2019-20
STUDENT EXPERIENCE INITIATIVE AT SFU

CANADA’S ENGAGED UNIVERSITY
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At the heart of all that makes Simon Fraser University vibrant is the student experience. This is why we have made it our goal to improve how we engage with students. We want to offer a wider range of spaces and opportunities, with a special focus on the needs of commuter students. For these students to feel comfortable staying on campus between classes, and to engage with their peers and communities, we must create a campus environment that feels like a home away from home—a campus to call their own.

With our Student Experience Initiative, staff and faculty from all three of our campuses are working hard to ensure students do find a home at SFU—one that piques their interests and highlights their passions.

Over the years, a variety of departments have used direct feedback from the student body to advance student-centric initiatives. These include new projects for creating a “Healthier Campus Community” and for improving “Supervision for the 21st Century.” All of this is possible when a unified SFU community doesn’t hesitate to ask the hard questions—not just of others, but of ourselves as well.

We look forward to defining the meaning behind “engaging the world” and leading by example with initiatives and collaborative efforts that will make the new student experience the best to date.

Best,

Dr. Jonathan Driver
Vice President Academic and Provost pro tem
The Student Experience Initiative (SEI) was launched in 2016 as one of Simon Fraser University’s Priority Initiatives under the leadership of President Andrew Petter. As a three-campus commuter university, SFU is continuously presented with unique opportunities, as well as unique challenges for fostering engagement among our diverse student body.

SFU is a great place to learn and work. Despite that, student survey data and feedback reveal there is room to improve the student experience. So, in 2016, we established Strategic Priority funding for enhancing the student experience. We wanted to make a meaningful difference for our students and provide a positive, healthy and exciting environment in which to learn and thrive. As a result, in the first year of the SEI, the leadership team conducted a series of 70 consultations with units across SFU to determine what the key action areas for the SEI needed to be. In addition, they reviewed a series of university reports as source material to determine what students are telling us about their experience at SFU. These reports included the Undergraduate Student Survey (UGSS 2014, UGSS 2015) and the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC 2014, CUSC 2015, CUSC 2016). Consequently, eight key action areas were developed.

The purpose of the SEI is to enhance the SFU student experience by developing strategic and sustainable student experience ideas. The initiative’s process has four phases and three operational levels:

**PHASE 1**
Conceptual Definition and Framework—information gathering and analysis to inform development of a framework of key areas for action.

**PHASE 2**
Idea Generation and Direction Setting—strike working groups to lead in generating ideas or student experience ideas by developing strategic and sustainable student experience ideas. The initiative’s process has four phases and three operational levels:

**PHASE 3**
Implementation—support projects with high potential for impact and sustainability; working groups to lead in generating ideas or student experience ideas.

**PHASE 4**
Impact Assessment and Fine Tuning—evaluate overall impact of SEI and individual projects as they conclude, explore possibilities and make recommendations for sustainability, post-SEI support.

The SEI consists of three operational levels:

**INITIATIVE LEVEL**
The initiative as a whole, the overall "umbrella" framework of eight key action areas to enhance student experience.

**WORKING GROUP LEVEL**
Eight working groups to guide the working groups to guide project/activity level.

**PROJECT/ACTIVITY LEVEL**
Each working group selects best ideas for implementing as projects or other activities, and oversees implementation.

Just having more discourse around well-being on campus makes me feel more confident both in asking for what I need for my own well-being and forefronting that with students.

Anonymous

The Student Experience Initiative is now in its final year and is currently co-chaired by Dr. Jonathan Driver, vice-president academic and provost, and Rummana Khan Hemani, vice-provost, students and international proctor, and registrar, directed by Laya Bahbahani and supported by Samer Rihani, project coordinator, VPSI Office; research assistants Fiona Li and Shina Kaur; and interns Luis Sanchez and Chris Lim.

The group is tasked with closing out the initiative by Summer 2021, after which they will conduct an assessment of the SEI’s impact and determine an assessment plan to enhance student experience in each key action area on an ongoing basis.

**INTRODUCTION**
"Just having more discourse around well-being on campus makes me feel more confident both in asking for what I need for my own well-being and forefronting that with students.”

Anonymous
### BUILDING COMMUNITY & A SENSE OF BELONGING

**MEMBERSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annette Santos</td>
<td>Building Community and a Sense of Belonging co-chair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and director, Student Engagement and Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lara Campbell</td>
<td>Building Community and a Sense of Belonging co-chair and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>chair, Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, Faculty of Arts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clara Schirrmeister</td>
<td>program assistant, Student Engagement and Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia Wright</td>
<td>coordinator, Student Learning Commons-Surrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julie Glazier</td>
<td>case manager, Sexual Violence Support &amp; Prevention Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcia Guno</td>
<td>director, Indigenous Student Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark McLaughlin</td>
<td>chief commercial services officer, Ancillary Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Micaela Roughton</td>
<td>associate director, Community &amp; Belonging,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student Engagement and Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitchell Stoddard</td>
<td>director, Centre for Accessible Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Precious Ile</td>
<td>student development educator, Student Engagement and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Retention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor Thomas</td>
<td>director, Interfaith Centre</td>
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ABOUT THE PROJECT

SFU is built on the traditional and unceded Coast Salish territories. Our programming strives to embody respect for the diverse communities in which we live, learn, work and play. Building Community and a Sense of Belonging (BCSB) envisions a welcoming, inclusive and supportive campus community where all SFU members feel they belong and can connect and develop supportive and meaningful relationships. The working group works closely with students and campus partners to implement solutions for impact and sustainability.

“This (fire pit) is the perfect stop after my classes.”
SUCCESSES

→ Increased commitment from SFU Surrey to have the games lounge scheduled regularly, three days a week for Spring 2020.

→ Enhanced collaboration with Facilities Services to streamline fire pit processes.

→ The hiring of student SMOREducators to facilitate peer-to-peer conversations.

→ The hiring of six student peer idea activators who reached 2,170+ participants through cross-campus student consultations from Fall 2018 until Fall 2019.

→ Four community-based murals installed, undertaking planning to install the Student Union Building mural and create a Terry Fox-themed mural for Fall 2020.

→ Increased resources and staffing for collaborative programming over the 2019 holiday closure.

CHALLENGES

→ Some delays in implementing projects due to coordination across multiple units. These were addressed through collaboration and communication. Similarly, some challenges have been presented because of the overlap with other SEI themes.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Planning large-scale initiatives such as Spring Social, First Friday Carnival/BBQ and the upcoming Night Market, present unique opportunities for our entire SFU community to come together. Similarly, the holiday closure programming was built around student feedback around isolation during holiday closures. Programming for students who remain on campus is crucial to building community at SFU. The strong student feedback across BCSB holiday programs demonstrates a need for increasing holiday-closure programming in the future. Additionally, ongoing programming such as the games lounge, fire pits and movie nights have helped revitalize and activate communal spaces on our campuses where students now expect consistent programming. Overall, the BCSB initiatives contribute significantly to increasing a sense of pride, connection and engagement for students at SFU.

ROADMAP

→ Continue to support ongoing programming such as Movie Night, games lounges and fire pits in Spring 2020.

→ Release a report sharing the results of the Fall 2019 consultations with students and the wider community about how we envision building community and a sense of belonging at SFU.

→ New projects are also being proposed which include Caring Classrooms Pilot for large first-year classes, an intercultural Night Market and the possibility of introducing a Food Sustainability Project, in consultation with key stakeholders at SFU.

→ Summer and Fall 2020 activities will include planning for the Fall 2019 Terry Fox Mural Mosaic as well as ongoing programming and finally, a Burnaby and Surrey Spring Social and close-out and assessment in Spring 2021.

SUSTAINMENT

→ Strategies for sustainment are embedded in the programming design and implementation, through the strong partnerships that have been established and the leveraging of existing resources.

→ The anticipation is that the Fall Welcome Day Carnival and the First Friday event will shift to be part of future transition programming and will not be funded from BCSB in future years.

→ Collaboration of the Night Market with the Tribute: Student Volunteer Appreciation Festival also allows for increased likelihood of sustainment in coming years.

→ The BCSB working group also plans on putting forward a series of policy recommendations for how best to incorporate community-building and student-centred spaces into all future building or renovation projects on all campuses to ensure these initiatives are sustained in the long term.
# Building Community & A Sense of Belonging

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>2019 Attendance</th>
<th>2019 Details</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spring Social</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,000+</strong></td>
<td>Students &amp; Community Members</td>
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<td><strong>Surrey Games Lounge</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,000+</strong></td>
<td>Attendees in 2019</td>
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<td><strong>Fire Pits</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>Custom fire pits featuring Indigenous artwork</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>32,000+</strong></td>
<td>Participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>64,000+</strong></td>
<td>Marshmallows</td>
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<td>Christmas Eve Dinner</td>
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<td><strong>First Friday Carnival &amp; BBQ</strong></td>
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<td><strong>REPORT-BACK VIDEO CAMPAIGN</strong></td>
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<td>Videos featuring student stories</td>
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<td><strong>MOVIE NIGHTS</strong></td>
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<td>Student Contacts</td>
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<td><strong>WELCOME DAY CARNIVAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>MURAL MOSAIC PROJECT</strong></td>
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<td>Student Contributors</td>
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<td>Murals (4 installed)</td>
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IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

MEMBERSHIP

Kristin Linklater  co-chair and executive director, Communications and Marketing
Leanne Dalton  co-chair and senior director, student success and strategic support, Student Services
Denise Leech  senior director, digital engagement, Communications and Marketing
Ailsa Brown  project director, brand expression, Communications and Marketing
ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Improving Communication with Students key action area under SEI is working to improve how, across SFU, we help students make sense of everything they need to know.

Working with communication professionals from Student Services, administration and faculties, the group started with an extensive period of research on communication challenges. A strategy was created and implementation began.
SUCCESSES

→ The Improving Communication with Students working group started by fleshing out their understanding of students and their perceptions of their communication environment.

→ They added embedded benchmarking in the Institutional Research and Planning’s Undergraduate Student Survey, collected survey data from thousands of undergraduate and graduate students, conducted one-hour, deep-dive interviews with students, completed an eight-month informal study of 100 students to see what communication they receive and how they understand it.

→ They reached out across the organization to collect communication samples and analyzed the performance of content across key channels in all faculties to determine what was working and what was not.

CHALLENGES

→ The Improving Communication with Students working group found that many of our students were receiving up to 1,000 emails per month from the many diverse areas of SFU. Imagine how confusing and stressful that would be for students.

→ Regarding social media, students felt we have too many channels and that they are not working.

→ Students do not differentiate between different departments or programs so the number of channels is confusing.

→ The needs of students were not matching the hyper-segmented communication environment we were presenting. Some of the student feedback indicated that they felt that SFU cared about them and was probably sending them everything they needed to be successful, but was making it hard to find that information.

→ Students told the working group that they were met with inconsistent visual branding, but that where they did see it, it contributed to their sense of school pride.

→ The way SFU communicates with students across the institution is in the hands of hundreds of individuals who are only trying to do their jobs well and reach students.
IMPART ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Imagine you are a new student at SFU. Every group and department has a program or service to offer you. That is great—you want to know everything about being a student at SFU! But to find out what will work best for you, you have to wade through thousands of webpages, hundreds of social media channels and endless posters, screens, postcards and fliers. You might want to learn about co-op at some point, or you might want to attend that event one day or explore a new major... but if everyone is trying to get your attention at the same time, and only a small percentage of the information is applicable to you, where do you even start?

Ultimately, what students are looking for from SFU is a two-way conversation. They want an answer when they ask a question in response to a mass email. They want more face-to-face communication than we might think. More than anything, students want a personalized, human, casual, direct experience and want to be able to customize what information they receive, when and where.

ROADMAP

→ To date, the project has involved writing integrated content strategy, checking in with communicators across SFU to validate direction, developing a digital playbook of tactical best practices as a guide for frontline staff, based on the strategy, imagining a handy reference guide identifying which tools to use when and how to best communicate with students and piloting the playbook in a couple of faculties to be sure that the project is on the right track.

→ The year ahead will involve iterating the process completed thus far and learning from the pilot, expand the solution by working with all faculties and units to be sure the playbook supports them in their day-to-day communication with students.

SUSTAINMENT

→ Ultimately, the Improving Communication with Students project will become embedded with the people who do this work every day, who will continue to lead the change and alter not just how SFU communicates with students but the kind of experience our students have with SFU.

→ Shifting our communication approach also paves the way for introducing other foundational changes to support student success, such as implementing a constituent relationship management-enabled student support and communication platform, and establishing a shared community of practice for student success.
# DESTINATION SFU/HOME AWAY FROM HOME

## MEMBERSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laurie Anderson</td>
<td>co-chair, executive director, Vancouver campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Dooley</td>
<td>co-chair, executive director, Surrey campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd Gattinger</td>
<td>co-chair, director, maintenance and operations, Burnaby campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia Wang</td>
<td>director of administration, Vancouver campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Sauro</td>
<td>manager, finance and administration, Surrey campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ailsa Brown</td>
<td>project director, brand expression, Communications and Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat Cocuzzi</td>
<td>associate director, facilities services, Vancouver campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustin Tretinik</td>
<td>project manager, facilities services, Vancouver campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Schneider</td>
<td>manager, facilities services, Surrey campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcos Olindan</td>
<td>project manager, facilities services, Burnaby campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alisa Zukanovic</td>
<td>project coordinator</td>
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ABOUT THE PROJECT

We know that more than 90 per cent of SFU students are commuters, with 53 per cent spending more than 45 minutes traveling to campus. The Home Away from Home and Destination SFU key action areas intend to make all three campuses at SFU more vibrant and exciting; places where students want to be and where visitors want to come. The working group consists of members across the three campuses.
SUCESSES

→ To better meet the unique needs of commuter students, the Home Away from Home/Destination SFU working group has consulted undergraduate, graduate and non-credit students as well as the Centre for Accessible Learning to ensure important needs will be met in these newly renovated spaces. In-person consultations and an online survey engaged 365 students at all campuses.

→ Enlivening the campus environment with lounges that incorporate art and nature are common themes that surfaced from student consultations.

→ Feedback from students found that 70 per cent of participants mentioned needing better spaces to study, lounge and gather; 60 per cent of participants wanted more colour and art at all campuses; and 45 per cent felt more greenery was needed in our spaces. Funds have been allocated and projects are underway at each campus for lounge renewal, which comprises of new furniture, colour, lighting, art and natural elements.

CHALLENGES

→ Some of the challenges that have been encountered have included soliciting a wide range of student input and increasing the demand on staff who have other responsibilities. As well, time barriers limit the ability of students to participate at in-person consultations across the three campuses. To address these challenges, the working group used flash consultations and an online survey to reach students at all three campuses.

→ Further, in order to address the challenging of staffing on the project, the working group hired a project coordinator to support the on-going needs of the project.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Well-designed indoor and open spaces are a key aspect of student learning and can promote a sense of belonging (Boyer, 1987; Greene, 2013). This project responds to students’ desire for more study spaces, furniture, acoustic features, greenery and art across the campus. Using student feedback demonstrates our commitment as a university to create welcoming spaces, and encourages students to stay on campus longer.
ROADMAP

→ For the remainder of this fiscal year the Home Away From Home/Destination SFU working group will complete renovations in the identified lounges and gather feedback in response to the enhancements.

→ The working group is keen on exploring ways to continuously gain feedback from the SFU community about the student experience resulting from the provision and enhancement of the study spaces.

SUSTAINMENT

→ The project funding provides the support necessary to undertake the capital and personnel expenses of this project. Future costs for maintaining the spaces will be addressed through campus facilities budgets.

“In talking with students, there has been an emphasis in environmental sustainability and bringing nature inside, especially in a concrete jungle like SFU Vancouver.”
The Ideas Too Good to Ignore working group was established in order to allow members of the SFU community to imagine ways in which the student experience at SFU could be improved. To date, proposals have been submitted to Ideas Too Good to Ignore from both students and staff. Each project within this key action area is unique and is led by a project champion. To date, projects within the Ideas Too Good to Ignore key action area have included the following:

**ACCESSIBLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS PROJECT**

**GRADUATE STUDENT SERVICES KNOW YOUR RIGHTS GUIDE**

**INDIGENOUS STUDENT COUNSELLOR**

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**IDEAS TOO GOOD TO IGNORE**

**MEMBERSHIP**

Dr. Jonathan Driver  
Rummana Khan Hemani

co-chair, vice-president academic and provost pro tem  
co-chair, vice-provost, students and international pro tem and registrar
ACCESSIBLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS PROJECT

MEMBERSHIP

Noortje de Weers  
research assistant, Accessible Menstrual Products Initiative, Student Experience Initiative

Ashley Brooks  
Out on Campus coordinator, Simon Fraser Student Society

Athena Guertin  
Women’s Centre coordinator, Fraser Student Society

Mona Mehdizadeh  
director of graduate studies, Graduate Student Society

Pierre Cenerelli  
executive director, Graduate Student Society

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Accessible Menstrual Products Initiative (AMPI) is a joint venture by various campus stakeholders and aims to provide free menstrual products in washrooms. This project will be one of the first of its kind at a university in Western Canada.

SUCCESSES

→ An environmental scan has been conducted, assessing the current status of provision of free menstrual products in B.C. in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools.

→ Facilities Services at SFU has helped determine which washrooms are inclusive and accessible to the student population at SFU. The first phase of this project also looked at various options for current dispensers on the market as well as the types of products that are environmentally friendly.

→ The project was approved in January 2020 and is set to place a purchase order to provide menstrual products to all students at SFU.

CHALLENGES

→ Being one of the first universities in Canada to provide free menstrual products in washrooms, one of the main challenges of this initiative has been to create a realistic budget based on limited previous data. The few schools and colleges offering menstrual products either limited their service to a specific area (e.g., a student union building), or did so on a much smaller scale.

→ Efforts are underway to obtain price quotes and usage estimates and draft a budget based on the expected usage.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

This project is anticipated to positively impact SFU students, while simultaneously and indirectly benefitting the entire community. It is expected that this project will create a positive, inclusive and connected community while alleviating some financial burden from the costs of menstrual products. By providing these essential menstrual products, SFU can ensure that students can remain on campus throughout their day—promoting social inclusion and classroom attendance while simultaneously decreasing stress and student anxiety. The hope is that this will enhance academic performance and improve the overall student experience at SFU.

ROADMAP

→ Consultations with the wider community will be conducted.

→ The next year will entail collecting and analyzing the responses from the surveys that are scheduled to be sent to the SFU community.

→ Similarly, consultations will be conducted with post-secondary institutions in the Lower Mainland to identify best practices and to collect feedback about the successes and challenges encountered by schools that have already instituted similar programs.

→ Upon placing purchase orders for the dispensers, the hope is to create a communication plan that will inform the SFU community about the project.

→ The dispensers are projected to arrive by Summer 2020, after which a number of volunteers will be trained to raise awareness about the initiative.
SUSTAINMENT

→ The first strategy for long-term sustainability is continued advocacy to the provincial government to mandate that all post-secondary institutions supply menstrual products and that the province provides adequate funding for this.

→ This advocacy would take place, for instance, at the public consultation on the upcoming provincial budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, when both the Graduate Student Society (GSS) and Simon Fraser Student Society present their budget suggestions.

→ The directors of both student organizations can further lobby to the Green Party in Burnaby and Victoria, and can encourage fellow student organizations in British Columbia to echo the call for a government investment in menstrual products at all levels of publicly funded educational institutions.

→ The second strategy is collaborating with SFU to identify potential efficiencies that would offset the costs of this program. Given the relatively low costs of continuing this program after Year 1 capital costs, this would be a pragmatic approach.

GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIETY—KNOW YOUR RIGHTS GUIDE

MEMBERSHIP

Harjap Grewal advocacy and policy advisor, Graduate Student Society
Chantelle Spicer research assistant, Graduate Student Society and MA student, Department of Anthropology
Pierre Cenerelli executive director, Graduate Student Society
Rahil Adeli director of academic relations

ABOUT THE PROJECT

‘Know Your Rights Guide’ is an initiative led by the Graduate Student Society for graduate students, which will provide clearly expressed and practiced rights at Simon Fraser University. This working group engages with offices and groups at SFU that are involved in implementing, and advocating for, graduate student rights. In the future, this work will also include feedback from the GSS Board of Directors to ensure clear language and a clear vision for this resource.

SUCCESSES

→ The project team has reviewed all SFU policies, regulations, reports and handbooks related to graduate students and has met with people in numerous offices, including the dean and associate provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the SFU ombudsperson, the Centre for Accessible Learning, TSSU staff and stewards and Indigenous graduate student support.

→ Each office was asked what graduate students need to know, areas where practice differs from policy and how policies are enacted.

→ This process has also helped identify gaps, natural justice, and best practices that may not be documented elsewhere. The information is being compiled in a draft document.

CHALLENGES

→ No challenges thus far. All offices have been supportive of these efforts and the goals of the resource.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Graduate students face many unique challenges, processes, relationships and interactions with different forms of power. All of this occurs while they are under significant pressure and stress, impacting their mental health and academic success.

ROADMAP

→ A draft of the resource is expected for early March 2020, to be circulated to all participants in this review process.
A final draft is expected for mid-March 2020. After this, it will go through a design process for both digital and print forms.

There have been discussions about the potential to turn this resource into a workshop or presentation to increase graduate student awareness of their rights.

Final resource products would be fully available for the Fall 2020 semester.

### Sustainment

- Resources will have to shift as policies are reviewed and adapted, and as best practices and natural laws evolve.
- A workshop and digital version of this resource will permit adaptability over time.
- Graduate students will continue to engage with this resource through the activities of the GSS Board of Directors.

### Indigenous Student Counsellor

**Membership**

Marcia Guno  
director, Indigenous Student Centre

**About the Project**

The goal of the Indigenous student counsellor is to improve Indigenous student mental health and well-being by providing direct mental-health support and helping students access and navigate the resources available to them at SFU and in the community. This project secured an additional counsellor with SEI funding during a time when the community was experiencing an increased need for support. This role provided both direct counselling support as well as community counselling. This included drop-in group activities where students can connect and check in with each other and the counsellor in a low-barrier setting while sharing an activity that promotes social connection and conversation about shared concerns and experiences.

### Successes

- The Indigenous student counsellor, funded by SEI funds, was available for a specific timeframe.
- During this time, the counsellor fostered support connections with students during a time when many in the Indigenous student community at SFU were experiencing an increased need for support following high-profile events that impacted the community, supported students through crisis situations, connected students with community resources and contributed to more than 300 direct counselling hours provided by the Indigenous Student Centre in 2018/19.

### Impact on Student Experience

- The impacts of colonization on Indigenous communities has resulted in a need for holistic support for Indigenous learners, including counselling support. In addition, as SFU continues to increase programming for Indigenous learners, there is a need for additional case management support to help support Indigenous students.

### Road Map

- In the 2020/2021 fiscal year, an application for funding will be submitted to transition this project to an Indigenous case manager role.
- The case manager’s goal will be to improve Indigenous students’ mental health and well-being by assisting them to navigate the mental health and support resources available to them at SFU and in the community.
- Indigenous students will work with the case manager to identify areas where education, workshops and support would be beneficial.

### Sustainment

- The sustainment of the Indigenous student case manager will need to be considered upon the close-out of the SEI.
ABOUT THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to enhance student experience and well-being at SFU. The team established 10 conditions for Well-being in Learning Environments:

1. personal development
2. flexibility
3. social connection
4. positive classroom culture
5. civic engagement
6. instructor support
7. real-life learning
8. supports and services
9. inclusivity
10. optimal challenge

MEMBERSHIP

Martin Mroz  chair; director, Health and Counselling
Alisa Stanton  associate director health promotion, Health and Counselling
Wayne Heaslip  counsellor, Health and Counselling
Lisa Ogilvie  special projects, Health and Counselling

Consultation with health promotion faculty network of 190 faculty members
Student consultation and collaborations (Student Health Advisory Committee; Simon Fraser Students’ Society)
Partners including Graduate Student Society, International Services for Students, Faculty of Health Sciences, Recreation and Athletics, Indigenous Student Centre, Campus Public Safety
By building upon existing partnerships with the Centre for Educational Excellence and with faculty members across all faculties, the project’s goals are to provide educators with updated resources so they can create conditions for Well-being in Learning Environments. Educators will also develop and expand similar resources for graduate students in collaboration with the Supervision for the 21st Century SEI working group and evaluate the impacts on students and faculty.

**SUCCESSES**

- Consulting with students, faculty and partners.
- Developing and launching a new website (www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity/learningenvironments.html) with an expanded, richer set of resources to support faculty in creating conditions for well-being in their classes.
- Developing an action plan for further engaging faculty over the coming two years.
- Establishing a partnership with the ‘Teaching Matters’ seminar series to host one well-being session per semester on Well-being in Learning Environments.
- Partnering with the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines to host an integrated seminar and grants program for faculty interested in exploring the impacts of their teaching practice on well-being. The team received 25 expressions of interest from faculty and have funded 10 projects. Four seminars were held to support faculty interested in developing projects that enhance student experience and well-being through their teaching practice.
- Launching an updated semesterly newsletter to provide ideas and features related to Well-being in Learning Environments for our network of more than 200 faculty members and educators.
- Expanding the ‘Thriving in Graduate School’ project to reach more graduate students (16 workshops with graduate students were held in Fall 2019; 116 graduate students signed up for, and received, weekly emails with just-in-time resources; 91 per cent of evaluation respondents indicated they have become more aware of strategies for enhancing their own well-being and have a better understanding of the importance of creating conditions for well-being in learning environments).
- Through a partnership with the Supervision for the 21st Century SEI working group, we will be developing a set of resources to support faculty working with graduate students in a supervisory capacity to better equip them to support and enhance graduate student well-being.

**CHALLENGES**

- Reporting on the SEI has been onerous.

**IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Students and instructors are focused on learning and teaching and human needs are often overlooked. Giving instructors the tools to create positive learning environments will contribute to the well-being of all students and improve their experience.

**ROADMAP**

- No new projects are on the horizon, however the roll-out of Well-being in Learning Environments 2.0 will continue until March 2021.

**SUSTAINMENT**

- From the outset, this project has been designed with sustainability in mind, and has built off existing partnerships and successes to embed our work within existing structures and practices.

“I liked the reminder that there are people in administration at SFU that deeply care about my well-being.”
TWO-YEAR MYSSP PILOT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Over the past 17 months SFU has implemented the My Student Support Program (MySSP), a comprehensive 24/7 service that offers mental-health supports in a variety of languages and modalities. The implementation integrated existing SFU systems, including Health and Counselling, Student Conduct, Campus Public Safety, the Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office and communicators across the organization. MySSP was implemented to fundamentally improve how mental health is perceived and how mental health services are offered at SFU. The project team wanted to foster a caring and supportive community, as well as facilitate an earlier student connection with mental health supports, and broadly minimize risk. Providing various just-in-time support opportunities creates feelings of safety and a positive culture to enhance well-being.

SUCCESSES

→ Access to MySSP for each student (no opt-out option), with support 24/7 via multiple platforms—phone, chat, app, web access, etc.

→ Crisis intervention and response, such as for those at risk of harm to self or others.

→ Ongoing short-term counselling support for students living or studying abroad.

→ Access to a large and diverse counselling network that satisfies the cultural and contextual needs of SFU’s student population, including specific language and religious needs.

→ 80 per cent of contacts had never previously accessed mental-health support.

→ 11 interactions about very concerning behavior or risk to self or others between August and the end of December 2019.

→ MySSP is now included as a standard messaging component from SFU communicators to students following any incident impacting student mental health or perceptions of safety.

→ Program usage for the first year (August 2018 – August 2019) exceeded targets by 159 per cent, including 2,390 new clinical cases.

→ More than 120 education sessions about MySSP were delivered and crisis supports were offered to faculty, staff, students.

→ The Simon Fraser Student Society Annual Student Survey also revealed that more than 92 per cent of students responded, “Yes, MySSP is an important service to provide students” (2,786 survey responses).

→ 74 per cent of clinical cases, from August 2018 – August 2019, were supported after hours and on weekends, outside the regular operating hours of Health and Counselling Services.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

→ The impact on undergraduate students, including international students, and staff was positive.

ROAD MAP / SUSTAINMENT

→ Following the successful pilot project, the team is now negotiating for funding for a three-year contract to extend this service.

“My SSP was very understanding and is helping me work on productive habits to improve my mental wellness. Great service.”

“This is a fantastic program that makes a huge different for students struggling with mental health.”
2,390 CLINICAL CASES OPENED IN THE FIRST YEAR

80% OF CONTACTS HAD NO PRIOR ACCESS to mental health support in the first year

11 NOTIFICATIONS OF concerning behavior and risk to self and or others

STANDARD MESSAGING FOLLOWING INCIDENTS impacting student mental health or perceptions of safety

92% STUDENTS SAID MYSSP IS AN IMPORTANT SERVICE

74% of clinical cases supported AFTER HOURS AND ON WEEKENDS

120+ EDUCATION SESSIONS delivered on internal mental health issues and crisis support
MEMBERSHIP

Jeff Derksen  chair, dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Sheilagh MacDonald  dean’s secretary
CJ Rowe  advisory member, Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Office
Laura Reid  advisory member, ombudsperson
Susan Brook  advisory member, graduate student clinical counsellor
Harjap Grewal  advisory member, Graduate Student Society advocate and policy advisor
Rahil Adeli  advisory member, Graduate Student Society director of university relations
Angela Lara  working group member, PhD student, Resource and Environmental Management
Kurt Yakimovich and Biochemistry  working group member, PhD student, Molecular Biology
Viridiana Perez  working group member, postdoctoral scholar
Genevieve Fuji Johnson  working group member, faculty member, Political Science
Lindsey Freeman  working group member, faculty member, Sociology and Anthropology
Lynne Quarmby  working group member, faculty member, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Nicole White  working group member, staff member, head of Research Commons
ABOUT THE PROJECT

Graduate supervision is a necessity in graduate education and can be the source of a very productive professional relationship between the student and faculty member that extends beyond degree completion. However, it can also be a relationship filled with anxiety and troubled by murky communication. The consultations for S21C indicate we need to provide clarity around supervisory relationships and expand the notion of supervision beyond traditional models. Our new supervisory handbook will provide a positive framework for the supervisory relationship at SFU.

Workshops for graduate students and faculty members will reinforce the set of respectful and professional practices we wish to highlight. A project of expanded supervision, lead through S21C, will seek to enhance the culture of graduate supervision in relation to research, academic life, and preparation for varied work possibilities.

SUCCESSES

- To date, consultations with a number of students, staff and faculty have taken place.
- The consultation has resulted in two reports, ‘Supervisory Best Practices in Canadian Institutions’ and ‘International Trends in Doctoral Supervision.’
- A supervisory handbook will be released in 2021.
- A workshop series offered by Susan Brook titled, ‘Surviving to Thriving’ has been funded and will continue to be funded by the SEI.

CHALLENGES

- While there is no shortage of ideas for how to improve graduate students’ supervisory and research conditions, there has been a lack of resources to do this programming. This issue has been resolved with the restructuring of the Student Experience Initiative.
- The focus on supervision has been overly narrow and has failed to conceptualize supervision within the network of Impact on Student Experience.

IMPACT ON STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Graduate supervision rethought in a positive framework of research, collegiality and professional training that emphasizes the impact of graduate student research and the enjoyable and vital aspects of graduate student life. The Supervision for the 21st Century working group believes that the work currently underway as well as proposed projects will improve the overall supervisory experience and move it into the 21st Century. This will benefit both graduate students and supervisors.

ROAD MAP

- In the coming year, several projects will be continued while new projects are also being planned.
- Counselling for graduate students will continue, through Susan Brook who has been funded by the SEI and is scheduled to continue in Spring 2020.
- The working group has designed an integrated series of projects along five broad themes: supervision, graduate student experience and the culture of research, generative collaboration, and graduate student proposal and input.
- A Graduate Student Community-Engaged Research lecture series will be held in conjunction with the Vancity Office of Community Engagement. Lecture topics are on the ‘Graduate Student Experience and a Culture of Research’, ‘Generative Collaboration’, and ‘From Grad to Prof’.

SUSTAINMENT

The various cultural aspects of this project are sustainable by incorporating them into programs in Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS). The supervisory workshops, once developed, could be run out of GPS, collaborating with Health and Counselling. We could create greater support for Indigenous graduate students by establishing an associate dean, Indigenous. All of these projects would require financial support, but all are scalable to the available resources.
MEMBERSHIP

Steve Birnie  chair, associate registrar, Information, Records, and Registration Services
Abhi Parmar  student
Alisa Stanton  associate director, Health Promotion
Bernard Ryu  manager, Back on Track Program
Diana Koyanagi  service desk manager, IT Services
Jennifer Chou  student
Kris Nordgren  assistant registrar, Senate and Academic Services
Tina Edmundson  secretary, manager, Student Enrollment

FORMER MEMBERS

Rummana Khan Hemani  outgoing chair, vice-provost, Students and International pro tem and Registrar
Parham Elmi  student
Sam Berbeck  manager, Academic Advising and Transition Programs
ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Navigating SFU Policy Review working group set out to positively influence the SFU student experience by supporting student-centred policies, processes and procedures across all three campuses. As is typical of large institutions, policies and procedures at SFU have developed organically over time rather than comprehensively. As a result, from the macro-level, the policy landscape is populated with “institution-centric,” outdated and, often contradictory language. Indeed, a “student-centred” approach is still a relatively new concept in policy, where language often fails to mention the word “students” at all. Students have regularly raised these concerns (for example through the Undergraduate Student Survey, or through contact with front-line staff members), and the SEI Policy Review working group is now well-positioned to gather and analyze further input and to propose meaningful change.

SUCCESSES

→ To ensure future success, the working group established a strong alignment with the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS), developing overlapping membership and a consolidated list of agreed topics to review. The Navigating SFU Policy Review working group has identified a number of policies and procedures for review, and have been conducting landscape analyses, student consultations, and analyses of existing student survey data.

→ In November, SCUS approved the new Classroom and Course Scheduling Policy, which then passed Senate in December. The policy (now GP 46, replacing T30.01), brought a crucial student-centred focus to classroom and course scheduling, and the revised policy is part of a number of measures that will assist the university in addressing course access issues that students have been raising for years in the Undergraduate Student Survey.

→ In February, SCUS approved the new Program GPA definition, which will go to Senate in March. If passed, the new definition will provide clarity and predictability to students and advisors when trying to determine graduation requirements. It will also allow for better use of student self-service advising tools like the Academic Progress Report.

CHALLENGES

→ The Navigating SFU Policy Review working group had a challenging start, given the sheer breadth of potential topics within the mandate and some committee turnover. To overcome these challenges, the committee split into two smaller groups. One group focused on navigation systems and the other focused on student-centered policy and practices.

→ The overall group also initially struggled to find alignment within the broader institution.

ROAD MAP

Over the rest of the year, the group will continue to tackle outstanding areas.

While changes to the identified policies will no doubt have a long-term impact on the student experience, there are many more to be reviewed.

SUSTAINMENT

→ As the SEI is a temporary initiative, the group plans to work on a policy framework/process document that others can use in future.

→ The document will help ensure that the group’s knowledge and processes can carry on for years.
The Student Experience Initiative is in its final year of implementation. Now, the working groups will focus on successfully completing the projects outlined in this report. There are a number of projects that will come to fruition over the coming year, they include: TA/TM Core Competencies project, Exploring the Vancouver Student Experience Project, the Centre for Accessible Learning Project, and the SFU Surrey Prayer Space enhancement.

The Student Experience Initiative projects funded by University Priority Funds will assessed to determine:

**HOW SUCCESSFUL THEY WERE**

**THEIR IMPACT ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

**WHICH PROJECTS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED**, further enhanced or phased out upon completing the Student Experience Initiative lifecycle

As well, the Student Experience Initiative will deliver a sustainment report in 2021 that identifies the necessary resources for sustaining projects implemented between 2016 and 2021.

While student experience at Simon Fraser University will remain at the forefront of the university’s goals and priorities, now that the Student Experience Initiative is coming to a close in 2021, our goal is to ensure that existing projects, events and services clearly work toward outlining a strategic plan for a seamless transition to the initiative’s completion phase.