

May 31, 2018

Dear Simon Fraser University,

It is with great concern that this former staff and alumnus of Simon Fraser University writes this letter. The concern is over the possible lack of space for the SFPIRG office, of which I had done numerous work study semesters as the Action Research Exchange Outreach and Research Assistant.

My introduction to SFU was through The Peak, student newspaper, where I was the Advertising Manager, which is a position that I took on prior to enrolling at SFU. The environment enticed me to begin an undergraduate degree at SFU and I believe that familiarity and accessibility is important for students, especially when they are the first in their immediate family to undergo University pursuits.

While at SFU I also volunteered at a community organization called Grassroots Women, where I was a core collective member. The group did numerous research projects, and our research with working migrant women was used in policy analysis that helped to reshape the unfair working conditions for many women. To this day it remains one of the most important contributions to society that I have collaborated on. It is also what I am most proud of. Second in line would be my work with SFPIRG and the completion of my undergraduate degree at SFU.

Education is key to continued efforts to address issues of local, national, and global concern. Having worked in Advertising and having been a student at SFU I believe that the words SFU-Engaging the World-are not taken lightly by the University or the students who gravitate to its doors. SFU will certainly continue to grow as a public research University, as does the vast majority of its undergraduate students. SFPIRG would like SFU to provide a workable office space to students interested in community groups and public interest research work. I walked away from SFU learning much more than I ever thought possible; most importantly that SFU provides quality education to its students, and that inclusion, diversity, and open dialogues are not only acceptable but encouraged at SFU.

While I am no longer attending SFU I continue to work with women, children and youth in the area of social justice. Advertising at a large newspaper would probably pay more, but I have no interest to continue in this line of work. However, I believe my time with SFPIRG helped me continue my studies throughout SFU, in many ways, and that it has opened my mind to continued efforts to challenge policies or practices that are unfair to many people and to work as an advocate whenever I can.

Please consider providing an appropriate accessible rental space to SFPIRG, as its presence on campus creates a more diverse and open learning environment for students, and the work that it does is of the utmost importance to a well-rounded educational experience that provides opportunities for students to engage in research in the areas of social justice and public interest.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Somerset