Dalhousie Student Union Report to Board of Governors
Madeleine Stinson, President
June 23, 2020
dsupres@dal.ca

As the newly elected Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) President, it is an honour to sit amongst the members of the Dalhousie Board of Governors. As the world around us shifts, I find myself increasingly humbled to have this opportunity to represent my peers. It is my promise to the Board of Governors to act as a steward for the University’s best interests with the perspective of its most valuable stakeholder in mind - the student body.

DSU Executive Priorities
The executive has identified several key topics that will guide the DSU’s actions and governance over the next year:
- Organizational & environmental sustainability
- Student mental health & well-being
- Affordable & meaningful post-secondary education for all students
- Student engagement & community connection
- Campus consent culture & survivor support
- Support & representation for Queer, Trans, Two Spirit, Black, Indigenous, Persons of Colour (QTBIPOC), and other marginalized student populations

These themes represent the needs and wants of our diverse student population as they relate to the DSU, its mandate, and the greater Dalhousie community.

DSU Internal Planning
The DSU is committed to continuous learning and growth as an institution. This year the executive and staff are taking the opportunity to look through and reform our policies to ensure that they operate on frameworks of harm reduction, survivor-centrism, equity, accessibility, sustainability, and inclusion.

The executive has also agreed to allow for an organizational audit of the DSU in order to identify inefficiencies and allow for optimization of our operations.
The DSU also acknowledges that it cannot be removed from its own history, or the colonial, racist, and oppressive histories of Dalhousie, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Canada. The DSU is taking steps to become an actively anti-oppressive organization. These steps include anti-oppression training opportunities for staff and better support for employees and councillors of the DSU who identify with marginalized communities. Initiatives to better support QTBIPOC students and other marginalized members of the DSU community are ongoing and/or under development.

**DSU Covid-19 Response**

**Student Survey: Covid, Campus & Costs**

In response to the Dalhousie Board of Governor’s recent decision to increase domestic and international tuition during a period of global crisis, the DSU has consulted with students to see what they think about the university’s approach to learning and fees during the Covid-19 pandemic. From this, we created the campaign, #RejectThe3.

The DSU maintains the position that if there ever was a year to *not* increase tuition, that the 2020/21 academic year would be it. While we understand that the university is acting in accordance with its vision to deliver world-class academics, we do not believe that institutional prestige should be valued over the wellbeing and security of students.

The DSU stands in support of students and calls for the Board of Governors to rescind their decision to increase tuition for the 2020/21 academic year, to decrease tuition and remove ancillary fees related to on-campus learning, and to issue partial refunds to students enrolled in the Winter and Summer 2020 terms. We urge members of the Board of Governors to consider the long-term sustainability and well-being of Dalhousie university, students, and the academic community at large.
**DSU Orientation Week**

The preparation for this year’s O-week is underway. Considering the impacts of Covid-19 and the University's decision for the fall semester to occur predominantly online, the DSU has remodeled orientation to include a blended itinerary of online and in-person events. This year's theme, “Dream Big,” is a nod to those who choose to embrace the undefined possibilities of the future, and to challenge the world around them.

Due to the fiscal constraints many students and families are facing as a result of Covid-19 and the fact that our orientation cohort will consist of individuals located across the globe, this year's programming will be delivered at no cost to participants. The DSU plans to substitute the usual schedule of large gatherings for various socially-distanced outdoor events and interactive, online programming.

Depending on the university's decisions for the Winter 2021 semester, the DSU hopes to welcome students back to campus with more substantive “Frost Week” programming.

**DSU Prospective Membership with CFS**

The Dalhousie Student Union remains in a prospective membership with the Nova Scotian chapter of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). Over the past year, the DSU's membership has voiced both support and concern regarding this prospective membership and the DSU's developing relationship with CFS.

This year's executive team has decided to proceed with a referendum vote to allow the members at large to decide what relationship the DSU will pursue with CFS. Until the time that a neutral, information-based referendum can be held (tentatively, Spring 2021), the DSU executive has decided not to engage in any long-term or large-scale partnerships with the CFS.
Dalhousie Student Union Report to Board of Governors
Madeleine Stinson, DSU President
Meeting Date: October 20, 2020
dsupres@dal.ca

DSU Executive Goals

The DSU executive team has recently published their individual goals for the 2020-21 academic year. These goals speak to the needs and wants of our diverse membership as they pertain to each portfolio’s unique relationship with students and the greater Dalhousie community.

A summary of each position’s goals are as follows:

- **President**
  - Review and development of governing documents
  - Collaboration and conversation with Dalhousie University
  - Advocacy for student supports on campus and in the community

- **Vice President, Internal**
  - Collection on, and reporting of student survey data
  - Development of member-oriented resources and policies
  - Facilitating member connection and experience

- **Vice President, Finance and Operations**
  - Optimization of internal financial processes and services
  - Improvement of student funding application and procedures
  - Financial tool and online resource development

- **Vice President, Academic and External**
  - Response to ongoing student issues
  - Advocacy work on behalf of members and the community
  - Development and proposal of student-centric academic procedures

- **Vice President, Student Life**
  - Development of programming in support of the health and wellbeing of members
  - Advocacy for harm reduction, community care, and fun on campus
  - Collaboration with, and support for societies and community

The DSU will continue to work with, and for students, to address key topics and issues over the course of the year, including:

- Student mental health & wellbeing
- Response to QTBIPOC student and community issues, calls to action, & solidarity efforts
- Environmental sustainability and ethical operations
- Local issues, such as the affordable housing crisis and student unemployment in Halifax
- Ongoing and arising issues with impact to the membership
Internal Affairs

Annual General Meeting
The Dalhousie Student Union recently held our Annual General Meeting on October 01, 2020. During this meeting, the audited financial statements and executive reports were presented to the membership. The Vice President, Internal presented the highlights of the DSU Annual Survey, which can be seen in the meeting’s recording. Members were also given the opportunity to ask questions, during which time a variety of student interests were discussed. To accommodate the level of consultation and review that Bylaw development requires, the DSU has decided to host a Special General Meeting in the Winter Semester to present amendments to our current Bylaws, which were ratified in 2016.

SUB Operations
The Dalhousie Student Union Building is now open, 7 days a week, at limited capacity. Some offices, services, and tenants of the SUB have returned to (adapted) in-person services (ex. Foodbank, Bookstore) while others have continued to operate remotely (ex. DSAS, Bissett Centre). Some businesses, such as the Grawood, T-Room, and Campus Copy will remain closed until it is deemed operationally and fiscally feasible to initiate their reopening. The DSU is committed to serving our members by providing access to space and services that contribute to the student experience; we will continue to prioritize both the health and wellbeing of our members, and act in accordance with our mandate.

DSU Orientation: Dream Big & Dream Bigger
This year, the DSU, supported by the Vice President, Student Life, executives, and our O-Week leaders, hosted “Dream Big” and “Dream Bigger”. Dream Big included a wide range of events and content to welcome new students to the Dalhousie community. Highlights of this year’s O-Week programming include a movie showing on the Quad, the annual ‘Sex-Talk’ in coordination with Venus Envy, a yoga class, a virtual tour of Halifax, and multiple concerts. Feature artists at this year’s musical events represented a showcase of local talent, some of whom are Dalhousie students! A first for the DSU, this year’s programming also included Dream Bigger, a series of activities that extended into the fall semester for student groups both on and off campuses.
Student Interests

Tuition at Dalhousie has continued to rise, now to the point where domestic undergraduate students at Dal are purchasing one of the most expensive post-secondary educations in Canada. Since the NS tuition freeze was lifted in 2011, Dalhousie students have watched tuition rise above the rate of inflation and at their expense. Specific note must be given to international students at Dalhousie, who pay even higher fees than domestic students. In response to the annual rise in fees, the DSU has organized 2 campaigns since May: Reject the 3, and Nova Scotia Needs Students.

These ongoing increases are particularly troubling when observed in a national and regional context. Over the course of just four years this, a combination of compounded increases in Nova Scotia and a major tuition decrease in Ontario in 2019/20 have led to Nova Scotia holding the title of ‘Highest Tuition Fees in Canada.’ It is continually concerning that Dalhousie is becoming increasingly reliant on tuition revenue, while public funding stagnates.
Covid-19 has impacted us all, but students have been clear in communicating that they feel the University has taken advantage of them and the circumstances. While Dalhousie has seen an increase in enrollment and their operating budget, many students are facing new and overwhelming barriers to accessing an education. Not only due students owe more to Dalhousie this year, they are also experiencing an increase in unemployment, decrease in available housing, and minimal access to government support.

Now, at a time when students have paid their fees and are attempting to adjust to online learning, concern is growing around the potential for a Dalhousie Faculty Association strike. **The DFA’s working conditions are our learning conditions.** For students to succeed in academic studies, Faculty must have access to a working environment that supports and respect them and their work. Students want to learn and complete their studies without more disruptions – there are already too many barriers. The DSU hopes that the University will come to the bargaining table in good faith, to ensure that students will not lose more value from the Dalhousie experience than they already have.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals outline the need to ensure “inclusive and equitable quality education” for all. Yet, Dalhousie continues to play a role in perpetuating the existence of barriers that prevent meaningful access to a post-secondary education. Among other factors present at Dalhousie, high tuition and fees prevent the creation of a space where ALL students can participate and excel without experiencing financial hardship. The DSU believes that the future of education is accessible to all – when will Dalhousie get on board?
Report of the Dalhousie Student Union President: Board Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Madeleine Stinson, DSU President

Reporting Period: May 2020 – October 2020
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Academic Affairs

Tuition & Fees

The Dalhousie Student Union has continued to bring forward concerns related to tuition and fees at Dalhousie, as have past student representatives. However, it must again be said that the DSU stands in solidarity with students against rising fees. Dalhousie must work to be a part of the future of academia; the DSU believes that this future includes equitable access to education. We urge the Board to consider taking a more inclusive approach to student fees by reducing (and ultimately eliminating) international and domestic tuition. This topic will continue to be reported on at Board meetings, as it has been in the past.

Academic Workload

Due to Covid-19, academic delivery at Dalhousie has moved primarily online. As the semester has progressed, the DSU has become aware of an increasing amount of student concerns related to online learning. Primarily, students have indicated that the current workload far exceeds their capacity. This sentiment is easily evidenced through the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences discussion board, posted to Brightspace. Despite the best intentions of teaching staff, activities intended to engage students have become too much, and amount to hours of additional work each week that students must complete. The Dalhousie Student Union is currently in the brainstorming phase of exploring options to work with administration and faculty to address academic workload issues. Next steps are anticipated to include data collection and analysis and we invite interested parties to reach out for collaboration.

The DSU has also been made aware that working groups and/or committees may have been created to assist in the development of online learning that do not include student representation. The DSU would like to request that students be present in all groups related to the development of online learning to ensure a responsible and equitable learning environment is fostered.
The DSU also believes it to be reasonably assumed that we are amid a student mental health and wellbeing crisis. Building off previous requests related to mental health services on our campuses, we believe that immediate and significant University action is required to address the declining health of our student community.

Faculty Association Bargaining

The DFA’s working conditions are our learning conditions. For students to succeed in academic studies, Faculty must have access to a working environment that supports and respect them and their work. Students want to learn and complete their studies without more disruptions – there are already too many barriers. The Dalhousie Student Union council has recently voted in favor of solidarity with our Faculty Association.

The Dalhousie Student Union executive team has also spoken with administration regarding recent communications sent to students about a potential strike. The DSU is happy to provide feedback on the student perspective to guide communications, as was asked of us. However, despite specific discussions, the student perspective was not utilized in recent memos, resulting in harm to the student community. We firmly believe that students should have access to vital information regarding their education without being forced to engage with bias. Students are feeling alienated, frustrated, and are now unsure of the University's willingness to bargain in good faith with our faculty union and its members. The recent messaging from the University has been interpreted as a clear signal that the administration prefers to prioritize their reputation and defer blame over providing accurate and unbiased information to students. The DSU will continue to work with both the University and DFA to support students in an appropriate manner.

Student Ratings of Instruction

As was voted by Senate earlier this academic year, Student Ratings of Instruction have been effectively suspended. While data will be collected and viewed by teaching staff, it will not be used in any official capacity. The Dalhousie Student Union urges the Board to consider working with Senate and Faculty to maintain annual data collection while ensuring faculty are fairly evaluated given the circumstances. The DSU believes that collecting data from students is essential for the University to responsibly develop Dalhousie’s capacity for online learning and teaching.

Student Experience

University Governance

As was discussed at the last (October 2020) Board meeting, students have shown growing concern with the University’s governance, including spending patterns. Feedback has indicated that students no longer feel that the Board considers the best interests of students or the academic community; as would be expected for a University. Dalhousie’s increasing dependency on student fees as a source of revenue has been questioned by students. Members
of the DSU are also concerned with the quality and accessibility of student services, supports, and academic resources, including faculty.

The compounding actions of the Board have increased the relational distance between the University and students. “Us versus Them” language is now commonplace in conversations regarding the Board, University, and students due to the perception that the Board is working against students rather than for them. While the Board’s main responsibility is to represent the interests of the University, students feel that they have been reduced to a source of revenue, as opposed to being valued members of the Dalhousie community.

Students are essential to achieving the goals outlined in Dalhousie’s Strategic Plan, as well as fulfilling the University’s stated vision and mission. For Dalhousie to succeed the University’s relationship with students must be repaired. To better support students, we must examine the methods used to govern Dalhousie and determine if they are the best or simply what has always been done.

**University Spending**

At the October 2020 meeting of the Board of Governors there was discussion on how Dalhousie’s spending patterns have raised concern from students. To provide support on this point, an analysis of the growth rates of several of the University’s Responsibility Centre Expenditure lines has been conducted.

Comparison of academic and student support to administration expenditures is only one way to view the data on Dalhousie’s spending patterns. Additional research, not completed by the DSU, has also noted a decline in finances being allocated towards the operating budget and an increase in funding to infrastructure development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range Minimum</th>
<th>Range Maximum</th>
<th>Dalhousie Responsibility Centre Expenditures: Rates of Growth</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Actual Academic Expenditure</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
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<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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*Note: R.O.G = Relative Operating Growth*

**Figure 1: Dalhousie Responsibility Centre Expenditure Growth Rates, 2010-2020 (including outlier year)**
Figure 1 shows that Dalhousie’s annual Actual Administration Expenditure has grown slightly more than that of Actual Academic Expenditures over the last decade.

Figure 2 shows that comparatively, Actual Administrative Expenditure had the largest year-over-year growth in 2012-13 and 2017-18. It also never grew the least year-over-year, relative to the other expenditures shown. While Actual Administrative Expenditure has consistently grown, other expenditures like Student Services have often shown negative growth rates.

Based on Figure 2, the following can also be reasonably assumed:

- The growth of Dalhousie’s Actual Administration Expenditure has been more consistent than Academic, Academic Support, and Student Service Expenditure. This may be a sign that variables impacting expenditure do not have as large an impact on administrative costs as they do academic and student-related costs.

In conversation on University spending, it must also be noted that the Dalhousie Student Union urges to Board to consider divestment from all organizations that benefit from fossil fuel use and private prison operations. As of fall 2020, the DSU has divested from companies that:

- Derive profits from fossil-fuel related activities;
- Derive profits from mining/quarrying;
- Hold a record of cautions or conviction for pollution;
- Operate in a manner that falls below recognized standards for human rights and labour standards;
- Operate in a manner that lacks respect for Indigenous peoples;
- Derive profits from weapon/weapon systems productions; and/or
- Derive profits from alcohol or gambling-related activities.
These divestments were requested in accordance with the DSU’s Responsible Investment Policy, ratified by Council.

Society Events

Over the past few months, the Dalhousie Student Union executive team has worked with the Dalhousie Return to Campus Committee to retake the responsibility to approve society events, as is its purview according to Nova Scotia Legislature. The DSU is set to resume society event approvals the week of October 26, 2020.

It must be noted that despite being promised a seat on the Dalhousie Return to Campus Committee on numerous occasions, this committee lacks student representation to date.

Annual Survey

The DSU presented the results of the 2019-20 Annual Survey this fall at the Annual General Meeting. We expect to be prepared to share the 2019-20 DSU Annual Survey Report at the next meeting of ASAC.
Report of the Dalhousie Student Union Report to Board of Governors

Madeleine Stinson, DSU President

Meeting Date: November 24, 2020
dsupres@dal.ca

Fall 2020 DSU Operations

Policy Review & Development

The Dalhousie Student Union is currently working to build its organizational longevity and sustainability. This fall has specifically focused on policy review and development. The entire collection of governing documents is set to be reviewed this year. An Ad Hoc Committee has also been struck to begin work on analyzing the DSU’s policies in relation to survivor centrism. This group will work with students and local experts to assess how the DSU’s policies relate to, and interact with, other policies. This will allow for the DSU to advance its own policies and integrate values that our membership has identified as important, to better support students.

Addressing Food Insecurity

The DSU is currently partnering with several colleagues in the Office of Advancement at Dalhousie to engage alumni around student-led food security initiatives. The DSU Food Bank feeds over 500 students each month and has become one of our most-used, critical services during the Covid-19 pandemic. For Giving Tuesday, the DSU will share information and stories around the DSU Food Bank with the hopes of inspiring alumni to engage with our efforts to address food insecurity on our campuses during the pandemic, and beyond.

Student Life

With students learning off campus and many expressing feelings of isolation, the DSU has been working extensively to inspire connections in the student body. The DSU has coordinated an extended Orientation Week (the first ever!), multiple outdoor events, and is now working to address the lack of appropriate study spaces for students in the city by organizing study halls. The Mental Health Forum has also returned, in coordination with Dalhousie Health and Wellness and is an open space for student-led conversation on mental health in the community. For the month of November, the DSU is also hosting conversations on men’s mental health to have important discussions on the socialization of men and boys; the
relationship between society and transgender men and non-binary individuals; and toxic masculinity and men’s development. The DSU has also coordinated with the Dalplex to offer free yoga classes.

**Covid-19, Campus, & Student Mental Health**

This year has been difficult for us all, and as it draws to a close, the DSU has been reflecting on how to move forward to best support our membership. What the DSU has heard, overwhelmingly, is that students are not OK.

The DSU first brought concerns to the Board related to the mental health of students amid the Covid-19 crisis in early July, 2020. The University responded with shared concerns and noted that they, “have been able to adequately and consistently address all student mental health requests”. Through conversation with Dalhousie Health and Wellness, the DSU has since learned that the demand for mental health and wellbeing services has gone down. However, based on the input we’ve heard from students, we know that mental health concerns are at an all-time high. So where is the disconnect?

From what the DSU has been told, students are at the point where they are far too overwhelmed to find the time and energy to seek professional health services. Some students at Dalhousie have also noted that the current services offered by the University’s health and wellness team do not reflect their needs or fail to create a safe space. Many students also fall within the category that have health concerns but do not require professional health services and would instead like to have access to adequate resources. Overall, students are looking for better support from their institution, and would benefit most from those supports that lessen the demand for their time and energy.

To be a student during a global pandemic has proven stressful, frustrating, physically and mentally exhausting, and in many cases less meaningful than regular in-person instruction. Many students report that their grades are lower than usual this semester. If Dalhousie does not act now, academic futures are in question. Students should not be punished for doing their best to stay afloat in an incredibly challenging semester. Based on student feedback and consultation, the DSU has continued to call for the University to address mental health and wellbeing - for five months now. Recently, the DSU has developed a survey to connect with students about what they need to succeed for the remainder of the semester. This goal of this consultation is to hopefully identify an adequate medium for supporting students that the DSU will then bring forward to Senate, Board, and administration.
DSU Annual Survey 2020

Highlight Presentation
Board Academic and Student Affairs Meeting
December 09, 2020
About the Annual Survey

• Introduced in 2018 as a way to collect information about our members and their priorities
• The 2020 survey ran between July 3 and August 3, receiving 1206 responses
• One of many tools that the DSU uses to engage with and consult members
Respondent Demographics

The majority of our respondents:

- Are undergraduates (73.1%)
- Study on Studley Campus (68.3%)
- Are full-time students (94.5%)
- Are domestic students (78.4%)
- Self-identify as White (45%)
  - 33% self-identified as Black, Indigenous, and/or Persons of Colour
  - 22% didn’t specify or omitted
- Self-identify as cisgender and straight (70.6%)
  - 15% self-identified as a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Did not identify as a student with a disability (99.9%)
Financial Matters

• 71.2% of respondents are expecting to carry debt upon graduation. 48.3% are expecting to owe over $30,000.
• Debt expectations are highest for professional students, 64.2% of whom are expecting over $40,000 in debt.
• 75% were employed in summer 2019 and 67.7% were employed throughout the school year.
DSU Involvement

• 96.6% of respondents had attended at least one DSU event or planned to do so in the future. Dalfest, the Society Expo, and O-Week were the most attended.
• 70% had been involved in elections by voting or in some other capacity
• 25% had been involved with a student society
• 14.3% had volunteered with or been employed by the DSU
Awareness and Satisfaction

• The survey showed a correlation between awareness of the DSU and what it offers and satisfaction with those offerings. Those who understand what the DSU offers are far more likely to be satisfied than those who do not.
Belonging to the Dalhousie Community

• Just over ½ (59.3%) of respondents feel that they are part of the Dalhousie community and that they are supported in their academic program/faculty.

“I feel like I am part of the Dalhousie Community”
Services and Businesses

• Students who had used DSU services were satisfied with their experiences, but many either had not heard of or had not made use of our services.

• For example: 61.3% of students had never used the services at Campus Copy. However, 92.5% of those who had were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. A similar pattern appeared in the ratings for the Grawood and the T-Room.
Student Union Building

• The vast majority of students based at Halifax campuses have visited the SUB, and 43.5% visited 50+ times over the past year.
• The top three reasons for students to visit the SUB are the food court, bookstore, and study space
• 89.1% of Halifax-based students were Somewhat or Very Satisfied with the SUB
Communication

• Most respondents noted that Dal E-mail was their number one way of hearing about the DSU for most types of events, information, and opportunities.

• Written responses emphasized the importance of engagement on social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook.
Employment and Volunteering

• While only 14.3% of students had worked at or volunteered with the DSU, 75% of workers and volunteers agreed that the DSU is a good place to work or volunteer.

• Among past employees and volunteers, the DSU’s volunteer opportunities got generally higher ratings than work opportunities.
Priorities and Direction

• When asked to name the topics most important to them, most respondents chose education cost (1025 responses), mental health (935 responses), and cost of living (819 responses).
Key Advocacy Themes

1. Increase advocacy against tuition fee increases
2. Advocate for improved accessibility and mental health services
3. Take action to support BIPOC students and to challenge racism and xenophobia
4. Lobby for improved on-campus work options
5. Call for improvements to physical spaces on campuses
6. Lobby for international student support
7. Call for improvements to academics
Key Internal Themes

- Improve communication and transparency
- Connect with distance students and Sexton, Carleton, Agricultural, and Yarmouth Campuses
- More ways to get involved
- Emphasize equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion
- Prioritize mental health programming
- Make improvements to the SUB
- Engage with underrepresented communities
Key Internal Themes (cont’d)

• Advertise and expand services
• Support new students and newcomers to Canada
• Improve Union governance
• Expand financial aid
• Support societies
Contact:

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Dalhousie Student Union Report to the Board of Governors
Madeleine Stinson (she/her), DSU President
Meeting Date: February 09, 2021
dsupres@dal.ca

Content Warning: The following contains discussion of sexualized violence & mental health crises.

Updated Budget
On December 17th, 2021 the Dalhousie Student Union Council passed a Revised 2020-21 budget to accommodate changing circumstances and winter semester plans. Highlights of the new budget include:

- $40,000.00 in funding for an Emergency Bursary open to all DSU members facing unforeseen financial challenges.
- $6,500.00 in sponsorship funding to allow the DSU to support local community organizations, advocacy groups, and movements that are of interest to the membership and community.
- $15,000.00 in funding for a Mental Health Bursary to assist students in accessing mental health and wellness supports. The DSU is currently looking for name partners on this initiative who may be interested in matching our donation to further assist students.

DSU Pride Week
Lead by the DSU Vice President, Finance and Operations, Isa Wright, the DSU hosted a winter Pride Week from January 25th to 30th. The week’s events included free massage and yoga sessions, a self-advocacy workshop, a queer mentorship night, a workshop with Dalhousie Health and Wellness, queer burlesque and hip-hop workshops, a pronoun competency workshop for Dalhousie faculty, administration, and staff, free professional headshots, and a move screening. The DSU hopes to continue offering pride programming, especially those opportunities that engage with faculty, staff, and management to improve the experience of 2SLGBTQIA+ students at Dalhousie.
Current Student Issues & Advocacy Efforts

International Student Isolation and Treatment

Since November 2020 the Dalhousie Student Union has been addressing student concerns related to the inequitable treatment of international students returning to Nova Scotia to complete their studies. These concerns were heightened in late December and early January when more students returned to the province and were mandated to a $1627.36 CAD hotel stay. Although financial aid is available, the majority of students do not meet the eligibility criteria. Alarmingly, the DSU has received multiple concerns related to a lack of adequate food, internet, and heating. On January 08, 2021 the DSU released a statement calling on Dalhousie and the Provincial and Federal Governments to address this discriminatory policy and poor treatment. The recent treatment of international students is at minimum unfair, and at the worst, intentionally exploitative. To date, Dalhousie has not responded to this call to action.

Sexual Violence on Atlantic Campuses

The news headlines in Atlantic Canada for this academic year point to a very dangerous and pervasive issue that thrives on our campuses. Since November 2020 Dalhousie has made headlines as survivors of sexualized violence have come forward. Two active professors – one on our Medical campus in New Brunswick, and another from the University of King’s – each face multiple claims of alleged sexual assault. In both cases, Dalhousie made no efforts to support students, survivors, or the community. These cases were solely addressed by student’s unions. To continue to allow these cases to come up with no acknowledgement is a sign to perpetrators that this behaviour will not cause waves on campus, creating a dangerous environment.

This year multiple universities across the Maritimes have been called on to respond to instances of sexual assault with no response. This is an opportunity for Dalhousie to become a leader in addressing sexualized violence in academic spaces. To stay silent on these matters is violence. Inaction in this circumstance is especially harmful to our women*, Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and disabled students, staff, and faculty. I strongly encourage the Board to take action by publicly condemning this behaviour and communicating supports and resources available to our community.

Provincial Funding

In January 2021 the Nova Scotian government publicly announced an allocation of ~$9.5 million dollars in funding to Dalhousie. After this news, the DSU approached university administration with recommendations for student-centric use of these funds. In a January meeting, the DSU executive was informed that these funds had already been allocated to the reserve budget and that there was no opportunity for discussion on the matter. The DSU is concerned, after many conversations on ensuring financial decisions of the university are accessible to students, that Dalhousie has not made steps to inform the community of this
decision. I would encourage the Board to ensure that students are aware of public funding and fee revenue allocation in the future to build student trust and transparency.

**Ongoing & Upcoming Work**

*Governance Review*

The DSU is continuing work on reviewing our governing documents and model this semester and has recently acquired the services of Wickwire Holm to assist in a two-step analysis and re-development of our policies and bylaws. This work is expected to be completed by May 2021.

The first phase of this work will center on establishing policy and process for handling complaints and conflict in and involving the DSU. The next phase will identify contradictions, loopholes, and possible opportunities to condense and simplify policy. This work is to be conducted in a survivor-centric, intersectional, and highly accessible manner to ensure that the DSU’s governance is equally accessible to all members.

*DSU Elections*

The DSU’s [winter term elections](#) period began on February 01, 2021 with the opening of the nominations period. We look forward to welcoming new executives, councillors, and student senators to the DSU team. The results of the election will be available on March 10, 2021.

*Orientation and End-of-Year Planning*

As the end of this academic year and the start of another approaches, the DSU has begun planning for our ‘Last Class Bash’ and Fall 2021 Orientation Week. Programing for both of these events is likely to be delivered in a hybrid format, both online and in-person, dependent on Covid-19 restrictions. The DSU is also planning to welcome two classes of students to Dalhousie this Fall: those students starting their first year and returning second-year students who are coming to campus for the first time.
Dalhousie Student Union Report to the Board of Governors

Meeting Date: April 20, 2021
Madeleine Stinson, DSU President
dsupres@dal.ca

DSU Executive, 2021-22

Four new executive officers, and one returning officer, will continue the work of the DSU starting May 01, 2021.

President: Madeleine Stinson (she/her/hers)
Program: BMgmt, Sustainability Studies, Minor in Security Studies.
Priorities: Finish a review and amendments of all the DSU’s governing documents. Build a strategic plan for the DSU. Supporting the safe return of students to our campus, ensuring they have the necessary supports and services.

Vice President, Internal: Truelee Love (she/her/hers)
Program: BA, Political Science.
Priorities: Create resources for students to better understand the DSU. Improve communication and organization for societies. Implement an anti-oppression stance within societies.

Vice President, Finance & Operations: Mohab Brisha (he/him/his)
Program: BSc, Marine Biology & Biochemistry
Priorities: Better communication and engagement with students. More financial support for students. Improve support to societies.

Vice President, Academic & External: Hannah Bealieu (she/her/hers)
Program: BA, History and Political Science, Minor in Indigenous Studies.
Priorities: Promotion of accountability, transparency, and accessibility within the DSU. Interacting with the student body. Helping students navigate difficult spaces and environments.

Vice President, Student life: Mazen Brisha (he/him/his)
Program: BSc, Kinesiology
Priorities: Improve student access to mental health resources. Increase investment into the DSU Foodbank and alleviate food insecurity. Re-structure the use of DSU social media.
The Student Union has spent the past year focused on supporting the student body through the Covid-19 Pandemic. Key academic initiatives have included:

- Advocacy for alternative grading schemes, including successful presentation of the PASS/ILL motion in Fall 2021.
- Support for Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students, including successful presentation of motion for academic amnesty in support of students in Saulnierville.
- Advocacy for Open Educational Resources and Student Ratings of Course Content
- Support for equity-deserving groups and their inclusion and excellence in all aspects of academia
- Advocacy for students during academic integrity processes, including the creation of multiple translations of the policy and facilitation of discussions around appropriate use of testing software.
- Support for Queer students, including facilitation of pronoun competency workshops, work with the Name Change Committee, and support on Registrar efforts to make the application process more inclusive.
- Extensive discussion with Faculty members, administrators, and students to resolve issues related to teaching, learning, and academic governance.
- Advocacy for student mental health and adequate supports and services.

Key student experience initiatives have included:

- Hosting Atlantic Canada’s largest in-person orientation to welcome students to campus.
- Delivered over $400,000.00 in student bursaries and grants to students in need.
  - This includes funds given under the Accessibility Fund, Emergency International Student Fund, Equity & Accessibility Office Grant, Society Grant, Emergency Student Bursary Fund, Mental Health Fund, and Black Student Grant. Individual fund sizes ranged from $11,000.00 to over $90,000.00.
- Reject the Fees and Nova Scotia Needs Students campaigns in Fall 2020 to advocate against rising fees and raise awareness for the lack of provincial funding for post-secondary in Nova Scotia.
- Support for our equity-deserving students through events, programming, financial aid, and motions at Council.
- Supported our Foodbank, in coordination with community, as it became our most used service during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Movember, PRIDE, and Frost week programming.
Priorities for 2021-22:

Based on student-sourced information and the context of the 2021-22 academic year, the following are likely to be key priorities for the DSU:

- **Returning students to campus safely and equitably**
  - Ensuring returning students feel safe on campus and in classes, and have access to all the supports and services they may need:
    - Appropriate open spaces on campus for the intended campus population, including study spaces and areas for in-between classes
    - Access to short-term, big A and little A academic accommodations
    - Appropriate class hours and classroom facilities
    - Consideration of the financial impacts of the pandemic and rising fees on students
    - Equitable teaching and learning environments

- **A holistic approach to mental health on campus**
  - Facilitation of conversations around promoting the health and wellbeing of faculty, staff, and students.
    - How can we do both things at once, instead of attempting to balance conflicting priorities? (ex. Encouraging professors to not work after hours, but also promising place-bound students they won’t have to take exams at 4am their local time)
  - Amending policies and processes to reduce red-tape and make navigating Dalhousie easier for both students and faculty.
  - Finding better ways to handle EDIA issues in the classroom.
  - Providing mental health services that are reflective of the student population, meaning an investment in Black, Indigenous, POC, Queer, and Disabled health professionals.

- **Universally accessible post-secondary education**
  - Moving closer to the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act deadline for 2030, holding discussions around accessible teaching and learning environments.
    - How do we balance the Accessibility rights of students with the Academic Freedom rights of professors?
  - Understanding the long-term effects of pricing students out of an education at Dalhousie, and how we might move away from a financial model that relies on student fee increases without unfairly impacting the faculty or staff.
  - Continued conversation on EDIA issues across campus, and within specific faculties.

The primary take-away from many of our discussions this year is that things are easier if we work together. We can’t, and won’t, always agree or be able to balance our priorities. However, whenever it is possible, the DSU will strive to advocate for a better Dalhousie for all.
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:
  - “I live with constant anxiety about taking on debt. Hiking tuition just because they can feels like a slap in the face.”
  - “I feel like Dalhousie doesn’t care about the students.”
  - “[The tuition increase] could make the difference between continuing my legal education and being forced to stop and work…”
  - “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.”
  - “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:
  - “A $600 increase is $50 a month I can’t spend on food and things I need.”
  - “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.”
  - “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."

**Upcoming Dates**

The Dalhousie Student Union is hosting a rally on campus on April 20\textsuperscript{th} to advocate against rising tuition fees. All faculty and staff members are invited to attend, out of support or in search of more information about why rising fees impact us all. #\texttt{REJECTTHEFEES}