPLESS HELPER

*Imagine joining a construction team, and seeing a big pile of dirt next to a giant hole, with oh so many of your teammates rushing about busily at their respective tasks. It is easy to imagine oneself saying, 'Oh my goodness! Someone is going to fall in this pit and hurt themselves! Clearly, no one around here has time to focus on safety. I must help the team and fill the hole as quickly as possible, so that none of my teammates hurt themselves!' An eye for risk and safety would likely be a great contribution to the team; but, helping to improve safety by filling the hole wouldn't be much help if the team were trying to build the foundation of an exciting new building. It's easy to imagine how upset the whole team would get if one of its members were trying to help by inadvertently undoing six months of work. A few moments to learn what was going on and what everyone was doing would have been sufficient to avoid this mistake.*



*This is, of course, a rather silly story; but, it's surprising just how many of us make this mistake.*

The role of the Board is arguably the most important role in the whole organization. With a good board of directors, the goals of the organization are clear, monitoring the organization's progress towards those goals is rigorous, and ensuring that those goals are what the members need is feasible.

To ensure that it is working effectively in a complex environment, the Simon Fraser Student Society Board of Directors has implemented Policy Governance. Policy Governance is a way to do governance work that is becoming dominant in the not-for-profit sector. It helps ensure that the entire organization, including yourself, your board, future boards, your management team, and your staff understand precisely what the organization will get from its Board; and, it helps ensure that the Board and the Society membership is well supported by the rest of the organization. Better yet, it provides you with the tools to do that effectively no matter how much or how little experience you have.

## 1.2 WHAT IS POLICY GOVERNANCE?

Though it is possible to define Policy Governance in a sentence, unless you already know what Policy Governance is, that sentence isn't likely to be of very much help. For instance,

*Policy governance is a comprehensive set of integrated principles that, when consistently applied, allows governing boards to realize owner-accountable organizations.*

- Michael Hughes, A Blueprint for Student Driven, Professionally Supported Student Associations

Or again,

*[Policy Governance is] the registered service mark held by John Carver that denotes a way of guiding governing boards towards fulfilling their accountability – specifically, a conceptual model composed of logically derived principles and concepts. In practice, the term refers to the entire conceptual model, which is a universal paradigm of governance.*

- John Carver, Boards that Make a Difference

These descriptions do very little more than hide the meaning of “Policy Governance” in a whole bunch of technical jargon.

What are these “principles” Hughes mentions? How do we know if they are “consistently applied?” What’s a “governing board,” and what’s an “owner-accountable organization?” Who the heck is “John Carver?” What is a “registered service mark?” From what are these “principles logically derived?” What the heck is a “paradigm?!” Clearly, these definitions aren’t very helpful.

To properly grasp Policy Governance, and the task of a member of the Board of Directors, it is important to understand a number of concepts that may be new and unfamiliar. Rather than speaking in the abstract, these concepts will be presented in the context of the SFSS.

With this approach in mind, we will have to answer a few questions:

1. What is the SFSS?
2. What is governance; and, what is the role of the Board?
3. What are operations; and, what is the role of the CEO?
4. Why separate governance and operations?

### 1.3 WHAT IS THE SIMON FRASER STUDENT SOCIETY?

The **Simon Fraser Student Society** is a not-for-profit corporation, owned by all undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University, and registered as a society under the Society Act of British Columbia. Simply put, the SFSS is a group of people with shared interests, doing something together that they couldn't do alone.

Canadian provinces, including British Columbia, provide the means for such groups of like-minded people to work together; that is, they provide their citizens with a means of establishing themselves as a legally existing organization. Along with that opportunity, they also provide a set of rules to which they must adhere when acting as an organization. In British Columbia, the [Societies Act](#) is the piece of legislation that provides for these opportunities and obligations.

The SFSS is precisely such a group of like-minded people. It is a society incorporated under the [Societies Act](#). Consequently, it benefits from all the rights attributed to a society, as well as all its obligations. For instance, as required by the [Societies Act](#), its name and purposes are provided for by its members in its constitution.

#### *THE SFSS CONSTITUTION*

1. The name of the Society shall be the Simon Fraser Student Society.
  - a. The purposes of the Society shall be:
    - i. To represent and advocate for the interests of undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University.
    - ii. To coordinate and promote all undergraduate student activities, of, by, and for the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University.
    - iii. To promote, among other goals democratically determined by the Society, the principles of public, universally accessible, high quality post-secondary education, and of meaningful undergraduate student participation in all aspects of University governance.
    - iv. To facilitate collective action by undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University, within the Province of British Columbia, and elsewhere in support of these principles.
    - v. To acquire or hold any lands, buildings, facilities or other assets for the use or benefit of the Society or the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University.
2. The operations of the Society shall be chiefly carried on at Simon Fraser University in the Province of British Columbia.

Happily, if the SFSS has set itself an ambitious task, it has a lot of dedicated volunteers, members, and staff at its disposal. Ironically, while many hands may make light work, the larger an organization gets, the more complex it gets; and, the more complex it gets, the harder it can be to mobilize towards a common goal. Consequently, given the number of dedicate staff and volunteers, cooperation, communication, and coordination are paramount if the Society is to be successful.

While there are many individual roles that make up the Society, it is possible to separate the Society into two key groups: governance and operations. Governance is a function performed by the Board and operations is a function performed by the staff.

## 1.4 WHAT IS GOVERNANCE AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE BOARD?

The role of governance in any organization is threefold: engage the membership, establish the strategic goals, and monitor progress towards those goals. For the SFSS, that means that Board, the executive body of the SFSS governance structure, must determine what the members want and need, prioritize amongst those needs, and ensure that the organization actually provides for those needs.

### *MEMBER ENGAGEMENT*

In the first instance, it must be clearly understood that the owners of the SFSS are its members, all the undergraduate students of Simon Fraser University. The role of the Board, therefore, is to ensure that the organization is actually serving the needs of its members. This means, first and foremost, understanding what those needs are.

This is not a process that ends with the results of the election. The Board must constantly be engaging with all segments of its over 26,000 members to learn what they want, what they need, and how well they think the SFSS is doing at what they already do. Moreover, it must be able to communicate the results of those engagement processes back to the members so that members can see clearly that they are being heard.

### *STRATEGIC PLANNING*

While it's important that the SFSS listen to its members, listening isn't enough. It must take that feedback and make some very hard decisions about how to invest its limited resources in delivering services back to the membership. That is to say, the Board must determine what the Society will do on the basis of those needs.

This is difficult, because there will invariably be more needs than those to which the Society can effectively cater. In order to fulfill its purpose as established in the SFSS Constitution, and in order to help it prioritize amongst the needs communicated to it by its membership, the Board has established a set of ends policies, that together form a vision statement for the Society. They have established an ideal end state for the Society and its members to which it can always refer when making hard decisions about setting organizational priorities.

The Simon Fraser Student Society exists to improve the academic, social, financial, and health and wellbeing aspects of the undergraduate student experience, as comprised of the following aspects:

Members have the highest quality academic experience.

1. Members are provided with sufficient and appropriate study space.
2. Members have access to responsive academic support services.
3. Members have adequate libraries and research tools.
4. Members have access to their required courses.

Members enjoy a rich social life.

1. Members are able to find and connect with other students.
2. Members have access to appropriate space.
3. Members have the resources available to support their activities.
4. Members are informed about the social activities at Simon Fraser University.

Members can afford their education.

1. Members can afford their tuition and fees.
2. Members have access to financial support on the basis of:
  - a. academic standing, and
  - b. financial need.
3. Members have access to affordable student loans.
4. Members have access to lower-cost educational resources.
5. Members have access to income generating opportunities on campus.

Members pursue their studies in health promoting conditions that contribute to their wellbeing.

1. Members have access to the services and supports necessary to achieve their optimal mental health.

Members have access to the services and supports necessary to achieve their optimal physical health.

With this understanding of the ideal end state of the organization, and with the members communicating their needs to their representatives, the Board can use the Ends Policies to help it establish the short term, medium term, and long term priorities of the organization.

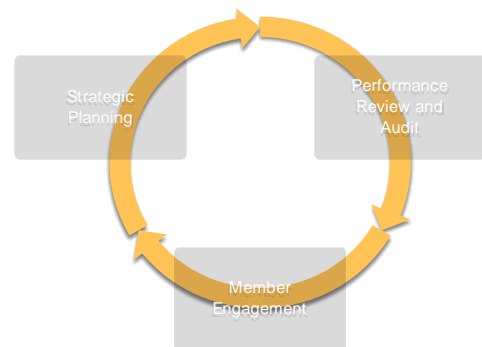
### *PERFORMANCE EVALUATION*

Having engaged with the membership to understand its needs, and having made some difficult decisions setting priorities for the organization, the Board also has to evaluate whether or not the organization is in fact attaining the goals it has set for itself.

While it may seem intimidating to try and evaluate the performance of an organization that involves the work of hundreds of individuals, Policy Governance, and its separation of operations and governance, provides a very straight-forward strategy for doing this transparently and effectively. Having set the short term, medium term, and long term priorities of the organization in a strategic plan, all it has to do is review whether or not the goals established in the plan were met on time and on budget. As will be seen in the next section, this is possible because Policy Governance clearly distinguishes between the role of Governance, the Board, and Operations, the staff.

### *CYCLING THROUGH THE STAGES*

While the roles of the Board have been separated for the sake of clarity, they do not proceed linearly. Member engagement is an endless task. After all, once the strategic plan is set, it is important to communicate that plan to the membership and seek feedback to learn whether it responds to the needs that informed its development. Governance work then, is an endless cycle of engagement, strategic direction setting, and evaluation.



## 1.5 WHAT ARE OPERATIONS AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CEO?

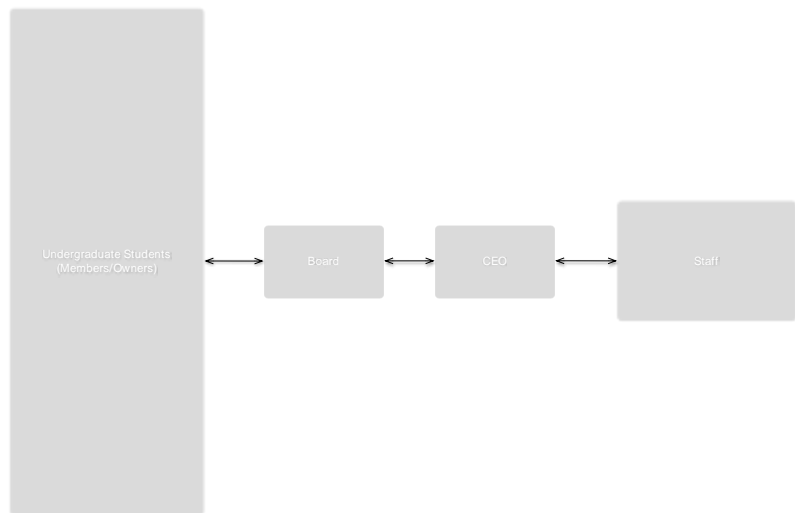
Simply put, operations are the implementation of the strategic goals set by the governance structure of an organization.

The SFSS currently provides a host of services such as a health insurance plan, a universal transit pass, a food bank program, a legal clinic, a \$65M new student space project, a space booking program, a pub, a host of restaurants, a vending program, a full-service print centre, a centre and programming for self-identified women, and a centre and programming for the LGBTQ+ community, to name only a few. These programs require a significant amount of logistical and administrative support, such as finance and budgeting, policy development and review, event planning, communications, IT, human resources, and customer service. A great deal of work goes into ensuring that the cost of this programming remains as low as possible to the membership, and service levels remain as high as possible. Quality and access are very labour intensive, especially with such a diverse and dynamic membership. This is further complicated in the SFSS context by striving to provide said services across three geographically distributed areas.

To this end, the Board has hired a management team to help it direct, manage, evaluate, and report on the Society's projects and programs. While the Board determines what the Society does on the basis of member engagement, management oversees the logistical support for the delivery and cost projection of these projects and programs.

Also, and perhaps most importantly, management evaluates those projects and programs to help the Board determine whether to continue to invest in those services, to dissolve the program and reinvest organizational resources in a new program, or to seek additional resources to increase the scope of the services already provided. These are extremely difficult decisions that require balancing member needs against each other to ensure that Society resources are invested where they are needed most.

To render the Board task of strategic direction setting and organizational review feasible, Policy Governance vests the accountability for, and authority over the implementation of Board-established goals in its Chief Executive Officer (CEO). That is to say, Policy Governance strictly separates the work of determining what to do (Governance), from the work of determining how to do it (Operations).



For instance, the Board, in striving to provide for the best possible social undergraduate experience might seek to host a large scale concert, or even an annually recurring large scale concert. While the Board and its committees will have to determine when the concert will be held, what the theme and purpose of the concert is to be, and who the performer or performers will be, it is the staff's responsibility to ensure that all requirements around hosting a concert are understood, planned for, and effectively executed. For instance, hosting a concert requires agreements with the SFU facility services, security, and vendor services. It requires external vendors such as fencing



contractors, staging, lighting. It requires appropriate insurance. It requires protocols for ticket sales and access control, all of which represents an investment of the fees paid by the members of the SFSS and a great deal of time. Consequently, there are accounting, liability, budgeting, cost, ROI, vendor negotiations, and timeline considerations that must be made clear to the Board prior to investing the required resources. Society staff is here to help ensure that everything needed to support such an event is provided, and that the Board, the Society, and its members are protected from any risk. Staff is here to ensure that when the Board makes a decision about what to do, it is making an informed decision about the proposed event and its scale, and has everything it needs to ensure its success.

## 1.6 WHY SEPARATE GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS?

### THE ALLEGORY OF THE BACK-SEAT DRIVER



*Imagine being hired as a professional driver to a high-powered executive of a property management firm. This executive is busy, and has a great deal of work to do. She works nearly every moment of the day, nearly every day, and takes her job very seriously. Over the course of the day, she often has to run around the city visiting different locations, ensuring that there is no discrepancy between what is reported on paper, and what is on site. If she had to drive herself or take public transit, she would either*

*lose too much time driving, or spend too much time traveling. Consequently, she has decided to hire you, an outstanding driver and consummate professional. Now imagine what would happen if the executive spent all of her time telling the you which routes to take, how quickly to drive, how to shift gears, when to use the car's day lights, etc. Clearly, you would get frustrated being told how to perform the job for which you were hired, and a job in which you take pride. Imagine how much more frustrating it would be if, after following the executive's instructions, you were criticized for getting her to her appointments late, and for keeping her from her work. 'How,' you would no doubt wonder, 'can you blame me for being late and keeping you from your work, if you spend all your time doing mine? Either let me drive and blame me if I fail, or tell me how to drive and blame yourself if you're unhappy with the results. In the first case, I'll show you how good I am; in the second, you should drive yourself and save yourself the cost of my salary.'*

This story is meant to illustrate why we can only be held accountable for the things over which we have authority. If the Board involves itself in operations, providing direction to staff directly, then the CEO can no longer be held accountable for the performance of the organization, because the CEO no longer has authority over its operations. The Board, or one of its members will have short circuited the chain of authority, and, as a result, the chain of accountability. The consequence of breaking the chain of authority and accountability is that if something goes wrong, everyone is to blame (which also means that no one is to blame).



Moreover, the organization has invested a significant amount of resources in its management team, and it has done so for good reason and according to best practice. Management is a crucially important piece of an organization's operations. However, the invest can only provide a meaningful return if it is allowed to perform its function. Why bother investing those resources in management if the managers aren't authorized to manage organizational operations. It would be like buying a sports car having your friends push you around the block in neutral.

With a strong Chief Executive Officer, the Board can expect the delivery of regular, timely, and quality reports on the performance of staff, as well as Society finances, projects, and programs. With these reports at its disposal, Board can have informed, considered debates about the direction the Society should take. In fact, this reporting is the condition of effective and meaningful governance. The interesting result of empowering the CEO over staff and operations, therefore, is an empowered Board.

## 1.7 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE BOARD AND A MEMBER OF THE BOARD

Given the importance of the Board of Directors to any organization, the work of each individual Board member is crucial. However, it is extremely important to distinguish between the authority of the Board, and the authority of a member of the Board.

While the Board has a great deal of authority, individual Board members do not. Board exercises its authority by passing or rejecting motions submitted at a Board meeting. Board members distinguish themselves from any other member by the opportunity to submit motions and vote on those motions. Board, therefore, is the source of organizational authority, not Board members.



A Board member on a Board of 16 individuals, such as the SFSS, does not have 1/16 of Board authority. They have the authority to make motions and vote on motions at Board meetings. Board members, therefore, serve the Board, and Board can only ever be as effective as its members are able to work constructively together.

With this in mind, winning a seat on the Board of Directors will require you to care and nurture your relationship with other Board members. Only insofar as you serve the Board can you be served by it.

## 2. ELECTION PROCEDURES

### 2.1 NOMINATION – FEBRUARY 27<sup>ND</sup> TO MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

The nomination process is administered by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). All nomination submissions must be approved by the IEC before the end of the nomination period.

To be approved, the candidate must:

1. be eligible,
2. submit a completed nomination form,
3. submit a completed consent form,
4. participate in the candidate orientation, and
5. receive written confirmation from the IEC that the nomination has been approved.

#### *ELIGIBILITY*

To be eligible to run for a position on the Board, a person must be an active member in good standing of the SFSS.<sup>1</sup> To be eligible to run for a position as a faculty representative member of the Board, the student must be a member of that faculty.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that a person may only hold one position at a time on any of the following bodies: Council, faculty student unions, departmental student unions, and Board.

#### *SUBMITTING YOUR NOMINATION*

To run as a candidate for a position on the Board of Directors of the Simon Fraser Student Society, you must fill in the appropriate nomination form. The form is available online at [www.elections.sfss.ca](http://www.elections.sfss.ca).

The form must contain the:

- name, address, telephone number, and email address of the prospective candidate,
- position sought,
- the names and signatures of 10 members in good standing of the SFSS, and
- signed agreement acknowledging an understanding of, and adherence to the election regulations.

#### *PARTICIPATING IN THE CANDIDATE ORIENTATION*

All candidates will participate in at least one session of the candidate orientation process.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Active member' means an undergraduate student who is registered in a course or program for the current semester. A person is considered in 'good standing' if they have paid the Activity fee and have no outstanding fines.

<sup>2</sup> A person is considered a member of a faculty if that person is taking at least one class in said faculty.

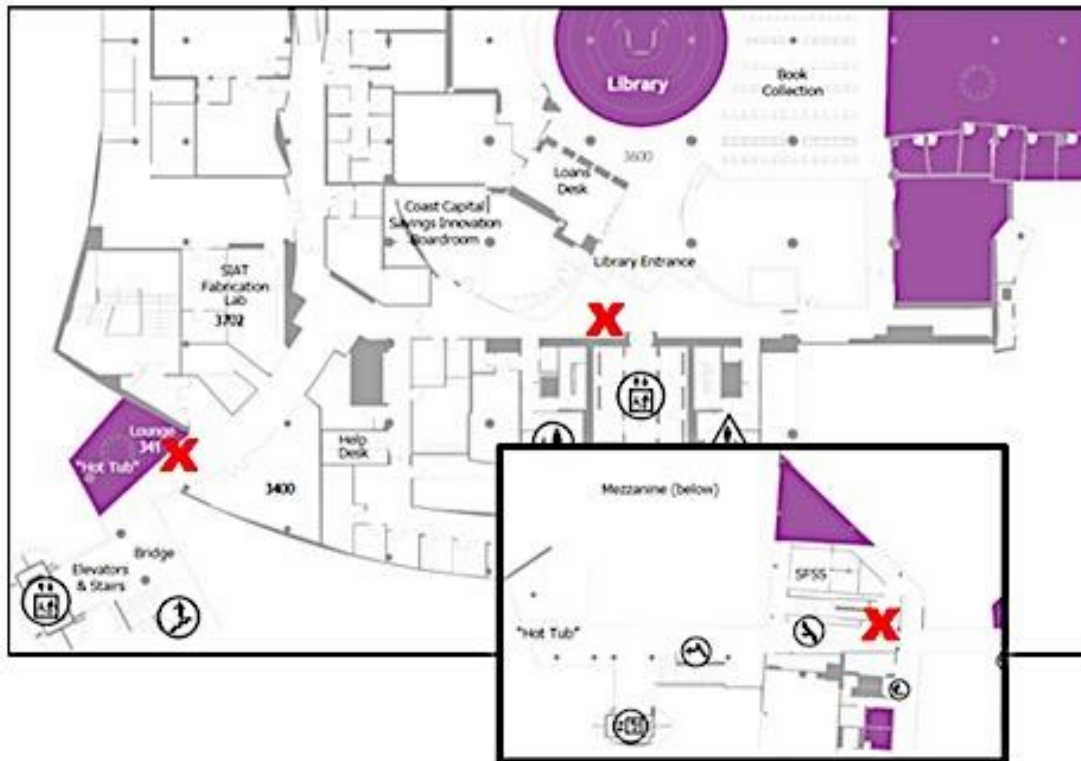
## 2.2 CAMPAIGNING – MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup> TO MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

The IEC shall adjudicate all disputes regarding a breach of electoral regulations, and may, in so doing, revoke the candidacy of any candidate or impose a fine of up to \$100.

All printed campaign materials must be printed by the SFSS Copy Centre.

### *REGULATIONS*

1. All campaign materials must:
  - a. be submitted to and approved by the IEC,
  - b. not be defamatory or discriminatory,
  - c. be removed by midnight, prior to the day of the election,
  - d. not be placed in or on:
    - i. wood, glass, or painted surfaces,
    - ii. floors,
    - iii. locations exposed to rain,
    - iv. off-campus locations,
    - v. The Women's Centre,
    - vi. Out on Campus,
    - vii. Food or Beverage Service spaces, or
    - viii. Society offices,
    - ix. bathrooms,
    - x. libraries,
    - xi. Translink property,
    - xii. cafeterias,
    - xiii. Strand Hall,
    - xiv. Graduate Student Society Offices,
    - xv. Student Residences,
    - xvi. Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG),
    - xvii. International Student Lounge, or
    - xviii. private business.
2. At the Surrey campus,
  - a. Campaign posters are not permitted on any bulletin boards, walls, windows, or other surfaces.
  - b. Three black rolling display grids will be made available to the candidates in the following locations:
    - i. Near the top of the escalator leading from the mezzanine to Galleria3
    - ii. In lounge 341 near the "hot tub"
    - iii. Outside of the library entrance



3. Campaign print materials must be produced at the SFSS Copy Centre
4. Only members of the Society may campaign on behalf of any candidate or referendum question.
5. Campaigning shall commence no sooner than the opening of the campaign period.
6. No Society, faculty student union, departmental student union, or club mailing list or database may be used to distribute campaign materials.
7. Campaigning is not permitted during the election period.
8. No candidate shall attack the person of another candidate.
9. Drawing on university property with chalk is strictly prohibited.

#### *SUBMISSION OF CAMPAIGN MATERIALS*

Campaign materials must be submitted to [elections@sfss.ca](mailto:elections@sfss.ca) for approval. Where these are printed materials, to be approved, they must be flattened image files (e.g. no layered Adobe files).

Once approved, print campaign materials are to be sent by email to the SFSS Copy Centre for printing (<http://sfss.ca/submit-a-document-for-print>).

#### *REIMBURSEMENT OF CAMPAIGN EXPENSES*

The cost of campaign materials may not exceed \$50. The Society will reimburse the cost of those materials following the elections. In order to be reimbursed, candidates must submit their campaign expenses with 72 hours of the close of the voting period.

Campaign expenses must be reported using the form available at the [elections website](http://elections.sfss.ca/documents/forms/) (<http://elections.sfss.ca/documents/forms/>)

*COST OF PRINT CAMPAIGN MATERIALS – SFSS COPY CENTRE (PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE)*

- Blank 8ft banners for hand painting
  - One free banner is made available per candidate
  - Additional banners - \$5
- Full Colour (on white paper)
  - 8.5” x 11” – \$0.25
  - 11” x 17” – \$0.50
- Black and White (on coloured paper)
  - 8.5” x 11” – \$0.09
  - 11” x 17” – \$0.20
- Handbills (max 4 per page, two cuts)
  - Single sided – \$0.09
  - Double sided – \$0.15
- Business cards (max 8 per page, four cuts)
  - \$1.50 per sheet on business card stock
  - \$1 per cut (max 4 cuts)

### 2.3 ELECTION PERIOD – MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup> TO 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2017

The election results will be tabulated at midnight on the last day of voting.

#### *REGULATIONS*

1. Candidates must submit signed copies of expenses to the IEC within 72 hours of the close of the voting period.
2. Candidates may request a recount within 72 hours of the close of the voting period.



### 3. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

All the organizational information presented in this document, as well as the electoral rules and regulations cited here are taken from the SFSS governing documents, listed below. They are listed in order of precedence.

The regulations of principle importance are contained in the SFSS Bylaws, SFSS Board Policies, and SFSS Policies.

#### 3.1 SOCIETY ACT AND UNIVERSITY ACT

The [Societies Act](#) is a piece of provincial legislation that defines a Society as a legal entity, and enumerates its basic legal obligations. These requirements may be extended by the membership of any Society, to further constrain the activities of its directors.

The [University Act](#) contains the regulations surrounding SFSS funding. It details the university's obligation to collect and remit funds from students to student organizations under certain conditions ([Section 27.1](#)).

The document also regulates the structure and business of the university as an organization.

#### 3.2 SFSS CONSTITUTION

The [SFSS Constitution](#), as all society constitutions, establishes its name and purposes. The requirements for the creation and change to the constitution are contained in the [Society Act](#).

#### 3.3 SFSS BYLAWS

The [SFSS Bylaws](#) contain the member-approved regulations that define the nature and scope of authority of each organizational unit of the SFSS. Bylaws may be established or changed by special resolution or referendum, which may be presented for consideration to the membership by the Board of Directors, Council, or a petition presented to the Board or Council that include the signatures of 5% of the membership and the question to be included on a referendum ballot.

#### 3.4 SFSS BOARD POLICIES

The SFSS Board Policies contain the Ends Policies, Board-Management Delegation Policies, Executive Limitations Policies, and Board Process Policies. Together, they comprise the goals, means, and processes according to which the Board performs its duties, ensuring adherence to provincial law, SFSS bylaws, and best practice.

#### 3.5 ROBERT'S RULES

Robert's Rules contain the procedures regulating the deliberative process of each organizational unit. It details the procedures that must be followed when making decision, debating possible courses of action, voting, etc. Copies of Robert's Rules and guides to Robert's Rules may be found in the SFU library and Bookstore.