

As a student first attracted to SFU for its dedication to the social sciences and liberal arts, I came to this university seeking connection with the keenest minds and hearts committed to social innovation and community engagement. SFPIRG was a quick suggestion on the lips of friends of mine, likewise committed students, then volunteers heading the club's day booths at what was my first official week of university. Once I stepped into the SFPIRG space, once I saw the evocative posters on the walls, once I picked up books that detailed years of progressive work worldwide, once I was welcomed by the compassionate staff -- I never truly left. SFPIRG has been my home on campus, and it still remains this way nearly four years following my graduation as Valedictorian of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

While at SFPIRG, I took part in numerous action groups including Fair Trade Vancouver's student chapter (which successfully petitioned President Petter to sign a fair trade certified ethical procurement agreement for the campus) and the Dzaleka Project (fellow alumni Jocelyn John's victorious effort to raise the profile of refugee students on campus and sponsor her own family for immigration from the Dzaleka camp in Malawi). I also joined the SFPIRG Board of Directors and, at the tender age of twenty, became the de facto employer of three incredibly experienced staff, true mentors to myself and a number of my dearest peers and friends.

My experience negotiating human resources matters as ombudsperson to the union, conferring on lease issues with the student society, conducting accessibility audit procedures, and emboldening young people to act on the issues that mattered most to them and their communities has followed me into my professional career post-graduation. SFPIRG has undoubtedly been a launch pad for the work I intend to build into for decades to come.

As Education Program Coordinator at Check Your Head (of PYE Global), I designed social and environmental justice workshops which I then trained youth to facilitate all across the public school, university, civil, and non profit sectors through peer-to-peer experiential techniques. I will likewise be mentoring a similar group of youth through a project of Vines Festival this summer.

As Engagement Specialist at OpenMedia, a digital rights advocacy group with an international reach (started by fellow SFU alumni Steve Anderson), I assisted cutting edge campaigns that engaged federal ministers, bolstered by the campaigning experience I first gained with SFPIRG's action groups.

And now as Engagement Manager at Vantage Point, a consultancy which advises non-profit clients on matters of leadership, governance, human resources and capacity, I now interact daily and advise Boards of Directors and executive leaders from organizations as wide ranging as the Canadian Mental Health Association, DiverseCity, and St Thomas Moore Collegiate. Just this month, I conducted a faculty wide administrative review of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, interviewing the very staff who made my education possible... while once again doing so with thanks to the skills I practiced as a proud member of SFPIRG.

In a time of increasing polarization and as the bastions of outdated, restrictive systems of governance more clearly show their faults, it is more critical than ever to protect spaces like SFPIRG, true hubs for empowering engaged, critically thinking leaders. And this is precisely what we need most in order for a just world to blossom -- dedicated leaders, with space and time and room to grow with and into and beyond themselves. SFPIRG nurtured me to be the leader I am today. I simply want it to remain and do the same for others like me.

My ask is that SFPIRG's claim to space and student funding on this campus be secured. Active opposition from an unelected CEO of the previously democratic student society has directly

endangered SFPIRG's current lease. This cannot continue. Compromising students' ability to access one of the only spaces on campus with a full staff complement trained in anti-oppression and diversity practices sacrifices safety for a large segment of the student population -- students of colour, of precarious immigration status, of varying physical and mental abilities, of indigenous heritage, of non-binary genders and non-heterosexual orientations. Rather than engaging with a student society which is actively dismantling it's own services -- despite their multi-year records of providing stellar service --- SFPIRG seeks relocation to the Maggie Benston Centre, as neighbours to the Grad Students Society, an established ally of the organization.

I'm writing this testimony as an appeal letter for the security owed to SFPIRG and the many students whose lives it has touched, both current and alumni. I ask that you enter into a contractual agreement with the staff and Board of Directors of SFPIRG, the terms of reference for which can be collaboratively determined by the university and Grad Student Society likewise. **Thank you for thinking of students as the forefront of this university's negotiations in** how space is treated and shared. Thank you for embracing the contention sides of these space decisions and for listening to the members who can clearly show SFPIRG as a valuable entity at SFU.