

To: Senate

From: Michael Letourneau, Senator

Date: August 27, 2007; revised September 4, 2007

Subject: Academic consideration for students attending 2007 SFSS annual general meeting

Background

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) has been the student society at SFU for over 40 years. Throughout its history, it has represented both graduate and undergraduate students. Having a single student society is unusual among Canadian universities, as nearly every school with a significant graduate program has a separate graduate student society to serve the distinct needs of its graduate students.

In March, a referendum of the entire SFU student body was 82.2% in favour of establishing a separate graduate student society. Working from this endorsement, the Graduate Issues Committee of the SFSS has set up a new society: The Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University (GSS). On July 26, the GSS was incorporated as a non-profit corporation, and it held its first meeting on July 27. In August, the GSS applied to the Provincial government for formal recognition as a student society. Incorporation and recognition by the Province are two of the three major procedural steps necessary to get the GSS up and running.

The one remaining step is to amend the constitution and by-laws of the SFSS so that it represents only undergraduate students. Such amendments can only be made at a general meeting of the SFSS. The SFSS has scheduled its annual general meeting for the afternoon of Wednesday, October 10, and has put the necessary amendments on its agenda. The quorum for this meeting is 500 students.

Requiring such a large number of students at a meeting is problematic. In the past 10 years, quorum for such meetings has only been achieved twice. In both cases, massive student mobilization efforts were required. Beyond simply being a very large number of people to assemble, the only space at SFU that can accommodate such a meeting is Convocation Mall. Since the meeting is occurring in October (as required by the SFSS' by-laws), the possibilities for inclement weather make it that much more difficult to assemble a quorum. Beyond this, students may have classes at the time the meeting is scheduled for.

In order to make it easier for students to attend this meeting, a request has been made jointly by the SFSS and the GSS that faculty and instructors:

- not schedule exams between 2:00 and 4:30 PM on October 10,
- not penalize students for missing class during these hours, and that they
- allow their TAs to reschedule activities that would normally be held during these hours.

In addition to being important to SFU's graduate students and the GSS, the proposed amendments are also beneficial to undergraduates. Beyond "writing out" the graduate students, they also reduce the SFSS' general meeting quorum to 250 students (allowing for future meetings to be held indoors) and allow for future amendments to be made by referendum vote (reducing the need for such meetings).

Motion:

Senate requests that faculty and instructors make every effort to accommodate students who wish to participate in the general meeting of the Simon Fraser Student Society on October 10, 2007 (2:00-4:30 pm), and not penalize these students academically.