

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS RETREAT REPORT

The USC's Board of Directors embarked on its first annual retreat in January 2016. The goal of the retreat was to provide an outlet for directors to voice concerns and opinions about the current and future positioning of the Board of Directors in a collegial and contemplative atmosphere. The focus of the discussions was a detailed analysis of strategy and risk within the organization, improvements to the Board itself, and examining the Board's interactions with the university and London community.

Breakout Session 1 - The Future of the Board of Directors: Strategy, Independence, Committees, Finances and Responsibilities

Recommendation 1: More explicit timelines and responsibilities in the Board recruitment process. Ensure new directors are informed of mandatory training sessions that will occur in March/April of the same academic year.

Recommendation 2: The implementation of bimonthly meetings. The Board Calendar would have its regularly scheduled meeting later in the month with an earlier Board meeting occurring under the procedures of "committee of a whole." Here Directors can talk freely and openly about concerns, ideas and strategies.

In addition, regularly-scheduled Board meetings can also include a topic for information/discussion at the beginning. These topics would allow for the development of new Directors, but also give the Board issues of further thought (i.e., a meeting could begin with a discussion on the challenges of the USC's Food and Beverage Department).

Recommendation 3: Implement more public stakeholder relationships and stronger community engagement. Introduce the Directors to the organization in a similar vein to the Executive. Include a USC Tour as an addition to Board development, introducing Directors to staff (particularly senior management).

Introduce more opportunities for Directors to engage with students (i.e. the USC Involvement Expo) and actively become a part of the USC community. Develop a job recruitment strategy, including promotions and awareness.

Recommendation 4: Create an Audit and Advisory Subcommittee of the Board of Directors, to be comprised partially of external members from the USC and Western community.

Breakout Session 2 – The 2016/2017 Budget: Challenges and Changes

Recommendation 1: Create a "traffic light" system that coordinates and compares the Long-Term Strategic Plan and the Annual Budget. This will identify budget deviations from the strategic plan, and highlight areas that are on course.

Recommendation 2: Create Board budget operational policies that provide guidelines to certain fiscal discussions (i.e. student fees vs. user pay models). Directors can then have benchmarks for discussion on budget points.

Breakout Session 3 – The Board and the 2016 Strategic Plan

Recommendation 1: Create measurable systems that will allow the Board of Directors to monitor the justification of the upcoming strategic plan. This can include answers to such questions as, "What is a number of survey respondents that quantifies due diligence" or, "What are the community partners and stakeholders that must be consulted in the drafting process?"

Recommendation 2: Begin the 2016 Strategic Plan process, and create a committee comprised of Board, management and Council to begin developing a timeline.

Breakout Session 4 – Continuous Improvement Models: Assessment, Risk and Strategy of the Corporation

Recommendation 1: Create training and modules that close the knowledge gap between Directors and the many facets of the organization. This can include aforementioned USC engagement, but may also include external consultation and training to understand the broader London and Ontario context for student union organizations and non-for-profits.