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Dear Interim Director Cara DiGirolamo,

It has been a pleasure working along side you for two years. Enclosed is a formal report with recommendations on how to increase and maintain participation in the Creative Writing Student Association (CWSA).

The report includes an extensive background on the CWSA and the roles available. Research consisted of a survey to all CWSA members, interviews with the Social and Executive Committee, reviewing the Sandbox and reading academic articles on student participation.

The goal is that these recommendations will structure discussions on new initiatives for the future CWSA Chair, Executive and Social Committee members.

Feel free to contact me at sidney@ssidney.com if there are any questions.

My Best Regards,
Sidney Singh
CWSA Secretary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
INCREASING AND MAINTAINING
STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE
CREATIVE WRITING STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

Submitted to: CWSA Interim Director Cara DiGirolamo
Distribution Date: April 23rd 2022

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Abstract

This report contains recommendations on how to increase and maintain student participation in the Creative Writing Student Association (CWSA). Members include students enrolled in the following programs:

- Undergraduate major in Creative Writing
- Master of Fine Arts in Creative writing on campus and Optional Residency
- Master in Theater and Creative Writing
- Master of Film Production and Creative Writing
- Master of Children's Literature.

Primary sources included a survey to all members and interviews with the CWSA Executive and Social committee. Secondary sources include the information provided on the UBC Creative Writing website, the official BFA and MFA handbook, the CWSA Sandbox and academic research and articles on student participation. Recommendations include building a CWSA website and creating leadership roles in the Social Committee.

Introduction to CWSA

History of the CWSA

Created in 2010 the CWSA represents the needs and concerns of the membership

(UBCCreativeWriting.com). In the 2020-2021 Winter Term the CWSA constitution went under a historic revision. Historically, members of the Executive Committee were tasked with planning social events along with their duties as faculty liaisons. Revisions to the constitution allowed for the creation of a separate social committee to facilitate events.

These revisions went into effect in the 2021-2022 Winter term.

Revisions relevant for the Report

The following revisions are the most relevant to this report.

- Revision to article 5 which enabled the creation of the CWSA social committee.
- Revision to article 6 which allowed students enrolled in the Master of Children's Literature degree to become CWSA members.
- Revision to article 8.3 which allows multiple BFA students to assume roles in the Social Committee. This revision also stipulated that it is the Chair's responsibility to engage interest in volunteering and if not, possible elected representatives will assume additional responsibilities.
- The creation of section 8.2.2 which allows CWSA to form ad-hoc committees if needed.

Roles within the CWSA

- **CWSA Chair:** The only paid position within CWSA and is considered a WorkLearn opportunity. The Chair is formally hired by the Creative Writing Department Director in September. Responsibilities include organizing, sending notice and overseeing monthly CWSA meetings, bringing students concerns and interests to faculty meetings. Communicating with the Opt. Res MFA and BFA student representatives. The Chair can

also organize social events if they choose. The CWSA Chair can only serve for one full calendar year term.

- **CWSA Interim Director:** Same responsibilities as the CWSA Chair. This position is created to allow a previous CWSA Chair to serve a second term.
- **CWSA Secretary:** Volunteer position. Can be either a BFA or MFA student. The secretary is elected by the CWSA. Attend monthly meetings and write the minutes. Secretary is a member of the Executive Committee and may attend faculty meetings if they wish.
- **Optional Residency Representative:** Volunteer position. Must be an Opt. Res MFA student. Elected by the Optional Residency Master of Fine Arts students. Responsibilities include bringing Opt. Res students needs and concerns to the CWSA Chair and faculty. Attending CWSA and faculty meetings. More than one student can hold this position.
- **BFA Representative:** Volunteer position. Must be a current BFA student. Elected by the BFA students. Responsibilities include bringing students needs and concerns to the CWSA Chair and faculty. More than one student can hold this position.
- **Locution Hosts:** Volunteer position. Must be an MFA student. Self nominated. Responsibilities include organizing a monthly MFA student reading either on ZOOM or in person. Host may have to book a venue, find catering and /or secure a paid guests to attend the event. More than one student can hold this position. Hosts are members of the social committee.
- **OutWrite Hosts:** Volunteer position. Must be a BFA student. Self nominated. Responsibilities include organizing a monthly BFA student reading either on ZOOM or

in person. Host may have to book a venue and find catering. Hosts are members of the Social Committee.

Former CWSA Structure

Chair
Secretary
MFA Representative
BFA Representative

Table 1

Current CWSA Structure

Executive	Social Committee
Chair	Secretary- if needed
Secretary	OutWrite Hosts
Optional Residency Representative	Locution Hosts
BFA Representative	

Ad-hoc committees can be formed if needed

Table 2

CWSA Sandbox

The CWSA Sandbox canvas course was created to inform membership about the structure of the CWSA and opportunities hosted by the Department. Currently it is managed by members of the Executive Committee.

Overview of Problem and Purpose of Report

These revisions allow for more members of CWSA to participate. Ensuring an ample number of participants seeking to fulfill volunteer positions will allow the CWSA to flourish in the future.

Methods

Research included a survey distributed through a secure UBC mailing list and interviews with the Executive and Social Committee.

Scope of Surveys

1. What events are the members attending?
2. Do they review the CWSA sandbox?
3. What inspires current CWSA Executives and Social Committee members to assume these positions?

Scope of Interviews

1. What motivated them to volunteer for CWSA?
2. How many hours per week are devoted to CWSA related activities?

Data Section

A 12-question survey that included, multiple choice, rankings and optional text boxes was sent to the CWSA membership through a secure UBC email. 16 surveys were completed alongside email interviews with Interim Director Cara DiGirolamo, Optional Residency Representatives

Sonia Di Placido and Shae Johnston and Social Committee members and Outwrite host Micah Pyre.

For the survey 7 participants self identified as Master of Fine Arts students, 6 as Bachelor of Fine Arts students and 1 as a Master of Creative Writing and Theatre student.

Events

The CWSA hosts a number of events which includes staples like OutWrite and Locution and recent additions such as the Fan Fiction Writing contest. There are no external incentives like gift card or prizes for members to attend. Members participate because they want to and because they can (Kumler and Whitaker 177).

Circle Graph Representing the Results for Question 2

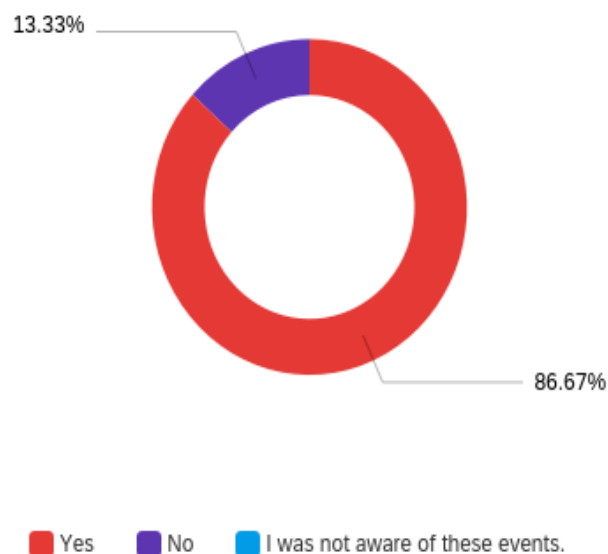


Figure 3

Graph shows that the majority of survey respondents have attended a CWSA event.

86% of respondents reported they have attended a CWSA event whereas 30% reported to have attended a CWSA meeting.

79% of respondents answered they attended CWSA events “to meet fellow students and socialize.”

50% of respondents reported to attending writing related events outside of CWSA. There was an optional text box if respondents wanted to share. Written answers included the Arts Amplifiers Program, Media Conference, UBC Connects, Writing Festival & Seminars, readings, book launches, author interview.

Respondents are clearly engaging with CWSA events.

Communication

Understanding members communication preferences was vital as research from the Pew Research Institute highlights those social media preferences vary for different demographics (Pew Research Institute).

Circle Graph representing results from Question 6.

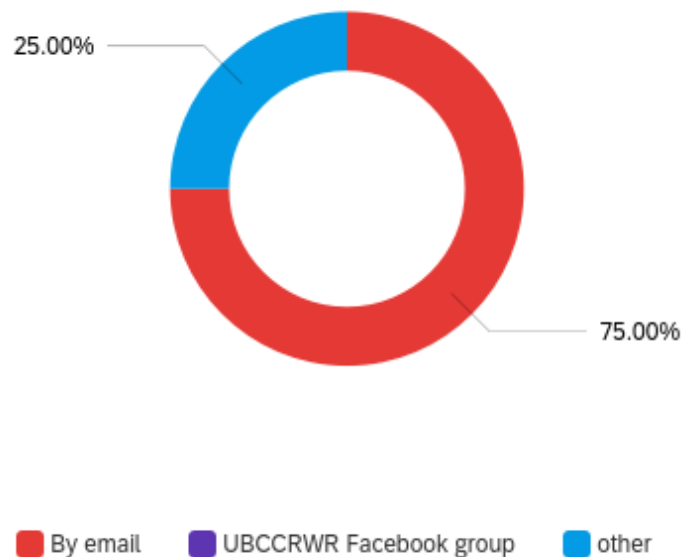


Figure 4

Graph indicates that the majority of survey respondents learned about CWSA through email.

77% of respondents reported they learn about the CWSA through email.

85% of respondents reported to never visiting the CWSA Sandbox Canvas course.

85% of respondents reported that the frequency of reminders of CWSA events is “just right.”

Email is a successful form of communication for CWSA members.

Interviews

Most of the interviewees expressed they joined CWSA in order to meet other students. Time commitment for the CWSA ranged between 1 to 5 hours per week depending on the role’s responsibilities.

Interim Director Cara DiGirolamo expressed that CWSA should have a record of all the events it organizes.

Observations during Research

To understand the role of CWSA better I reviewed documents created by either the CWSA or the Creative Writing Department. Below are a few notes.

- The 2021 MFA Handbook lists the CWSA Chair as a possible Work Learn experience.
- The 2021 BFA Handbook mentions the CWSA and references the BFA Representative as a possible volunteer position. The emails for the CWSA Chair and BFA Rep are provided.
- The CWSA Sandbox states there can be “an unlimited number of volunteer positions that any CWSA member can hold. Anyone can join or show up (to a social committee meeting) ...”
- There is a diverse array of social media channels the CWSA uses to maintain communication. This includes, BFA and MFA mailing lists, a BFA Facebook group, an

MFA Facebook group and the UBC Creative Writing Forum. The Facebook group and forum also contains information about events external to the CWSA and UBC.

These notes informed the recommendation to create a CWSA website.

Conclusion

The surveys demonstrated that members want to participate in CWSA. There is interest in the CWSA volunteer and paid positions. Members are interested in socializing with other Creative Writing students. Creating more informal opportunities for members to socialize with one another may help in finding new volunteers. The membership of CWSA covers a variety of degree programs thus creating a comprehensive communication channel may help in reaching members. Researching further required into CWSA member's social media preferences could help connect members to one another. The recommendations may inspire thought and discussion on member participation.

Recommendations

- Creating a concise CWSA exclusive website similar to the English Student Association (ESA) and Arts Undergraduates Society (AUS). They have clear and concise websites and webpages that effectively inform readers of their organization purpose and goals. This initiative may help in advertising the Association better among the wider UBC community and members. Content can be exclusively focused on the CWSA.
- Maintaining the CWSA mailing lists and ensuring it is compatible with all major email services in order for members to receive messages in a timely fashion.
- Creating leadership roles within the Social Committee to help facilitate and oversee social events. This role should be discussed in further depth in future CWSA meetings with all Social Committee members in attendance.

- Drafting creative, informal and low-cost social events to meet more member and recruit possible volunteers. The surveys indicated that members attend CWSA events to socialize with other another.

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Appendix

Survey questions.

Introduction - Creative Writing at UBC is great but let's make it awesome! How can the Creative Student Association support you? I am an UBC Bachelor of Fine Arts student and the current Creative Writing Student Association Secretary engaged in project for ENGL 301. The purpose of this survey is to obtain primary data on student engagement within CWSA. The final formal report will be addressed to members of the CWSA Executive and Social Committee. The data collected will inform a list of recommendations for increasing and maintain student participation in CWSA. The survey contains 12 questions and should take approximately 5-10 minutes. All responses are voluntary and anonymous. Thank you for participation in my survey.

1. Which program do you belong to?
 - a) Creative Writing Bachelor of Fine Arts
 - b) Creative Writing Master of Fine Arts
 - c) MACL Master of Children's Literature
 - d) Master of Creative Writing and Theatre
 - e) Master of Creative Writing and Film Production

2. Have you attended a CWSA event? Such as OutWrite, Locution, Chat and Writes, Fan Fiction Contest, Comic Speaker Series...
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

- c) I was not aware of these events
3. Have you attended a CWSA Meeting? Such as the AGM or monthly meetings.
- a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) I was not aware of these meetings
4. Why did you attend a CWSA Meeting?
- a) To bring forward ideas to the CWSA members
 - b) To meet other students
 - c) prefer not to share
 - d) I have not attended a CWSA meeting
 - e) other
5. Why did you attend a CWSA event?
- a) To meet fellow students/socialize
 - b) To learn more about writing or the industry
 - c) I have not attended a CWSA event
6. How did you learn about CWSA?
- a) By email
 - b) UBCCRWR Facebook group
 - c) Other
7. Which opportunities sound appealing to you?
- a) Bachelor of Fine Arts Representative
 - b) Optional Residency Representative
 - c) Creative Writing Student Association Chair-Paid Position

- d) Creative Writing Student Association Social Media Manager
 - e) OutWrite Event Hosts
 - f) Creative Writing Student Association Secretary
8. Please rank the CWSA communication channels by personal preference. 1-highest, 3 lowest.
- a) CWSA Sandbox Course
 - b) Email
 - c) Facebook Group
9. How frequently do you visit the CWSA Sandbox Canvas course?
- a) Never
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) About half the time
 - d) Most of the time
 - e) Always
10. Reminders of CWSA events are
- a) Very few
 - b) Slightly too few
 - c) Frequency is just right
 - d) Too many reminders
11. Do you visit or participate in other writing related events hosted outside of CWSA?
- a) yes. could you share what events you have attended?
 - b) No
12. If there are any events/programs you would like to see organized by CWSA?

Interview Questions

What is your position in CWSA?

How long have you held this position?

Why did you decide to participate in CWSA?

How many hours per week were are devoted to CWSA related activities?

How would you describe your experience at CWSA?

What do you hope to achieve during your tenure at CWSA?