

Interactive Arts and Technology Student Union

Room 245, Simon Fraser University Surrey
2400 Central City
Surrey BC V3T 2W1
604-268-7542



The Board of Directors
Simon Fraser Student Society
Maggie Bentson Centre Room 2250
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

October 14, 2005

Dear members of the Board,

For some time now, members of the Executive of the Interactive Arts and Technology Student Union (IATSU) have devoted some time to considering their role within the student movement. Ever since the Technical University of British Columbia (TechBC) was dissolved and its student society, the TechBC Learner Association, became defunct, students have considered various ways to improve the quality of student services and representation at SFU Surrey. To that end, IATSU has established the Project Infinity Campaign. This campaign is directed towards the SFSS (Simon Fraser Student Society), and towards the major DFU (Dedicated Fee Unit) organizations at SFU: the Peak Publications Society, the Simon Fraser Campus Radio Society, and the Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group.

The purpose of this document is to outline IATSU's proposal to improve the quality of student representation and services at SFU Surrey, both for our members and for those students on our campus who are not Interactive Arts and Technology students. We have considered several alternative ways of achieving our goals, including the maintenance of the *status quo* (an option that we have rejected). If the proposals contained herein are not compatible with the purposes of the SFSS, we are prepared to examine, in consultation with the Student Society, alternative means of fulfilling our goals.

I. The Problem

The current SFSS structures in place do not fairly and equitably serve SFU Surrey students. This problem will only be enlarged as SFU Surrey expands.

A. Representation

IATSU only represents students in the Interactive Arts and Technology program. However, SFU Surrey is expanding; currently, there are students in Computing Science, Business Administration, Education, Science, and Arts and Social Sciences. These students are not being represented by their various departmental student unions (e.g. Business Administration Student Society).

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Furthermore, there are issues of concern to SFU Surrey students *as a whole* (such as concerning student services and events). There is no SFU Surrey-wide body that can address these concerns.

The provincial government intends to add 1,850 new seats at SFU Surrey by 2010. Most of these students will not be IATSU students, and they will not be adequately represented. The SFU Senate has committed that “all Faculties should establish a presence at Surrey.”

B. Autonomy

The current SFSS regulations restrict IATSU in many ways. In September 2006, when we move in to the Central City complex, any student union space that we might have will be controlled by the SFSS, and any staff that may be hired will also be controlled by the SFSS. Our level of funding is also controlled by the SFSS. Most political, financial, service, and other decisions are currently controlled at SFU Burnaby.

Many satellite campuses at other universities and colleges in Canada have autonomous student unions or campus councils, including the following:

- Vancouver Community College: City Centre Students' Union and King Edward Students' Union were, until recently, separate student societies.
- The University of British Columbia has two students' unions: one for the Point Gray campus and one for the Okanagan campus.
- The Kwantlen University College Student Association has separate “campus councils” for its various campuses. The same is true at North Island College.
- Many universities have separate graduate student associations. At SFU, graduate students are represented in a Graduate Issues Committee, which has its own budget (much larger than IATSU) and dedicated staff support.
- The Scarborough Campus Students' Union is an autonomous union representing students at the University of Toronto's Scarborough Campus.

C. Funding Inequities

1. Money-losing SFSS operations

The SFSS Food and Beverage operations and Quad Books are both losing significant amounts of money. Since these operations (especially the Pub) provide few services at SFU Surrey, we are essentially

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subsidizing the food, beverages, and school supplies used by SFU Burnaby students.

2. SFSS services providing little benefit for SFU Surrey students

The SFSS provides a number of services that have no significant presence at SFU Surrey, such as the following:

- Food and Beverage Services, including Catering Services
- Retail Services (excluding Book Buyback)
- Women's Centre
- OmbudsOffice
- Legal Clinic
- Cinema SFSS
- Advocacy Committee-funded events
- Food Bank

The SFSS does provide funding for clubs and Departmental Student Unions (like IATSU) located at SFU Surrey, though the physical distance between SFU Surrey and SFU Burnaby has created some administrative problems.

The 'Events' budget was recently amended so that some money must be spent on SFU Surrey students; in the past, this money was entirely spent at Harbour Centre and Burnaby.

Andrew Drinkwater, the former President of IATSU, noted in his Exit Report that "Quad Books has had the biggest and most noticeable impact on the Surrey campus of all the SFSS services," citing in particular Book Buyback events.

3. Dedicated Fee Unit organizations are unaccountable to SFU Surrey students

Through referenda, SFU students have decided to charge a dedicated fee towards the following organizations and purposes:

- *The Peak*
- CJSF Radio
- Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG)
- Canadian Federation of Students
- World University Service of Canada
- Accessibility Fund
- U-Pass

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Many of these referenda were passed before SFU Surrey was created. Many of these organizations do not provide significant levels of services to SFU Surrey students. Furthermore, many of these organizations have an undemocratic decision-making structure. However, the only way to diminish funding to these organizations is through an SFU-wide referendum. Since these organizations have a presence at SFU Burnaby, it is unlikely that the votes of SFU Surrey students would be significant.

For example, SFPIRG is an organization devoted to advancing environmental and social justice causes. They have four staff and an office located at SFU Burnaby. Aside from one or two booths at Clubs Days, SFPIRG has provided no events, resources, or services for SFU Surrey students, nor have they advertised themselves at Surrey through posters or other means. Furthermore, although the Bylaws of SFPIRG provided for a theoretically democratic institution, in practice there are no regular elections, and the Board of Directors is consistently filled by acclamation. This does not lend itself to accountability to SFU Surrey students, since it is harder for SFU Surrey students to travel to the Burnaby Campus to participate in an Annual General Meeting than it is for them to simply vote at the Surrey Campus.

II. Our Goals

A. SFU Surrey campus-wide representation

SFU Surrey students must be able to express their concerns and interests as a campus.

B. Autonomy

Decision-making on the spending of SFU Surrey students' student society fees should be, to a significant extent, in the hands of SFU Surrey students. SFU Surrey students should have the ability to determine their own future.

C. Funding Equity

SFU Surrey students should receive a level of services and representation similar to that received by SFU Burnaby students.

III. Historical Context

The TechBC Learner Association (LA) was formed in 1999. Originally funded through a grant from the TechBC administration, the TechBC LA soon matured and expanded its operations and services. The TechBC LA co-produced a learner's handbook; chartered and funded various clubs; sponsored numerous

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social activities; and frequently approached the TechBC administration with concerns regarding student services and academic affairs.

When it became apparent that the recently-elected BC Liberal government was thinking of shutting down TechBC, the Learner Association became a political organization, and devoted its efforts to saving TechBC from destruction. The Association, through its "Name One Good Thing" campaign, obtained widespread sympathetic media coverage and the formal support of Surrey City Council and of Surrey-Newton MLA Tony Bhullar. Unfortunately, these efforts were in vain: the provincial government announced on February 7, 2002 that TechBC would be transferred to SFU.

On September 4, 2002, members of the now-defunct Learner Association gathered together to decide the fate of student representation at Surrey. Three options were considered: forming an independent student society at Surrey; amending the SFSS bylaws for the purpose of creating a Campus Council to represent SFU Surrey students; and forming a Departmental Student Union under the SFSS. The members voted unanimously to seek independent student society status. However, the student leadership at the time did further research into the matter, and concluded that it would be infeasible to pursue any option other than Departmental Student Union status¹. Thus, at a second meeting held on September 19, 2002, the membership voted to reverse their previous decision, and seek Departmental Student Union status. This was achieved on November 13, 2002.

In the first year of SFU Surrey's existence, the SFSS made few efforts to expand their presence at the Surrey campus. This was partly due to the internal conflicts over the role of the Canadian Federation of Students that plagued the organization at the time, and partly due to the fact that the Applied Sciences representative of the day (who was not actually taking an Applied Sciences major) had no concern for 'administrative details', preferring to spend her energies on external political matters. However, since then, the SFSS presence at Surrey has expanded:

- The current Applied Sciences representative, Josephine Wong, has frequently come to the Surrey campus, and has attended several IATSU meetings.

¹ The recent success of the Okanagan University College Student Association-Kelowna (now the University of British Columbia Students' Union) in securing, through the support of the Canadian Federation of Students, assurances from the provincial government that a "one university, two student societies" model is feasible suggests that the SFU Surrey student leadership was mistaken in its conclusions.

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- The SFSS has been diligent in providing handbooks and Studentsaver cards to SFU Surrey students during Week of Welcome events in September of each year.
- Quad Books maintains a temporary presence at Surrey during the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters.
- The SFSS now has a 7.5¢ photocopier on campus.

IV. Our Proposals

IATSU believes that the most feasible means to achieve our goals within the framework of the SFSS is through the creation of a Constituency Group. Constituency Groups have representation on Forum; have the ability to govern their own affairs in an autonomous manner; and receive regular funding from the SFSS.

However, we do not believe that the default funding levels currently allocated to constituency groups (\$300 a semester) would be sufficient for our needs, especially when one examines the funding levels granted to campus councils at other universities and colleges in Canada. Rather, we are seeking funding on a level similar to that granted to graduate students at SFU. (We are not seeking for the *same* amount of money that graduate students are receiving, since there are more graduate students at SFU than there are SFU Surrey students. Rather, we are seeking funding that is proportionate on a per FTE [Full Time Equivalent] basis.)

Furthermore, we believe that it would be appropriate for the SFSS to create a staff position on the Surrey campus for the purpose of providing services to Surrey students. We are aware that the SFSS is currently negotiating with SFU for an SFSS office at Surrey. It would be unfortunate if your satellite campus office at Surrey would remain vacant most of the time, as is currently the case at Harbour Centre.

Lastly, we believe that Surrey students should be able to participate in SFSS General Meetings on the same basis as students from SFU Burnaby. To that end, we believe that General Meetings should be co-located at all SFU satellite campuses, just as CUPE 3338 General Meetings are regularly co-located at SFU's Burnaby, Harbour Centre, and Kamloops campuses.

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Thus, the Interactive Arts and Technology Student Union requests that you pass the following motions:

Motion 1

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors support, in principle, the creation of a constituency group for the purposes of representing the unique concerns of SFU Surrey students and promoting student community at SFU Surrey

Motion 2

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors support, in principle and subject to budgetary constraints, the allocation of a level of funding to the SFU Surrey constituency group that is proportionate, on a per FTE basis, to that which is granted to the Graduate Issues Committee

Motion 3

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors support, in principle and subject to budgetary constraints, the provision of staff support at SFU Surrey equal or greater than 0.5 FTE starting in September 2006

Motion 4

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors support, in principle, the co-location of SFSS General Meetings at satellite campuses, including SFU Surrey

We look forward to working together with the SFSS to further our goals of providing meaningful student representation and equitable services to SFU Surrey students.

Respectfully submitted,

Manuel Pineault
President, IATSU

Titus Gregory
Chair, Project Infinity Working Group