

StFX Students’ Union

STRATEGIC PLAN

The StFX Students’ Union Strategic Plan Table of Contents

1. Strategic Plan Preamble
2. Strategic Plan Process Outline
3. Core Values
4. Goals and Objectives
5. Communications
6. Student Engagement
7. Increased Advocacy
8. Organizational Advancement
9. Academics
10. Future Recommendations

Strategic Plan Preamble

In the fall of 2014, the St. Francis Xavier University Students’ Union began to develop a three-year strategic plan based on the Students’ Union Strategic Plan that had been created in 2011. This strategic plan is meant to address issues identified in various focus groups, surveys and in discussions with various stakeholders across the St. Francis Xavier University campus.

It is the hope of the Strategic Planning Committee that the goals and objectives outlined in this document will be developed and carried out over the next 3 years by elected and hired student executive teams, representative councillors, and sub executives. The purpose of this document is to provide clear goals that will add significantly to the sustainability, value and importance of the StFX Students’ Union by addressing organizational weaknesses and building on our strong commitment to the students of St. Francis Xavier University, and ensuring that their interest is served by the actions of the SU.

This strategic plan will outline 5 organizational goals to be implemented in both the short term and long term. Each goal contains a brief summary of purpose as well as action items that target specific areas for improvement, continuity, and organizational growth.

Strategic Plan Process Outline

In November of 2014 a strategic planning committee was struck through the Students’ Union Representative Council to review, develop and implement a new strategic plan for the St. Francis Xavier Students’ Union. This committee was made up of the Brandon Hamilton, Students’ Union President, Hilary Perry, Chair of Council, Troy Mrazek, VP Activities and Events, Sean Ryan, General Manager, and Kate Sullivan and Mitch George, 2 Students’ Union Representative Councillors.

During the research phase the strategic planning committee did the following:

* Conducted an Internal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis in which 20+ members of the Students’ Union provided feedback.
* Reviewed mid-year and end of year reports from volunteer members of the Students’ Union, collected in May 2014 and December 2014.
* Held multiple focus groups with St. Francis Xavier students, collectively gathering feedback from approximately 200 StFX students.
* Created an online survey with campus stakeholders, Students’ Union Executive and Council, focusing on potential goals for the strategic plan from which the committee received approximately 40 responses.
* Conducted a goal-setting exercise with SU Executive and Council to identify targets this strategic plan should strive to address.
* Meetings weekly commencing in November 2014 until the documents’ completion in April 2015.

Students’ Union Core Values

The Students’ Union Core Values were re-evaluated this year to make sure that these guiding principles continued to reflect the direction of this organization. The following core values are felt to best represent the beliefs and principles for the Students’ Union presently and moving forward.

*Servant Leadership to Students  
 Trust, Integrity and Respect  
 Transparency and Accountability  
 Fun, Inclusive Student Engagement  
 Sustainable, Innovative Practices*

It is the hope of the Strategic Plan Committee that these core values will remain in place for at least a period of 5-7 years, and that each year emphasis will continue to be placed on each position within the Students’ Union exemplifying these values.

Strategic Plan Goals

**Goal One**: Communications

**Item One:** **Promotions of Services**

One of the pillars of a Students’ Union is the services that it provides to its membership. Promotion of these services is essential in order for students to benefit from them fully. As an organization, we must therefore put a greater focus on the promotion of our services.

**Objective:** Develop a promotion and communication strategy to create brand awareness of current services.

**Action Items:**

1. Develop a pamphlet that lists all services offered by the Students’ Union. This handout shall contain contacts for each services and shall be updated annually.
2. Update signage of various services (ie. DriveU, SFRC)
3. Ensure continual promotion of services (I.e. Frost Week-relaunch)
4. Look into DriveU van promotion

**Item Two: Website**

**Objective:** The Students’ Union website has not been updated or overhauled since 2011. A plan must be put in place to both develop and enhance the current website, and to work towards developing and implementing a more advanced, user friendly website.

**Action Items:**

1. Create and maintain a relationship with an external service to assist with updating and maintenance of our current website.
2. Fund a student internship through Cercada. The intern will assist with website improvements and maintenance.
3. Develop a template for RFP to gather proposals from web-design companies for a vision of a future website.
4. Select a website provider through an RFP Committee ion process
5. Negotiate contracts with the provider chosen by the RFP committee
6. Begin budgeting to commence with website upgrade the year following the completion of contract negotiations.

**Item Three:** **Oohlala App**

**Objective:** The SU has committed to a three-year contract with App designer Oohlala, which began in September of 2014. Increased communication and utilization of the app is needed in order to best provide information and

**Action Items:**

1. Host an annual launch of the app during Orientation Week, and continued promotion for the duration of the contract.
2. Provide opportunities for incoming students to connect with each other in the summer months through the app.
3. Create download cards to include in Orientation mail out package explaining Oohlala and providing an explanation that the Orientation week schedule will be released early on the app to encourage downloads by incoming students.
4. Provide interactive, dynamic, up to date calendar on the app to immediately inform students of all events happening on campus.
5. Employ research officer to monitor the success of the Oohlala app before the contract is up for renewal.
6. Report analytics of the Oohlala app to Council once per semester. These reports should also provide insight into the usefulness and effectiveness of the Oohlala app.
7. Strike an ad/hoc committee to review Oohlala and the future use of the app by the StFX Students’ Union. Information should be gathered by research officers to provide insight for committee members into student responses to the app.

**Item Four:** **Outreach**

**Objective:** It is essential that individuals who work for the Students’ Union are available and accessible to the rest of the student opportunity. The Strategic Plan Committee believes that SU volunteers should provide more opportunities for students to give feedback to those that occupy the offices of the executive and representative council.

**Action Items:**

1. Mandate the Students’ Union Executive, in conjunction with their assigned Councillors, to host at least four student forums yearly on different topics appealing to the interest of students on campus
2. Develop a how to host a forum template to be distributed to SU Executive and Councillors to ensure effective and successful sessions.

**Item Five:** **Communications Office**

**Objective:** There is a growing and demanding workload being placed on the Communications office as communication and marketing continues to become more reliant on technology. It is essential that as technology continues to evolve, the Students’ Union assess how as an organization we can best make use of the communications office.

**Action Items:**

1. Review the Communications office yearly to accurately assess its successes and challenges. Assess the feasibility of VP Communications as a student Executive position.
2. Continue to provide support to the Xaverian Weekly Publication Board and the CFXU Board of Directors

Goal Two: Student Engagement

**Item One:** **Development of a Volunteer Bank**

**Objective:** To have an online and/or physical location on campus where students can easily access information on various volunteer opportunities within the Students’ Union, the University community and the town and county of Antigonish.

**Action Items:**

1. Strike a committee to develop an implementation strategy for the volunteer bank.
2. Contact all volunteer stakeholders on and off campus to begin collecting information on volunteer opportunities.
3. Select either physical or online location where the volunteer information will be accessible to students.
4. Develop a communication strategy to make students aware of new volunteer opportunities as they arise.
5. Create an application form to be collected and sent to the intended volunteer organizations.

**Item Two:** **Experiential Learning Opportunities with the SU**

**Objective:** Have more extensive promotion of positions available within the Students’ Union. Greater awareness of opportunities will lead to greater engagement of the student body within the Students’ Union.

**Action Items:**

1. Plan and execute a Students’ Union job fair in January of each year.
2. Create a jobs page with accurate job descriptions and timelines for hiring for each position.
3. Continue to hold information sessions for various hired and elected positions within the Students’ Union.
4. Strike the Executive Restructure Committee as a standing committee of Council.
5. Continue to review executive and sub-executive positions within the Students’ Union to increase efficiency, reduce redundancy of position, and provide more opportunities for project-based positions.

**Item Three:** **Diversity of Orientation Week**

**Objective:** Identify opportunities to make Orientation Week a more welcoming experience for all students. The committee feels it is essential to ensure that Orientation Week caters to the diversity that exists on campus to create a more inclusive experience for members of the StFX community, beginning their first day on campus.

**Action Items:**

1. Invite Student Advisors to the Student Orientation Week Committee to discuss opportunities increase the inclusiveness of events that take place during orientation week.
2. Pursue collaboration on welcome week activities between the Orientation Week Crew Leaders and the International Student Orientation Week Leaders.
3. Plan Society Night to take place during Orientation Week to provide engagement opportunities for new and returning students.
   1. Ensure that Student Services and opportunities with the U are also promoted.
4. Encourage, with the assistance of the Office of the Registrar, a review academic day schedule with a goal to pursue activities centered on academic success using a peer-driven model.
   1. Aim to create a relationship between students within faculties, with the assistance of academic advisors.
   2. Integrate this academic peer-driven model into activities throughout orientation week to enforce this connection (ie. X-Games; Faculty friendship day)

Goal Three: Increased Advocacy  
  
**Item One:** **Continued Advocacy**

Objective: Work with the University to invest funding into services that students promote and ensue academic success both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Action Items:**

1. Lobby the university to include more study space in the upcoming renovations being made to Nicholson Hall.
2. Lobby the university to increase the student voice on the Campus Facility Renewal Fee allocation.
3. Lobby the university to increase the support given to services provided by the university including, but not limited to an increase in staff in the Center for Accessible Learning and the Health and Counseling Centre.
4. Lobby the university to Increase staff in the StFX Career and Co-op Centers

**Item Two:** **Sexual Assault Protocol**

**Objective:** Continue to work with the University and community groups to develop and roll out a sexual assault protocol. This protocol will outline the process by which students will be informed of sexual assaults when they occur on campus.

**Action Items:**

1. Review the current StFX Sexual Assault Policy.
2. Consult with faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders to implement a Sexual Assault protocol.
3. Achieve the goals outlined in the “Bringing in the Bystander” Strategic Plan (see Appendix).
4. Provide safe spaces where discussions surrounding sexual assault can continue to take place on campus.

**Item Three:** **Mental Health**

**Objective:** Continue to support students with mental health challenges through support for existing services on and off campus and advocating for their expansion.

**Action Items:**

1. Advocate for increased Mental Health First Aid training to student leaders within and outside of the Students’ Union.
2. Lobby the government through CASA to continue and increase funding to the Mental Health Commission of Canada.
3. Develop a promotional strategy with the Student Assistance Provider to increase the use and awareness of the program and services it provides.

**Item Four:** **Campus Accessibility**

**Objective:** Lobby the University to use the Campus renewal fee to create a more accessible campus.

**Action Items:**

1. Increase the number of bike racks on campus, and make them more accessible and secure.
2. Lobby the University to increase wheelchair accessibility around campus (ie, better snow removal, more accessible classrooms, ramp outside of Morrison Hall).
3. Lobby the university to increase lighting on campus, beginning with installing lights at the main entrance of the Bloomfield Centre.
4. Lobby the university for institutional accessibility (ie. centralized services).

**Item Five:** **Consultation Agreement**

**Objective:** Complete a consultation agreement with the University to provide transparency and accountability surrounding tuition and fee increases or additions in the coming years.

**Action Items:**

1. Consult with the President’s Council, the Students’ Union Representative Council, and the Chair of the University Board of Governors before finalizing the consultation agreement.
2. Ensure the consultation agreement includes a section outlining a process for student representation on committees.
3. Pass a consultation agreement at the June 2015 Board of Governors meeting.
4. Follow the Consultation process as outlined upon approval of the consultation agreement and hold the University accountable.

Goal Four: Organizational Advancement

**Item One:** **Students Union Fees**

**Objective:** The Students’ Union is being asked to provide additional funding and services each year. In order to continue to provide additional services, as they are demanded and to upgrade resources to ensure the quality of our services is maintained, an increase to the Students’ Union fee is required.

**Action Items:**

1. Implement an annual increase of 3% to the Students’ Union fee for the next 5 years at the discretion of the VP Finance and Operations and Accounts Coordinator with final approval from Council.
2. The VP Finance and Operations shall include additional information in their budget update as to the allocation benefits to the Students’ Union for this additional funding each year.

**Item Two:** **Bloomfield Renovations**

Objective: The Students’ Union is being asked more and more to provide various services for students. In order for the growth of the StFX Students’ Union to continue, a greater stake-hold in the Bloomfield Center is essential. Greater ownership over the Bloomfield Center will allow the Students’ Union to provide increased services to students and expand its operations and capabilities. The initiatives below are preliminary steps towards a These steps are preliminary to a larger goal of ownership of the Bloomfield Center, leading to greater autonomy of the Students’ Union.

**Action Items:**

1. Partner with the university in the cost to contract an architectural design firm to develop a re-imagination strategy for the Bloomfield Center. The focus will be on adapting and increasing Students’ Union space and accessibility.
2. Create of a *Project Charter* for the renovation of the Bloomfield Center which will include, but is not limited to:
   1. Project Summary;
   2. Project Goals;
   3. Project Timelines;
   4. Project Scope and Financing Strategy;
   5. Student and stakeholder consultation;
   6. Schematic Design.

**Item Three:** **Full Time Staff Autonomy**

**Objective:** The Students’ Union full time staff are currently hired and appointed by the University. While this has served well in the past, it is important to maintain and assert the Students’ Union autonomy in all aspects of its operation. This includes the hiring and management of its own full time staff.

**Action Items:**

1. Consult with the University to ensure that benefits currently provided under the university’s HR department are still available to the full time Staff of the Students’ Union.
2. Create a *Separation Proposal* to be presented to Council during the 2015-2016 academic year.
3. Hire an external consultant to review the current terms of reference for full time staff as outlined in the Students’ Union By-Laws and develop compensation packages for said employees.
4. Ensure that both the Students’ Union and the university create the appropriate documentation for the transition of full-time staff members. This would entail that the university prepares termination documentation and the Students’ Union prepare contract documentation for each full-time staff position.

Goal Five: Academics

**Item One:** **Academic Engagement**

**Objective:** Bridge the gap between academic programing and social programming, and to encourage the pursuit of academics outside the classroom. Ensure that Students’ Union programming promotes a full student experience, offering social spaces where intellectual dialogue can take place.

**Action Items:**

1. Promotion of academic and issue-based forums that are put on throughout the year on campus.
2. Create X-Talks project to give opportunity to students to speak on academic topics or areas of specialty or experience.
3. Develop rotating study halls for various faculties to give mentorship opportunities within programs.

**Item Two:** **Academic Appeals**

**Objective:** Lobby the Academic Vice President for the creation of an academic appeals system for students.

**Action Items:**

1. Ensure the Vice President of the Students’ Union creates a forum for students to voice concerns around current academic outcomes and processes that may be considered unfair or inconsistent.
2. Create a committee to develop a proposal based on the forum results.
3. Present the academic appeals proposal to Senate after it has been vetted through the Students’ Union governance structure.
4. Create a student academic advocate position within the Students’ Union to guide students through the academic appeals process upon Senate approval.

**Item Three:** **Academic Success Workshops**

**Objective:** Develop and promote academic success workshops

**Action Items:**

1. Ensure the Vice President continues to grow a partnership with the writing center and library to bring awareness to programs currently offered.
2. Consult faculty to target where resources could be best used to identify areas where the Students’ Union can assist in academic success.
3. Coordinate workshops executed by campus stakeholders based on the opportunities presented by faculty.

Future Recommendations:

The focus groups conducted by Councillors identified a number of opportunities for our organization. While they did not all fit under the five areas outlined within this document, there were several we felt were important to be included. The following are initiatives the members of this committee believe would benefit the student body, or processes that we believe will help the success of this document. Below are additional recommendations that were not reflected in this strategic plan:

* Include incoming President and Vice President of the Students’ Union in drafting the Strategic Plan
* Ensure the Strategic Plan is presented at the first Council meeting of each year
* Increase the visibility of the Students’ Union Executive Team on campus
* Assist CFXU and the Xaverian Weekly in the pursuit of financial autonomy
* Review StudentsNS membership fees annually, in conjunction with the StudentsNS Board.
* Review CASA membership fees annually, in conjunction with the CASA Board.