

2018-2021

STRATEGIC PLAN

The U - StFX Students' Union
Approved: November 25th, 2018

THE 
StFX Students' Union
For Students, By Students.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
PILLAR ONE: COMMUNICATION.....	5
Item 1: Marketing.....	5
Item 2: Student Awareness.....	5
Item 3: Accessibility of Information	6
PILLAR TWO: STUDENT CONSULTATION.....	8
Item 1: Event Diversity	8
Item 2: Student Representative Council.....	8
Item 3: Advocacy for Student Issues	9
Item 4: Student Representation and Diversity	10
Item 5: Transparency.....	10
PILLAR THREE: INCREASED CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY.....	12
Item 1: Building Autonomy.....	12
Item 2: Renovations	13
Item 3: Food services.....	13
Item 4: Students' Union Fee Evaluation	14
Item 5: Review of Terms of Reference for Union Positions.....	15
Item 6: Review of By-laws and Council Procedures	15
MEASURABLES OF SUCCESS	16

INTRODUCTION

The St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) Students' Union (the Union) is a student-led organization that provides services and advocacy for the students of StFX University. The Union has been providing services and advocacy to students since its incorporation in 1965. To formalize an avenue towards an overarching direction for the organization, the Union routinely undergoes a review of its services, advocacy, and structure. This strategic plan has been developed to guide the organization for the following three-year period. The Union recognizes that position turnover is both one of the assets and limitations of student government. The strategic plan helps to provide future student leaders with consistent goals and objectives.

The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan development process began in May of 2017. The purpose was to identify the methods that the organization would use to evaluate its services, practices, affiliations, and advocacy efforts. The Strategic Planning Committee created two surveys whose objectives were to solicit feedback from both the general student body and those directly involved in the Students' Union. The committee distributed both surveys to students in February of 2018. The feedback obtained from these surveys directly informed the directives outlined in this document. The *Strategic Planning Committee* would like to acknowledge all of the students that took the time to complete the surveys. Without this feedback from our members, the organization would not be able to grow or challenge our future leaders to innovate alongside the Union's core values.

Student feedback identified communication, student consultation, and increased capacity and sustainability of the Students' Union as key priorities. These create the guiding pillars for the plan. Following each pillar, overarching areas are identified for future Executive teams to consider when creating and/or improving the Union's practices. The objective of the strategic plan is not to be prescriptive with the recommendations, but to provide possible avenues and highlight potential barriers to success.

Strategic Planning Committee Members:

Annie Sirois, Students' Union President (co-chair)

Jessica Fullerton, Students' Union Chair of Council (co-chair)

Sean Ryan, Students' Union General Manager

Rebecca Mesay, Students' Union Vice-President Residence Affairs

Bry Crabbe, Graduate Student Representative

Lucas Middleton, Arts Student Representative



PILLAR ONE: COMMUNICATION

The St.FX Students' Union recognizes the importance of communicating effectively with our membership. It is vital that students are informed of the work completed by the Union, upcoming events, as well as the advocacy efforts done by our external lobby groups. The objective of this pillar is to review the design and functionality of modern marketing and communications methods. The accessibility of Union information will be assessed to ensure that the organization is maintaining a high degree of transparency and accountability to the membership.

Item 1: Marketing

In 2016, the Union moved the position of Vice-President Communications into a full-time Communications and Marketing Manager. The Marketing Office, now overseen by the Manager, is responsible for carrying out Union's communications. The objective is to ensure that the Marketing Office is consistently producing quality materials for the membership that are innovative and accessible to all students. The Union has the potential to be the lead marketing provider in Antigonish and to export its services to local businesses.

Possible methods to develop marketing efforts:

- Survey international students to better understand what communication methods are most effective for them;
- Convert all Marketing Office positions from honorariums to per hour wages to better ensure that all materials are being published by their deadlines;
- Look to utilize advertising screens within Bloomfield Centre and expand to other buildings on campus and in the community;
- Standardize and brand Students' Union services and events;
- Establish relationships with co-op office to engage students taking marketing classes.

Potential barriers to developing marketing efforts:

- Financial constraints;
- Burdening the Marketing Team with too many tasks;
- Lack of tools to accomplish projects;
- Lack of training/skill set for specific projects.

Item 2: Student Awareness

To represent students effectively, the Union must be aware of students' positions on current topics, so that discussions and decisions can be informed. According to the survey data, most students are unaware of who their Student Representative councillor is, or what function the Student Representative councillor serves.

However, this does not reflect interest. Many students are interested in giving their input on Union affairs, and students are searching for a way to do so. By increasing student awareness

of the Union, the decisions it makes, and the representatives available to each constituency, the Union will be more efficient in its representation of its members.

Possible methods to increase student awareness:

- Prioritize the awareness of essential services the Union provides to students – advocacy efforts, better marketing of reports;
- The increased promotion and streaming of Student Union Representative Council (Council) recap videos following each representative council meeting;
- The creation of Student Representative emails, acquiring a list-serve update, and conduct outreach directly with their constituencies;
 - I.e. su_bog@stfx.ca or su_business@stfx.ca
- Consider short introductory videos of Council positions at the beginning of their term;
- Consider ensuring all students are aware of the location of their personal voting information on election days.

Potential obstacles to increasing student awareness:

- Students' Union's reliance on the University's Information Technology system;
 - Which would be used to set up Student Representative emails.
- Timely updates of the website;
- Students' dissatisfaction with an overwhelming number of emails from their Student Representatives;
- Confidentiality of students;
 - Providing a StFX student with contact information of their entire constituency.
- Students' Union's reliance on the StFX's Registrars' office.
 - Which would be used to create councillor list-serves.

Item 3: Accessibility of Information

To ensure adequate communication with StFX students, information released by the Union shall be accessible for all members. This information shall be distributed through the various Union channels of communication (the Union website and social media sites). Based on survey results from the general membership, it is evident that students require more frequent updates regarding Union content, reports and advocacy efforts. The objective of this item is to ensure that the collective membership is informed on Union proceedings and can access all information effectively.

Possible methods to increase the accessibility of information:

- Frequent website updates and Facebook postings;
 - Executive reports
 - Constituency Reports
 - Council Minutes

- Releasing the Council Packages on the website;
- Timely release of Union hiring positions and nomination forms.

Potential obstacles to increasing the accessibility of information:

- Layout of the website does not always support accessible information;
- Lack of use of the University List-Serve (currently only allowed usage for election, and health and dental plan opt-out information);
- Timing of information release and internal resources.



PILLAR TWO: STUDENT CONSULTATION

The Students' Union represents all full and part time students at StFX. Our legitimacy is established through the ability to accurately reflect and represent views of the membership. The support of the membership is critical, and members should feel an affiliation to the organization. To continue to garner this support, we must reflect the interests of our members through engagement between the Union leaders and those they represent and be transparent in our discussions and decisions.

Item 1: Event Diversity

The Students' Union will continue to look for opportunities to provide events that reflect the current cultures and styles of the day. The Union will also look to partner with the various internal and external groups to share resources, and experience to build community on our campus.

Possible methods to increase event diversity:

- Continue to tweak current events for Orientation Week to highlight all the various groups within our campus and Antigonish communities;
- Look for opportunities to continue to integrate the currently separate International Student Welcome Week and Orientation Week;
- Partner with societies and other groups to utilize The Inn for community events;
- Engage students early in the year to inquire about events they would like to see
- Make ERC training more available to non-society affiliated groups so they can host events.

Potential obstacles to increasing the accessibility of information:

- Lack of finances to bring in multiple speakers or artists for events;
- Space continues to be an issue while large construction projects continue on campus;
- Timelines and sharing information so that events can be organized appropriately;
- Lack of human resources to execute multiple events.

Item 2: Student Representative Council

Following the results of the StFX Students' Union Strategic Plan General Survey, it is evident the majority of StFX students don't know who their Student Representatives are and do not feel adequately represented by their Representatives. Within the General Survey, despite responses primarily being reactive to the University Avenue residents and following discussions in the 2017-2018 academic year, members expressed their dissatisfaction with their current student representatives. This dissatisfaction was based on their lack of outreach with constituents and advocacy on Council. The Union recognizes the importance of the Council to conduct outreach with constituents, to place an informed vote on behalf of their constituents. The Student

Representative Council should create an effective method to inform constituents and engage these members during consultation processes.

Furthermore, the Union acknowledges the importance to ensure the Student Representatives are equipped with the tools to succeed within their position. The objective is to introduce a Council procedure that is comprehensible and implement a training schedule that will improve Student Representative participation.

Possible methods to improve the Student Representative Council:

- Increase the number and involvement of Students-at-Large on Union Committees;
- Create a formal consultation process/mechanism for all Student Representative to utilize (adjusting the process/mechanism to their respective constituents);
- Improving Council training sessions to increase the overall productivity and effectiveness of Council;
 - Promote better transition within these high turnover positions.
- Look into live stream options for council;
- Move the Annual General Meeting (AGM) date and promote the importance of attendance;
- Develop new Council procedures that allows for more engagement.

Potential barriers when improving the Student Representative Council:

- Current terms of reference and office hours for Student Representatives;
- Lack of applications and vacancies for Student Representative positions;
- Current composition of Council (number of positions);
- Bylaw revisions.

Item 3: Advocacy for Student Issues

The Union acknowledges that it has an obligation and vital role to play in being an advocate for redressing a variety of student issues. These can include but are not limited to socio-economic barriers to university, mental health and wellness, sexualized violence, and campus accessibility. These issues affect each student differently, and the Union needs to be accommodating to that reality in their practices.

Possible methods to advocate for student issues:

- Collaborate with existing university and town resources;
- Utilize the External Affairs Advisory Committee (by conducting outreach) to identify student issues that can be championed through Students Nova Scotia (SNS) and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

Potential barriers when advocating for student issues:

- Those who face systemic barriers to accessing post-secondary education can feel that their Union does not reflect them and are more reluctant to provide feedback because they do not feel empowered to do so.

Item 4: Student Representation and Diversity

The Union recognizes it must represent and provide services to all of its membership. It is clear from the survey results that there is a demographic who is receiving a greater benefit from their membership than others. The Union's objective is to increase the diversity of those holding positions within the organization and better support students representing the voices of historically marginalized members of the StFX community.

Possible methods to increase student representation and diversity:

- Provide more support to the Equity, International, Students of African Descent, and Aboriginal Student Representatives by:
 - Creating connections between the Union and the Mi'kmaq and historic African Nova Scotia communities surrounding Antigonish;
 - Collaborating with the students of African Descent and Aboriginal Descent Advisors, as well as the Gender & Sexual Diversity Advisor and the Office of Internationalization.
- Provide equitable compensations for its volunteers and student leaders to financial barriers to involvement;
- Advocate and support reconciliation within the Students' Union and the university, by introducing and recognizing Indigenous knowledge systems and their role in improving the governance of the Union through consensus decision-making.

Potential barriers to increasing student representation and diversity:

- Push-back from those within the membership who have disproportionately benefited from the Union's status quo;
- University and Students' Union resource allocation;
- Historically difficult/resistant to challenge the status quo.

Item 5: Transparency

The Union continues to fulfil its obligation of effectively representing the voices of students to all relevant stakeholders. Executive and Student Representatives reports are published on the Union's website monthly, and oral reports are provided at the Student Representative Council bi-weekly. Despite these efforts, the survey results indicated that transparency was one of the core values the Union least embodies. Further analysis of the report shows that this stems largely from the recent decision to support the StFX's decision to change Cameron Hall and MacKinnon Hall to fully co-ed residences. Regardless of the reason, it is crucial that the

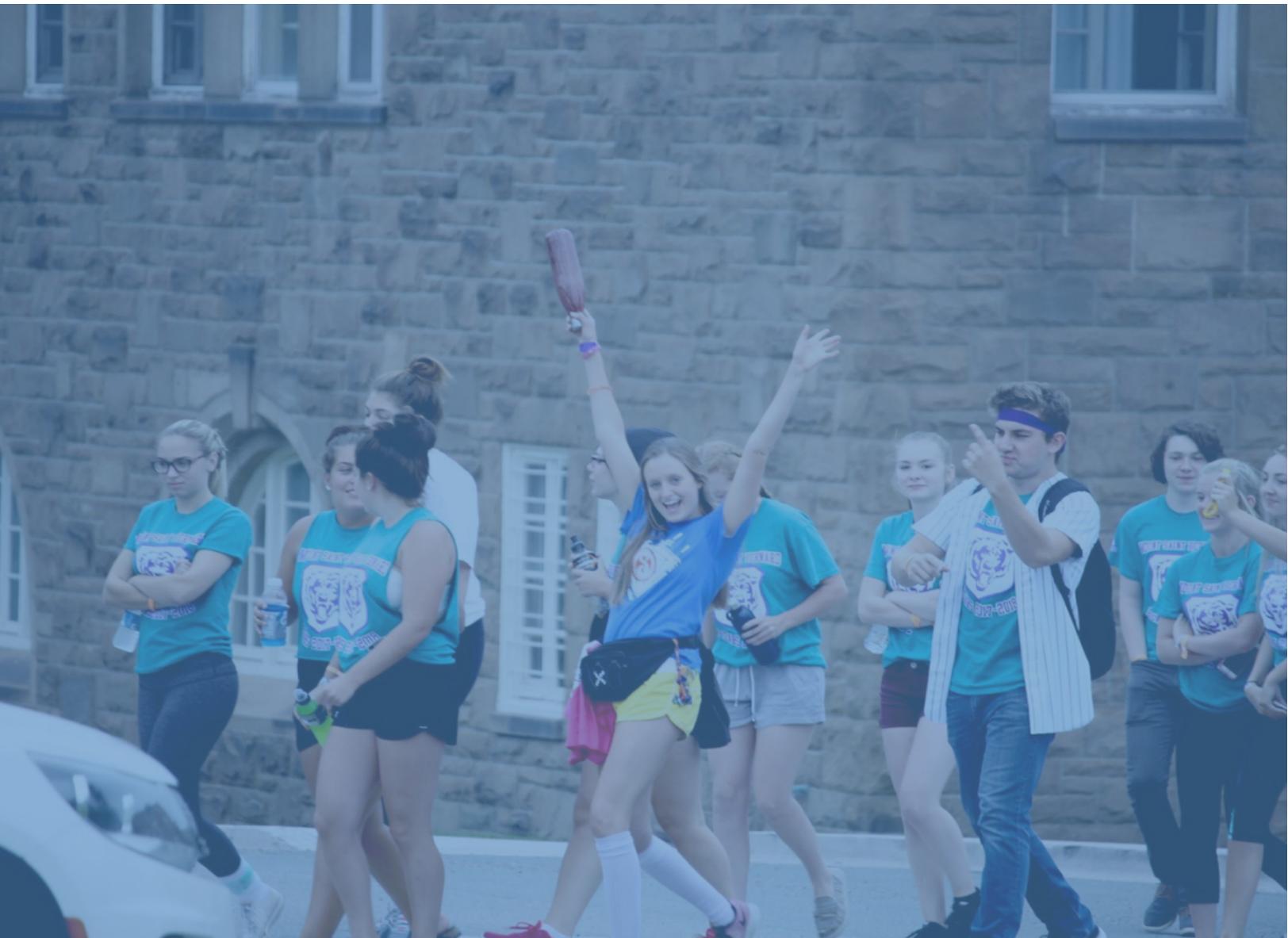
membership feels that their Representatives and those making operational decisions are informed of both students' wants and needs.

Possible methods to increase transparency:

- Strategize with the Communications and Marketing to improve the membership's overall awareness of Union internal affairs;
- Use of social media and the Union's website to provide better access to more information.

Potential barriers to increasing transparency:

- Student apathy to Union affairs;
- Lack of trust in the Union and its representatives.



PILLAR THREE: INCREASED CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Students' Union recognizes the necessity of having sufficient resources to enable and support future initiatives and projects. In order to continue to support and advocate on behalf of students, the Union must evaluate its current capacity to ensure sustainability for the organization. The primary restraint on the Union is resources (physical and monetary) as well as lack of building autonomy. The objective is that the Union shall be able to sustain itself, increase its capacity of services and job opportunities for the membership.

Item 1: Building Autonomy

The Union acknowledges that most other student associations in Canada have a designated space and/or building that provides central access to the resources and services offered to students. There is a growing demand to see this shift occur at StFX. Achieving greater building autonomy is essential for the growth and efficiency of the organization, as well as the overall accessibility of the organization to students.

The Union should renovate existing spaces or create new areas that address the needs of as many demographics in the student body as possible. The objective is to produce a physical environment that welcomes and encourages diversity, and which all students feel a sense of pride, ownership, and connection to. When negotiating greater building autonomy with external parties, the Union will need to take into consideration its capacity to expand both financially and in terms of resources (human resources, construction material, etc.).

Possible methods for increasing building autonomy:

- Renovate fourth-floor lounge space to solidify a proper student lounge (particularly to address the lack of designated informal space for off-campus and international students to convene);
- Expand to the full fourth floor of the Bloomfield Centre and relocate all Union personnel to existing and new office spaces;
- Conduct a student referendum for building renovations (redesign building to meet the needs and wants of all student);
- Work with the University to have the back half of the Bloomfield Centre (facing MacIsaac Hall) accessible for students and visitors with mobility issues.

Potential barriers to increasing building autonomy:

- Lack of existing ownership (office space is leased from the University for \$1.00 a year);
- (Until the Mulroneu project is complete in 2019/2020) lack of existing spaces to re-locate study space for students or administration office space that is currently housed in Bloomfield Centre;
- The desire for University personnel to be in Bloomfield Centre near Union services and resources;

- Financial constraints for the Union.

Item 2: Renovations

Student associations across Canada are facing increased requests from its membership for new services, updated technology, and more welcoming and multifunctional spaces. While the University continues to try and provide upgraded and new infrastructure to remain a leader in the recruitment of students, faculty and research, the Union should also strive for continued upgrades to its spaces to meet the growing needs and expectations of its membership.

The Union will be engaging with the University in the coming year to evaluate all the office, meeting, study, and living spaces that could be available or built in the Bloomfield Center. This should not eliminate continued efforts to renovate current Union spaces as outlined in the *Lease Agreement*.

Possible areas for renovation:

- Golden X Inn;
- Xaverian Weekly Offices;
- Dedicated Health and Dental Plan Office;
- Relocating the Student Food Resource Center to Bloomfield;
- X-Denn Consignment Shop.

Potential barriers to renovations:

- Reliance on student referendums to finance projects;
- Reliance on overtaxed University Facilities Management services as well as their inflated prices for services;
- Sourcing affordable external vendors, architects, construction companies to complete the work.

Item 3: Food services

Most post-secondary institutions across Canada have a food services contract with an external company. Many of these contracts either exclude the student organization from the contract or recognize them as a stakeholder in the agreements. The Union's objective is to be recognized as a stakeholder on any new food services contract or agreement, should the University renegotiate their current contract or enter into a new contract or agreement with the existing provider or a new provider.

Possible methods to improve food services:

- Have the Union be recognized as an independent entity from the University's food contract in order to enable the autonomy to solicit from external providers for contracted

food services and to be exempt from restrictions put in place by the University's food service providers;

- Renovate the Golden X Inn and explore the addition of a kitchen and food service area to enable it to provide its own food services;
- Collaborate with the University's food service provider to support the Student Food Resource Centre and create additional food security programs.

Potential barriers to improving food services:

- Resistance from the University and their food service provider to Union autonomy from the contract;
- Additional costs and resources to add and maintain a kitchen and food service for the Golden X Inn.

Item 4: Students' Union Fee Evaluation

The StFX Students' Union has one of the lowest student union fees in the country. With the rising cost of tuition, additional fees, and the cost of living, the Union recognizes it must keep our fees as affordable as possible. The Union has been operating at its maximum capacity and may run the risk of no longer providing the services and necessary improvements at its current rate.

In 2019, the Union will be at the end of the Student Representative Council's previous recommendation of a 3% increase to the Students' Union fee over five years. All Union positions—except for the Golden X Inn, Info Desk, Drive U, Part-Time and Full-Time staff—receive an honorarium pay that is a fraction of minimum wage in Nova Scotia. These volunteer positions are out of step in regard to financial compensation and have not had an increase since 2015.

Possible methods to evaluate the fee:

- Review the compensation structure for all volunteer positions within the organization to understand which roles need prioritization for wage increases;
- Review compensation structures of similar student associations within the province and across Canada to provide the best recommendation to the Student Representative Council for compensation changes and office hour adjustments;
- As identified in the survey as the most preferred option (65.5%), increase the Students' Union fee by \$10 each year for the next five years.

Potential barriers to evaluating the fee:

- Burdening students with increased costs;

Item 5: Review of Terms of Reference for Union Positions

By 2022, the Students' Union will undergo a review of all the terms of reference outlined in the By-laws. This review will focus on terms of reference for Executive, Council, Associate positions, Part-Time and Full-Time staff. This review must involve consultation with the current staff occupying these positions.

Before any changes are made, the full By-laws and Policy Manual must be consulted to review where direct and indirect impacts may exist.

Areas for review are outlined but not limited to job description, election practices, hiring practices, office hours, committee work, external responsibilities, compensation, and reporting structure.

Possible methods to review terms of reference:

- Line-by-line review of the By-laws to highlight inconsistencies, lack of definition and outdated practices or positions;
- Once a review is completed, consult a lawyer or third-party provider with a specialty for By-laws and not-for-profit regulations;
- Submit all changes to the *By-law and Policy Committee* and then to Council for review and adoption.

Potential barriers to reviewing terms of reference:

- Timeline and breadth of changes;
- Outstanding review of the Impeachment By-law recommendations from 2017-18.

Item 6: Review of By-laws and Council Procedures

The Union recognizes its obligation to possess updated and thorough governing documents. As a not-for-profit organization, the Union understands the importance of reviewing its By-laws and addressing all ambiguities in the document. The objective is for the Union to review and revise the By-laws in their entirety. The StFX Students' Union By-laws will then be reviewed with legal consultation. The Students' Union By-laws are not at the calibre they should be for an organization of this magnitude. Such a revision will increase the transparency of the organization for its membership.

Possible methods to review by-laws and council procedures:

- Review By-laws with legal consultation;
- Produce an individualized set of Council Procedures with legal consultation.

Potential barriers to reviewing By-laws and Council Procedures:

- Time-consuming process and potential reluctance from members of Council to commit to the revision project

MEASURABLES OF SUCCESS

- Each Executive Team create an annual plan, approved at the AGM, that is shaped around the strategic plan and their objectives;
- An Annual Report: each President publishes a Year-in-Review at the end of their term identifying the outcomes of the respective plan so that the next Executive Team can identify what aspects of the strategic plan still need to be addressed/completed;
- Beginning a yearly satisfaction survey to highlight the impact of decisions made by the Executive Team and Council at the end of each year. This survey can be used for consideration by the student leaders transitioning into the positions for the coming year;
- Supported and successful referendum for increases to the Union fee and Building Renovation fee;
- More diversified attendance at Union events.





StFX Students' Union
For Students, By Students.

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP TO
STUDENTS**

TRUST, INTEGRITY, RESPECT

**TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY**

**FUN, INCLUSIVE STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT**

**SUSTAINABLE, INNOVATIVE
PRACTICES**