SEM Council Backgrounder, September 2016

Prepared by SEM Council

Strategic Enrollment Management at SFU

SEM Definition

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students, where “optimum” is defined within the academic context of the institution. As such, SEM is an institution-wide process that embraces virtually every aspect of an institution’s function and culture.

Historical Context

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) at SFU began in early 2007 with two Enrollment Summits hosted by Student Services. The purpose of the summits was to introduce the concept of SEM to the SFU community, and begin the consultation process as to how impending enrollment opportunities and challenges could be proactively addressed at SFU. As a result, the Enrollment Management Coordinating Committee (EMCC) and Retention 101 groups were formed, bringing together SEM stakeholders from across the institution to discuss enrollment and retention issues. In 2009, a third event was held, the SEM Launch. At this meeting, the President, Vice President Academic, Deans, Vice Presidents and other senior administrative staff, put forward an action plan for incorporating a SEM approach at SFU, including the creation of the Strategic Enrolment Management Planning Committee (SEMPC), consisting of a Dean, 2 Associate Deans, the Registrar, and Executive Director Student Affairs. SEMPC met continuously after the SEM Launch to develop their mandate by identifying how to best implement a SEM approach at SFU. A report was delivered in 2010 outlining three outcomes: understanding SEM at SFU; the SEM community; and initial undergraduate SEM goals.

Understanding SEM at SFU

SEM at SFU is rooted in developing a student success culture; informing decisions through communication and collaboration; creating and utilizing data intelligence; and understanding the SFU institutional vision, all supported by senior-level leadership. SEM is achieved through the development of an undergraduate enrollment vision and completion vision that is achieved through attaining related goals. Articulated below is the SEM vision as presented in the SEMPC Final Report, with operationalized goals and principles developed later by the SEM Council.

1 Definition by Michael Dolence, 1993
2 Historical context provided by Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Committee Final Report – June 2010
Undergraduate SEM Vision at SFU

Simon Fraser University provides undergraduate students with the highest quality education in the liberal arts and sciences and in selected interdisciplinary and professional programs. We celebrate an ethnically and culturally diverse, highly internationalized student body. Our teaching is informed by excellent research programs and experiential learning, and flagship educational offerings such as co-op, research internships and international learning opportunities are a cornerstone of all of our programs.

Through an institutional commitment to SEM practice, we enroll high quality, “best fit” students and provide them with the best possible learning experiences and levels of support to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed.

Principles

1. SEM is a comprehensive process that intentionally embeds institutional enrollment, retention and completion goals into our university’s strategic planning, assessment and reporting.

2. We commit to recruiting and enrolling ‘best-fit’ students who should have the potential to complete their academic goals successfully at SFU, and we commit to supporting our students in achieving their goals in a timely fashion.

3. We believe students, faculty and staff have a mutual responsibility to create an experience that prioritizes and supports our students’ learning and development.

4. We believe that our communications and interactions with students should be transparent and consistent, and should assist students in setting realistic expectations of their experience at our institution.

5. SEM is the shared responsibility of every faculty and unit at our institution.

6. We will critically, strategically and regularly review and modify our practices in order to achieve our institution’s SEM goals.

7. We will identify populations of interest (i.e. First Nations, athletes, international, refugees) that support our University’s strategic priorities. Some populations may be specific to a program or department level and may change over time.

8. We commit to providing regular, ongoing professional development support to new members of the SEM Council at SFU, to ensure appropriate knowledge of the field.

9. SEMC members are accountable to each other and the units within which they work. Their role at the table is both as representative of their areas and the overall institutional enrollment needs.

*Highlighted sections indicate suggested enhancements to the previously developed principles
Community, Collaboration, and Communication

SEM practice is supported at all levels of the SFU community and planning is a shared activity. Faculty and staff contribute to the SEM community through cross-functional committees and groups (i.e. SEMC, EMCC, Enrollment Strategies, etc.). The below diagram depicts the structure of the SEM community at SFU; the structure maximizes effective oversight, partnership and collaboration within the community.

Strategic Enrollment Management Council

In response to a recommendation contained in SEMPC’s 2010 report, the AVP Academic and AVP Students & International proposed the creation of a SEM Council (SEMC) as a sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Enrolment Management and Planning (SCEMP). This proposal was supported by the VPA and approved by SCEMP in 2010.

SEMC develops SEM principles, recommends the annual Enrollment Plan to SCEMP and Senate, discusses the student experience, investigates enrollment patterns, and engages in critical discussion and decision-making around new student intake targets and student retention objectives. Co-chaired by the AVPA and AVPSI, SEMC is comprised of senior-level Student Services staff, Faculty Deans (or designates), the Dean of Graduate Studies, and Vancouver and Surrey representatives.

SEMC Terms of Reference

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3 Information retrieved from SEMC Terms of Reference - November 2010
• Reports directly to the Chair of SCEMP through its co-chairs. It receives information from, and provides feedback to, the Enrollment Management Coordinating Committee (EMCC).

• Focuses on issues pertaining to university-wide, as well as Faculty-level, enrollment management and planning. Its main roles will be to co-ordinate and integrate SEM activities across the University, and evaluate sources of data and information that can be used to inform and guide SEM practice.

• SEMC is a forum for the development of policy recommendations and best practices in support of SFU’s SEM goals. It has two main responsibilities:
  1. Developing and implementing a SEM plan for SFU, and
  2. Drafting recommendations on SEM-related policies and procedures for consideration by SCEMP.

SEMC Impact

The impact of SEMC on the university community has been enormous. SEMC has pushed the agenda for enrollment planning by broadening the professional approach to SEM across the institution. Each council member is better informed as a result of SEMC, and brings a higher level of understanding to their enrollment work in the faculties and other units such as Student Services and Institutional Research and Planning (IRP). An ongoing benefit of the Council has been supporting and encouraging the faculties and Student Services to work as one team, emerging from restrictive silos. Dr. Martin Gotfrit, Associate Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art & Technology Associate Dean (2013-2016), stated that the “spirit of the [SEMC] participants was collaborative and all were willing to listen to a wide range of views. We raised important questions and thought creatively about the future of the university. There was frank talk and criticism and an openness that transcended the usual silos of faculties and status. The decisions made around allocation of incoming students to the various faculties were remarkably collegial and I felt a strong commitment to fairness and transparency. Administrators attend many meetings but few afford the opportunity to really consider the university’s future direction in all of its complexities and nuances. SEMC is that rare opportunity.”

SEMC provides an avenue for faculty members from different areas of the University to meet and discuss key issues, priorities and strategies impacting their area. Faculties learn not only how issues impact the overall institution, but how changes impact each other. The Council supports SEM principles by looking beyond enrollment to issues of retention and student success. Dr. Catherine Murray, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, echoed that SEMC is valuable in supporting the creation of initiatives across faculties: “[SEMC] bridges institutional partners, professional backgrounds and

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4 Complete faculty testimonials available in Appendix
brings evidence-based decision-making alive. For FASS, the opportunity to share experiences about design of retention or other initiatives in SEMC is invaluable.” This collaborative approach amongst the faculties supports the SEM principle of critically, strategically and regularly reviewing and modifying practices in order to achieve SFU’s SEM goals.

Discussions at SEMC have impacted prospective and current student support, curriculum/program development and design, and the university budget model. As noted by Dr. Andrew Gemino, Associate Dean, Beedie School of Business, “SEMC has created a community of people who are dedicated to improving enrolment management and has been the driving force to bringing more timely and relevant data to the people making decisions about enrolment management.” Ultimately, the University will never be in a steady state as it constantly adapts to changes both internally and externally, however, SEMC can be a pivot in which that change occurs.

As listed in the SEM Principles, SEM is the shared responsibility of every unit at SFU. SEMC provides strategic guidance to the units who can operationalize institutional, SEM plans and priorities. Long standing member, Dr. David Paterson, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, observed how SEMC has evolved over the years: “I have watched the discussion improve over the years as members tend to be better informed and more willing to participate by offering ideas and experiences… Enrolment matters raised in faculties and departments can be understood in the context of the wider university priorities and plans.” As such, SEMC meets regularly throughout the academic year, in addition to an annual, daylong retreat to review key topics.

The Future of SEMC

Since 2012, SEMC holds an annual retreat to discuss subjects like enrollment planning, student retention, international student success, and developing a SEMC work plan. Outcomes of these discussions have seen the development of strategic plans, enrollment targets set for specific populations, and the establishment of SEM community meetings. More importantly, these retreats provide a venue for the faculties, Student Services and IRP to come together for a day of information sharing, discussion, learning and goal setting.

At the most recent SEMC retreat, the Council discussed the future of SEM at SFU, including topics such as: SFU’s strategic enrollment vision; retention principles and practices; and student satisfaction. Below are highlights from that discussion.

<table>
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<th>Theme</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Student Experience / Satisfaction</td>
<td>- Create market responsive, nimble and intentional programs, an authentically interdisciplinary experience, and enriched educational experiences in all faculty streams.</td>
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As trends such as demographics, budgets and markets impact enrollment and retention, SEMC strives to anticipate these changes and make recommendations to SFU leadership. In looking forward, the Council would like to evaluate the student experience and address specific issues and concerns, whilst remaining cognizant of resource and institutional business processes.

SEMC is keen to create market responsive, nimble programming which supports the SFU interdisciplinary experience and student engagement opportunities. Most recently, the Council discussed shifting our objective beyond SFU as the number one choice for BC students, to being the best, undergraduate post-secondary institution in BC. To achieve this, SFU must review such implications as having top researchers instruct 100-level courses and the curricula implications. SEMC is well positioned to hold these discussions and lay the groundwork for future planning.

Finally, a key instrument for driving SEMC decision making and setting priorities is data. To continue this, data must focus not only on current students, but also incoming students and their expectations. If SEMC is aware of new student needs, the Council can

| 2. Data collection | - Collect data on incoming student expectations and profile, provincial trends and SFU standing, current student success. Ex. Analyze results from student surveys (NSSE, UGSS, etc.) to inform changes |
| 3. Systemic barriers | - Align university funding and recruitment practices with SEM priorities / objectives. Ex. Introduction of broad based admission, review of the scholarship program, improve course access |
| 4. University and community commitment | - Engage the university community in SFU initiatives and develop buy in from all levels of the university. Ex. Create a community engagement strategy |
| 5. Strategic vision | - Create a strategic document to determine who SFU is, who our students are, and the SEMC priorities and university vision. Ex. Improve national reputation by focusing on the priority of excellence in undergraduate education |

As trends such as demographics, budgets and markets impact enrollment and retention, SEMC strives to anticipate these changes and make recommendations to SFU leadership. In looking forward, the Council would like to evaluate the student experience and address specific issues and concerns, whilst remaining cognizant of resource and institutional business processes.
be responsive and ensure opportunities are available which support student success. In addition, changes to the BC, post-secondary landscape are imminent and SEMC must be positioned to be responsive. For example, changes such as secondary school grading practices, immigration policies, feeder school district enrollments, provincial funding to universities, etc. SEMC needs access to data that forecasts these changes so the Council can anticipate impacts to SFU and offer solutions, rather than being reactive.

SEM Council testimonials

Dr. Martin Gotfrit, Associate Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology
The SEMC meetings I attended during my three-year term as Associate Dean, Undergraduate in the faculty of Communication, Art and Technology were some of the most valuable and informative meetings of my 35 years at SFU. The spirit of the participants was collaborative and all were willing to listen to a wide range of views. We raised important questions and thought creatively about the future of the university. There was frank talk and criticism and an openness that transcended the usual silos of faculties and status. The decisions made around allocation of incoming students to the various faculties were remarkably collegial and I felt a strong commitment to fairness and transparency. Administrators attend many meetings but few afford the opportunity to really consider the university’s future direction in all of its complexities and nuances. SEMC is that rare opportunity.

A final thought. The university needs to become even more agile, responsive and integrated into our rapidly transforming planet. Yet we must hold our moral purpose and our mission to heart. SEMC is a university-wide forum where this great challenge can be discussed freely by people who can make a difference.

Dr. Catherine Murray, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
SEMC forges a low stakes venue where high-risk ideas can be asked about where we want SFU to be, how to get there, and why received wisdom about what students need should be challenged.

It bridges institutional partners, professional backgrounds and brings evidence-based decision-making alive. For FASS, the opportunity to share experiences about design of retention or other initiatives in SEMC is invaluable. SEMC's planning mission evolves and is directly relevant to core accountability instruments like the Student Satisfaction Survey, priority setting for the Strategic Envelope of the Budget Review Committee, and
work of BoG and Senate on university planning. Part professional development, info resource, confessional and think tank, SEMC is a key support to faculty associate deans.

**Dr. David Paterson, Faculty of Education**

I have been one of the longest continuing committee members on SCEMP next to Jon Driver. Perhaps at the next meeting I will have served the longest. Will there be a cake?

Early SCEMP meetings were "horse trading" sessions where the Senate Enrolment Plan was proposed, discussed, modified and sent along to Senate. We had one or two meetings to accomplish this. Some of us felt that by the time the meetings rolled around, many elements of the plan had been fixed, decisions had been taken, and the administrative structure of the University continued to roll along. SCEMP looked into ways to discuss matters earlier in the sequence. Nobody wished to add additional SCEMP meetings through the year. Two new committees were formed - EMC (operational) and SEM-C (strategic). I have been a continuing member of the second committee and believe it has been a resounding success.

SEM-C is a place to discuss enrolment policy, make plans, and share good ideas from across campus. The participants of this working committee have built trust and gained knowledge necessary to enter into difficult discussions. I have watched the discussion improve over the years as members tend to be better informed and more willing to participate by offering ideas and experiences. Our last SEM-C meeting over a full day made time for each member to stand and present on a common topic. Following a meeting like this one feels a greater sense of community and institutional identity. Enrolment matters raised in faculties and departments can be understood in the context of the wider university priorities and plans. For our faculty, this has been a very good thing. Education is not targeted for growth and not expected to shrink. From within these parameters we can make our plans. The narrative only makes sense when the wider narrative is available.

I believe EMC has experienced a similar pattern, educating members and refining the wider operational narrative.

Back to SCEMP - The members attending this meeting are better informed and much more involved as a result of these meetings through the year. Gone is the push and pull of "priorities of the house" versus "priorities of the faculties." To the extent that tensions emerge, they have been well discussed and much better informed. We have removed the heat from a single meeting.
SEM-C is an excellent committee that has come of age in a very positive way. We developed the terms of reference and have experienced benefits well beyond the problems we set out to solve. I believe we have more work to do and have proposed to the SEM-C chairs (Gord and Tim) the idea of developing three completely different enrolment scenarios for 2020 - laying them out in a package and then having this group grapple with the strengths and challenges of each direction. This would be a risky exercise. We are not quite there yet and must not be seen to compete with ongoing discussions of the Dean's group and SFU Exec. Nonetheless, I believe that SEM-C is unique in bringing forward members with a powerful combination of technical knowledge and strategic sensibility. Opening up a big discussion with these people has tremendous potential as yet untapped.

We are entering an exciting time for Strategic Enrolment Management at SFU. I believe we have developed some promising structures fostering a community across all faculties of individuals who believe SEM is important, who take these discussions seriously, and who hold the best interest of SFU at the centre of our work together.

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**Dr. Andrew Gemino, Associate Dean, Beedie School of Business**

The Strategic Enrolment Management Council (SEMC) is a forum that enables central administrators, students services and faculty representatives to dialog about how we admit, register, retain and graduate our students. The annual retreat has allowed me to meet people outside of the Business faculty and expanded my understanding of larger perspective in enrolment management and how the Business School impacts other faculties (and vice versa) at SFU. Our discussions have had impact on how we recruit, how we advise students, how we offer course sections, how we budget and how we design curriculum. More importantly, the SEMC has created a community of people who are dedicated to improving our enrolment management and has been the driving force to bringing more timely and relevant data to the people making decisions about enrolment management.

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**Dr. Nancy Johnston, Executive Director, Student Affairs, Student Services**

Many institutions have implemented SEM through the creation of VP level SEM portfolio so as to "top down" adoption of the approach. Though this was also the initial recommendation at SFU, I think the institution very wisely determined that SFU take a collective approach to achieving the culture change we sought. Because SEM is a major responsibility of so many -- Faculties, Programs, IRP, Student Services to name a few -- creating a mechanism (SEMC Council) to share important data, environmental factors, potential opportunities and risks, and pragmatic realities around enrolment management, and vesting that within the SEM stakeholder community, was critical. Presidential and
VP support was clearly also provided and by having SEMC as a committee of SCEMP, so too was the institutional line authority for its work. While the changes in how we conduct the business of enrolment are clearly key outcomes of SEMC, perhaps more importantly, so too are the strengthened and developing relationships between and amongst the members of the SEMC community. While still enjoying a healthy amount of debate with members vigorously representing their areas and needs, this group of people, I believe, has also come to appreciate the larger institutional needs and constraints and when needed has come together in support of those larger goals. It is a committee where many members wear two hats - ensuring SEMC and SCEMP are apprised of their local levels challenges and opportunities while placing those same challenges and opportunities within the broader institutional context back at the local level. It has been very rewarding to see enrolment culture shift at SFU to one of shared responsibility and accountability, from the bottom up, in a relatively short period of time. Kudos to all that have been part of that shift.

Dr. Zareen Naqvi, Director, Institutional Research and Planning (IRP)
In the narrowest sense, for me the SEMC is a forum to come to agreement on the annual Enrollment Plan targets and the new student intake targets. But the discussions that take place in the process of generating these targets is far from narrow. The SEMC forum allows us to talk about a range of issues related to enrollment management such as domestic and international enrollment trends, to what is happening in the high schools and in competing post-secondary institutions, to the recruitment and admission issues faced now and expected in the future, to strategies and initiatives that the faculties are taking to improve student retention at SFU. The information sharing and deliberations helps us in our work at IRP in a significant way. The SEMC meetings and the annual retreat is also a good place to share our work on institutional research and get excellent feedback.