Reject the Fees: Why Rising Tuition Impacts Us All

Planning our post-Covid return to campus, Dalhousie is approaching a pivotal time in our history. How will we transition to the 'new normal'? Will Dalhousie’s future be accessible to all? The DSU strongly believes that rising student fees put our community in an impossible position, and show an inertia within our governing bodies.

The following is a sample of student-sourced data, broken down by Faculty, that represents the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and rising fees.

Faculty of Law
- Most students surveyed rely on student loans and grants & bursaries to support themselves.
- Most students said there wasn’t adequate financial aid within the Faculty, or that they weren’t sure what was available.
- Almost half of students work while in school.
- When asked if there was anything else they’d like the Board to know, the following were responses:
  o “I live with constant anxiety about taking on debt. Hiking tuition just because they can feels like a slap in the face.”
  o “I feel like Dalhousie doesn’t care about the students.”
  o “[The tuition increase] could make the difference between continuing my legal education and being forced to stop and work…”
  o “The Dal administration’s behaviour during the pandemic with 100% impact my future decisions I make as far as giving back to the school goes. Really not proud to be a Dal student these days.”
  o “If it wasn’t so challenging to switch law schools, I would leave Dalhousie immediately.”

Faculty of Medicine
- Most students said there wasn’t adequate access to financial aid within the Faculty.
- Almost all students relied on student loans, and at least 2 other sources of aid to support themselves.
- Most students chose not to work to focus on school and their health.
- When asked if there was anything else they’d like the Board to know, the following were responses:
  o “A $600 increase is $50 a month I can’t spend on food and things I need.”
  o “It’s impossible to work while in med school, it’s unfair to increase charges while many students’ families can’t help or have families of their own. Tuition is already very expensive and most of us will be graduating with a huge debt, I hope you reconsider increasing to our debts.”
  o “With fees increasing every year and the resulting debt load at the end of medical school getting higher and higher this directly impacts my decision on
choosing a high demand and low paying speciality like family medicine. It forces my hand toward pursuing a higher paying speciality to overcome the massive debt load I’ve had to take on.”

Faculty of Science

- Students are supported by a wide variety of financial aid options, many work while in school.
- Most students weren’t sure what financial aid options were available to them through the Faculty, or if they adequate.
- A higher rate of students in this Faculty face food insecurity compared to others surveyed.
- When asked if there was anything else they’d like the Board to know, the following were responses:
  - “These fee increases seriously impact how current students regard and will continue to regard Dalhousie as an institution after they graduate and become alumni. These fee increases have dramatically decreased the amount of respect I have for the institution of Dalhousie and will certainly affect how I speak of the institution after I graduate.”
  - “Many international students have not felt that they are being valued by the University with the significant tuition increase and quarantining measures. International students are important members of the Dalhousie community and should be treated as such.”
  - “An increase in tuition fees could result in choosing between keeping a roof over my head, keeping myself... fed, and giving up transportation”.
  - “I am already struggling to stay alive as my mental health has gone downhill significantly. I am working 50 hour weeks and I still don’t have enough money to buy food.”

Faculty of Engineering

- Most students said they have incurred 500.00 in additional fees since moving online.
- Most students said they found it difficult to find employment within the Co-op program.
- Many students were supported by their families in some way, but not entirely.
- A higher rate of students in this Faculty face housing insecurity compared to others surveyed.
- Notable responses about the impact of rising tuition include:
  - “Dalhousie to needs to step up. If rising tuition is necessary, at the very least make sure that the quality of the product students are receiving for their tuition isn’t decreasing.”
  - “It is completely unfair to increase fees for university students that had been struggling as is. The extra money for tuition for some students will be coming out of money for food or other necessities that no one should be going without.”
"I don’t understand why we keep talking about this, Dal doesn’t change for their students."

"It will make it incredibly difficult for me to afford attending Dal with the new international student fees along with the 3% increase on tuition overall."

"I will not be able to continue my degree honestly, I won’t be able to afford it."

"Being from a third world country it is already too expensive and difficult to pay for tuition as an international student. Increasing the tuition will mean more debt and therefore more work to earn more. Spending less time studying and more time working can negatively affect mine/everyone’s grades."