



Dalhousie Student Union Building | 6136 University Avenue  
PO Box 15000 | Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 4R2  
T 902.494.2140 F 902.494.5185 dsu.ca • @dalstudentunion

March 9, 2021

**To: BAC Chair, acting Provost Frank Harvey, and Vice President Finance & Admin Gitta Kulczycki,**

On behalf of over 19,000 students studying at Dalhousie University, we are sharing our concerns regarding Dalhousie University's proposed 2021/22 budget. At the beginning of the summer 2020 semester, the DSU and its members voiced concerns about the 3% tuition increase instated this past Fall, and the additional \$1473 increase for International students. Since then, the DSU has continued to advocate for adequate support for students whose finances and wellbeing have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and increased university fees. The DSU is recommending that Dalhousie do the following:

- Remove all tuition increases and freeze tuition for both domestic and international students.
- Develop a sustainable budget that moves towards universally accessible education.
- Lobby the provincial and federal government to increase funding for post-secondary institutions.

**Remove all tuition increases and freeze tuition for both domestic and international students.**

Students on campus continue to voice concerns about the rising cost of tuition and financial barriers attached to accessing post-secondary education. When quarantine restrictions were implemented across the globe last March, the precarious nature of students' financial realities only heightened. Many students faced and continue to face loss of employment, food insecurity and increasing anxiety given the global uncertainty.

International students in Nova Scotia continue to pay upwards of \$19,000 and climbing each year, which is more than double the amount of tuition that their domestic peers pay. Moreover, they have significantly less health care coverage, more barriers preventing them from accessing CERB and other financial assistance programs, and this year alone the both the province and the university has already required them to pay up to \$1600 in hotel costs to return to Halifax, which was not required by students entering the province from other regions of Canada or Canadian students who were returning from an international trip. Dalhousie prides itself on claiming to create a fair, diverse, and accessible community. Raising international student fees exorbitantly and defending the decision by comparing these fees to others in the country directly contradicts these claims. If Dalhousie wants to create a fair and accessible community on campus and online for the international community, they must prioritize the wellbeing of their current students who cannot continue to pay these rising fees.



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As our one-year anniversary of the pandemic quickly approaches, a promising solution that caters to the immediate needs of students has yet to be presented. Imposing increases in tuition fees during a pandemic shows that Dalhousie University has not taken the necessary steps to address the financial concerns faced by all students. Moreover, the lack of engagement with students about this issue and possible solutions is creating an environment of distrust between students and Dalhousie's administration. Dalhousie can begin to amend the divide by removing all proposed tuition increases for the 2021/2022 academic year and freezing tuition.

### **Develop a sustainable budget that moves towards universally accessible education.**

Given the current global circumstances, Dalhousie is still projecting an increase in enrollment by 4.8%. Tuition currently makes up over 42% of Dalhousie current revenue, meaning students are the institution's second largest investor. To ensure our campus is equipped with the supports and services needed to create a healthy learning environment, Dalhousie must work alongside students, faculty and staff to ensure the budget is reflective of our needs.

The 2021-2022 draft budget included investments into a variety of grant and scholarship programs, such as the First Nations and Indigenous Black (FNIB) Student Scholarship. Scholarships for marginalized groups must be maintained to assist groups who face systematic barriers when accessing post-secondary education. However, blanket scholarships intended to bridge the divide created by rising tuition fees are insufficient, largely because they can only be obtained by a fraction of the student population and at-risk students are falling through the system's cracks. These funds should be used to decrease or stabilize current tuition and ancillary fees for all students.

### **Lobby the provincial and federal government to increase funding for post-secondary institutions.**

We can work alongside each other and lobby the federal and provincial governments to increase their funding to post-secondary institutions. The current memorandum of understanding between the Province of Nova Scotia and the province's universities states that each institution's Operating Grant will increase by "not less than (1%) from the previous year" on a yearly basis. This mandated 1% increase is insufficient when faculty salaries, expenses, and inflation increase at faster rates.

In 2010/2011, 60% of Dalhousie University's revenue was from government sources, with only 31% of revenue coming from tuition and fees. Last year, government funding (49%) barely edged out tuition and fee revenue (42%). More and more of the costs of running and maintaining our universities are being offloaded onto students. Education is both a right and a necessity within today's society. We need public investment in our public education system. For us to maintain the development of innovative technology, we must ensure the institutions that fund them are adequately funded, and not at the expense of students.



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**In conclusion**, we call on the Budget Advisory Committee to develop a 2021-2022 draft operating budget that does not include tuition fee and fee increases.

Furthermore, students want to see a longer timeframe for their feedback to be sought and considered by BAC. We ask that initial feedback be collected via email up until April 1, 2021 and frequent communications and updates are made available following the deadline.

Students need the University to step up and seriously consider a new path forward with this operating budget—one that is reflective of the long-term wellbeing of students and the need for accessible post-secondary education in our province and in this country.

Signed,

Dalhousie Student Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Stinson'.

Madeleine Stinson, DSU President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Stewart'.

Hanna Stewart, Vice President Internal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Seelemann'.

Erica Seelemann, Vice President Academic and External

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I Wright'.

Isa Wright, Vice President Finance and Operations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Ghiz'.

Jad Ghiz, Vice President Student Life



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**More information:**

Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710004501>

Budget Advisory Committee Report LX:

<https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/financial-services/Reports/BAC%20Reports/Budget%20Advisory%20Committee%20Report%20LX.pdf>

Proposed 2021-22 operating budget: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/financial-services/budget.html#:~:text=Budget%20plan%20highlights,by%20the%20Board%20in%202019>

<https://www.dal.ca/dept/financial-services/budget.html#:~:text=Budget%20plan%20highlights,by%20the%20Board%20in%202019>