Student Services 5 Year Plan
2013-2018
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Student Services 5 Year Plan (2013-2018)

1. Executive Summary

Student Services’ on-going strategy is to maintain and strengthen commitments to the overall student experience at SFU with a focus on enrolment management (student recruitment and retention), student engagement and the on-going provision of essential student services. Without new base budget funds, we cannot plan for growth to meet the growing demand on our services. We must continue to focus on core programs and look for efficiency in our business processes to maintain our service level.

We continue to employ technology to increase service effectiveness and efficiency and will continue to do so. We also plan to improve our business process to better support the University’s strategy of recruitment and retention.

We have recently achieved full active member status with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and will continue to establish policies and procedures to meet NCAA compliance regulations, focus on fund raising for athletic scholarships, and work towards improving SFU facilities to serve athletics and recreation.

This plan articulates three main goals:

1. To equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world
2. To strengthen and grow partnerships with internal and external communities
3. To optimize admin policy, practices, procedures, and infrastructure in support of students, research, and community engagement

2. Unit’s Core Activities

Student Services has three major divisions: Athletics and Recreation, Enrolment Services, and Student Affairs. Some of the major units within the portfolio include Health and Counseling Services, the Office of the Registrar, Residence and Housing, International Services For Students, Centre for Students with Disabilities, Indigenous Student Centre and Work Integrated Learning. A high level organizational chart can be found in Appendix I.

The mission of Student Services is to foster transformative student experiences by collaboratively anticipating, facilitating, and providing services, programs and environments for student learning and success.

Student Services’ on-going strategy is to maintain and strengthen commitments to the overall student experience at SFU with a focus on enrolment management (student recruitment and retention), student engagement, and the on-going provision of essential student services.
3. Planning Assumptions

Assumptions used in developing this plan.
- No provincial grant increase
- No FTE growth
- Salary increases (steps) will be funded.
- Some international student revenue will be added to SS base budget:
- To mirror the budgeting process for Faculties where base was added in the activity based budget model (no such base was added in Student Services or Grad Studies).
- A portion of International tuition increases will flow to both SS operations and SBA to benefit these students.
- Where possible, we will generate revenue through new sponsorship activity.
- Undergraduate international student enrollment will be approximately 20 percent of domestic enrollments. Accordingly this presumes political, economic, or natural events that would disrupt yields from established pathways to SFU.
- While we assume steady state on undergraduate domestic enrollment the composition of the student body will shift based on immigration statistics as outlined by Statistics Canada. Stated another way, our student body will reflect the growth in domestic students who are new to Canada, and first generation Canadian. This will have direct impact on the use and nature of student support issues.
- The growth of Aboriginal K-12 numbers.
- Any funding cuts will necessitate corresponding cuts in core programs and/or services (while it is clear the Province has stated that cuts to the sector can’t result in cuts to service, any other cuts would have to result in cuts to programs and services).

4. Strategic Influences

The following are specific to Student Services in addition to the environment in which the University operates.

4.1. Opportunities:
4.1.1. Grow strategic recruitment partnerships with key partners building on success with Douglas College and Fraser International College. These include other Colleges, IB Schools, High Schools, School Districts, and special interest groups (e.g., First Nations Band).
4.1.2. For SFU to be the institution of choice for new Canadians.
4.1.3. SFSS referendum for Build SFU is an opportunity to increase student space and improve student engagement.
4.1.4. Efforts in collaboration with the SFSS
4.1.5. Recovered space from MBC and Rotunda

4.2. Threats:
4.2.1. Decreasing demographics of BC 12 system.
4.2.2. BC’s International Education Strategy (May 2012) focuses on student recruitment and is silent on issues of student retention. It is unclear how PSE’s will be assessed in meeting this plan and SFU could be either advantaged or disadvantaged based on our already comparably high level of international enrolment.
4.2.3. TransLink – Upass: This program is subject to repeated student referenda as well as political changes at the provincial and TransLink levels.

5. Self Assessment

The major strengths and weaknesses of the Department are as follows:
5.1. **Strengths:**

5.1.1. Staff who are committed to SFU’s vision and mission and have a strong affinity towards our students.

5.1.2. Strong existing partnerships with high schools, colleges and other PSE’s result in joint recruitment, collaborative initiatives, etc.

5.1.3. We have fostered positive relationships with Faculties with respect to student recruitment and retention.

5.1.4. We are innovative, we are improving services.

5.1.5. We are highly centralized with many student services shared across the University.

5.1.6. We have a strong Student Services team that have an ethos and culture of working cross-boundary with academic and administrative units.

5.1.7. Strong and growing commitment of assessment to inform operational, planning, and business improvement.

5.1.8. We have a strong reliance on key pathways to meet international student enrolment.

5.2. **Weaknesses:**

5.2.1. The base-budget for Student Services is not driven by activity, enrolment, or multi-campus demands.

5.2.2. Student Services has accountability for services at Vancouver and Surrey campuses often without line-authority or budget responsibility.

5.2.3. Our policies related to student conduct in which mental health plays a factor are insufficient to manage complex cases.

5.2.4. Workload related to mental health cases has increased substantially.

5.2.5. Our Scholarship Awards and Bursary funding has not been keeping pace with enrolment.

5.2.6. As an institution we do not speak about international enrolment in particularly nuanced ways.

5.2.7. Statements about diversifying our international student body are often erroneous. The issue is not the students’ ethnicity. We need to strengthen our focus on the pathway that brings them to SFU for SEM purposes.

5.2.8. Words like “international” are used in very different ways and often not to refer to students who are in Canada on a Student Visa.

5.2.9. SFU has not historically acknowledged the need to provide a core amount of transitional language and cultural support for students who have been schooled outside of Canada.

5.2.10. The goals for our Varsity teams are misaligned with current operational budget.

5.2.11. NCAA Transition was not thought out

5.2.12. Golf does not have base budget for golf.

5.2.13. Strong community expectation that we will support Men’s and Women’s Hockey, Rugby, Lacrosse, and Rowing.

5.2.14. The facility needs work.

6. **Efficiencies**

Currently, there are no operational efficiencies that we feel we have not exploited. We undertook a major reorganization in 2005-6. We amalgamated two major divisions of Student Services in 2010 (Student & Community Life and Learning and Retention became Student Affairs). Enrolment Services took on the work of the Senate responsibilities of the University Secretariat. We have added Student Central, centralized Criminal Record Checks, absorbed additional work for the new Upass, seconded numerous staff to IT projects, managed work loads related to increased accountability in strategic planning, financial reporting, NCAA membership, NWCCU accreditation, and workload associated with examining the privatization of Residence & Housing.
7. Unit Goals & Objectives

Student Services’ goals and objectives are drawn from the University’s Strategic Vision (Envision) which articulated three core themes:

Engaging Students:
Engaging Research:
Engaging Communities:

The plan focuses on the core themes of engaging students and engaging communities. In addition, this plan supports the goal of engaging research. The first goal of this plan is identical to the first goal of the VPA’s Five-Year Plan. The supporting objectives are specific to the work of Student Services units.

The goals and objectives in this plan link directly to both the University’s strategic vision and the three-year academic plan. The linkages among the plans is outlined in Appendix II.

Goal 1: To equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that prepare them for life in an ever-changing and challenging world

Objectives:

8. Enhance the quality of education and student satisfaction

8.1. Use assessment information to strengthen programs and services
Student Services has a long history of continuous change based on best practices, student feedback, and direct observation of student behavior. Despite our best efforts there is a myriad of survey information indicating there is room to improve. This will be a challenge given the diverse needs of students and limited financial growth (less than inflation). Accordingly it is a priority to use the existing information and build a framework and method to systematically collect benchmarking data from all units within Student Services. This information is critical to inform our decision-making and to inform the University Community of the valuable work that supports the Academic Mission of the University.

8.1.2. Enhance and grow service, learning, and gathering spaces
The environment in which programs and services occur is directly linked to students experiences. Welcoming spaces that are designed for the service, program or activity support outcomes. Primarily through the use of one-time funding we will prioritize space enhancement that is not simply cosmetic but rather fundamental to the activity taking place in the space. This includes, but is not limited to) renovations to service counter areas, waiting areas (e.g., on-line and physical queuing systems), spaces that support student engagement (e.g., relocation of the Indigenous Student Centre), and student spaces within our jurisdiction (e.g., Fitness Centre, Residence community gathering spaces, etc.).

8.1.3. Rationalize services within the multi-campus model
The development of SFU’s multi-campus system has taken place in an organic manner. In our practical ways we have worked collaboratively with colleagues at all locations to reactively provide programs and services. We recognize that we do not offer all programs and services at all locations. The budget model for each service at any given campus is idiosyncratic. Finally student feedback indicates differences in the student experience at various campus locations. As SFU embraces its middle age, it is imperative the we strategically plan for the provision of programs and services across the campus system based on agreed upon principles and priorities. The goal is not to make each campus identical but
rather to seek similar levels of student satisfaction. This objective needs the support of the 
Vice-Presidents, the Executive Directors of the Campuses, and the creative thinking of 
Student Service Directors.

9. Improve support for students

9.1.1. Improve access for under-represented communities
With regard to Aboriginal or Indigenous students the University has implanted the 
Aboriginal Admissions Policy. We need to monitor the efficacy of this policy along with the 
transition and services that contribute to student persistence. The connection of these 
students to programs and services within Student Services as well as in the Faculties remains 
of vital importance.

International students have been part of SFU’s enrolment plan for many years. However, we 
have not adequately planned for students at SFU who are not visa students; they include 
Permanent Residents and other new Canadians. While these are not classified as 
International Students at SFU, their identities and educational needs are similar in many 
ways to our visa students. These are bona fide members of our diverse (i.e., ethnic, 
religious, etc.) Greater Vancouver Area community and they bring their identities wit them 
to our campuses. Arguably they enrich our campus environment but many require similar 
programs and services as their International Student identified peers.

With respect to International Students (i.e., visa) our recruitment plans need to increase the 
pathways to SFU and strengthen the geographic diversity of the students we bring to our 
campuses. To support these efforts we will need to plan for more targeted recruitment and 
scholarships and examine creative ways to market SFU. In addition, we will focus on 
collaborative efforts with academic units and the Vice-President External Relations portfolio 
to assure that SFU has the kinds of programs that not only meet our Academic Plan but are 
also attractive to potential students.

9.1.2. Plan and support services for special interest groups as identified by SEMC Planning
While many students have similar programs and services needs, the distinct nature of 
particular students (e.g., international, new immigrants, FN, students with complex mental 
health profiles, mature, students with disabilities) affects either their ability to access 
programs and services or some customization (e.g., a unique offering, targeted outreach, or 
community education) needs to take place to meet the students’ needs. Units within 
student services have a common need to learn about specific populations and identify 
specific services to meet identified needs.

With respect to working with targeted and under-represented populations, Student Services 
will continue to support professional development of staff to support a campus environment 
that will be perceived as friendly and supportive to students. These activities include cross-
cultural communication (indigenous, international, gender Create a better campus 
environment through cross cultural education, and work with campus groups on inclusivity 
based education (e.g., gender, sexual identity, ability, etc.)

10. Continue to partner with academic units & Student Societies to coordinate, 
strengthen, and (where possible) grow programs and initiatives
10.1. Collaborate with Faculties to provide programs and services. We work under delegated 
authority for the purposes of Admissions and collaboratively for most other services. A 
great deal of effort has been placed on creating Faculty specific service plans and this is a 
practice that will continue during the years to come. Within our planning and service
delivery we aspire to expand experiential learning, co-curricular record, and programs that support both the academic mission of the University as well as those that may enhance student engagement.

10.2. Seek input and advice to improve programs and services.
Student Services will strike advisory committees of faculty and students to regularly solicit input on the programs and services offered. The goal of the committees will be formative in nature focusing on continual improvement.

11. To provide the best level of athletic competition in North America to student athletes.
While our early admission to the NCAA is a testament to the hard work of many staff and athlete, no detailed planning occurred in advance of the membership process. In order to maintain our athletic programs much work remains on our facilities, base-budget allocations, scholarship development, gender parity, and operational planning to meet NCAA compliance requirements.

Goal 2: To strengthen and grow partnerships with internal and external communities

Objectives

12. Increase admission pathways to SFU by adding additional BC Colleges to Dual Admission program.

13. Grow experiential learning programs (Coop, Volunteerism, Service-Learning, etc.)
As outlined in 1.2.3 above, experiential learning is a priority area for SFU but not only as an activity to equip students with knowledge and skills but also as a strategy to engage with internal and external communities. As part of this goal, we will examine SFU’s own student support programs that use students to deliver service (e.g., Peer Education, Residence Life, etc.) to recognize their experiential learning outcomes.

14. Expand the co-curricular record program in partnership with Faculties.
Note: This goal is primarily in support of goal 1 (1.2.3) but is noted as its own activity to highlight the alignment of this plan with the VPA plan and assist with yearly reporting of activities.

Goal 3: To optimize admin policy, practices, procedures, and infrastructure in support of students, research, and community engagement

Objectives

15. Improve programs and services
15.1. Leverage technology to improve services
We had great success with recent IT projects to enhance programs and services (e.g., Call Centre, CQ Content Management System) and we will continue to work towards the SIMS upgrade, full implementation of the Co-curricular Record, and work towards an SFU Mobile App primarily intended to meet students’ needs.
16. **Update policies and procedures to reflect current challenges**

16.1. **Refresh out policy framework (S10.01, & GP25)**

The University Act of BC did not anticipate the complex environment in which we now live where students have complex mental health needs, social media both enhances and challenges communication, and students and their parents are increasingly litigious. Accordingly we will work towards enhancing our Policies that are reactive to situations and create new Policies that assist in the proactive management of student wellbeing and reduce student misconduct.

16.2. **Create a new policy(s) on voluntary and involuntary withdrawal based on physical and mental health.**

At this juncture we need to draft a policy on voluntary and involuntary withdrawal for students with mental health issues. This may necessitate working with other Universities in the Province to lobby Government for the ability to act under the University Act of BC.

16.3. **Realign our procedures for managing student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct**

The number of cases brought forward and investigated under our Policy on Academic Integrity and Good Behavior has grown significantly in the past five years. Accordingly we need to continue to build on successes in partnering with Faculties, continue to strengthen our procedures relating to the Student Threat Assessment Team, and examine staffing to manage existing and emerging student cases.

17. **Contribute to and leverage best-practices in the fields of Student Affairs, Enrolment Services, Strategic Enrolment Management and other professional areas represented within the units within the portfolio.**

Student Services at SFU is fortunate to have among its leadership and staff some of the leading practitioners in the field. When compared to other post-secondary institutions in Canada, our staff is more highly educated, and contribute to research and professional practice in the field. Recognizing that the portfolio has a primary mission to deliver programs and services, we will encourage activity that enhances our work through collaborative research with each other, colleagues at other post-secondary institutions, as well as with academics who study within the areas of Higher Education.

18. **Possible Long Term Growth Scenarios**

What would be the priorities for growth under the following circumstances:

- Growth allowed in professional masters programs, with no tuition cap and no per FTE base grant from the province.
- Expansion of the Surrey campus with funded graduate and undergraduate FTEs (this is only a possibility if the Provincial government provides funding per FTE as well as for capital expansion).

Due to the high degree of uncertainty with regard to our funding situation you are not asked to prepare a detailed financial plan but rather reflect your new initiatives/growth plans discussed in Section 7 and 8 above, in financial terms using the attached Excel spreadsheet. Revenue and Expenses need to be considered.

19. **Communication**

The broad goals of this plan were presented to Student Services at a “town hall” meeting held in March 2012. Each year we will continue to hold similar events to outline broad goals for the portfolio. The plan is reviewed by the leadership team and all members of the staff are invited to
comment. The final plan is provided to unit Directors to inform their unit plan development that provide operational detail to achieve the goals outlined in this overarching strategic plan.

20. **Supporting Financial Data for New/Growth initiatives**

While some incremental growth may be anticipated any new initiatives would be based on existing revenue streams or based on cost recovery.

**APPENDIX 1 - Associate Vice-President, Students Portfolio**
APPENDIX 2 – Linkages among University Plans