DSU Council Statement on Dalhousie’s 2022-23 Draft Operating Budget Plan

01-24-2022

On January 19, 2022, Dalhousie University Budget Advisory Committee released their draft operating budget plan for the 2022/2023 year. Within the document they outlined recommendations for tuition and fee increases that will impact students attending Dalhousie in the upcoming semester. Within the proposed budget tuition fees account for Dalhousie’s largest pool of revenue sitting at 45.8%, while provincial opening grants sit at 44.2%. In 2011 60% of the university's revenue was from provincial funding and only 31% of the revenue was obtained through the collection of tuition.

Since last 2020, amid a global pandemic, students have continued to express their growing concerns around the rise in tuition fees paired with frustration with a lack of services and financial support from Dalhousie University. We called on Dalhousie University to not only stop this increase in fees but to freeze tuition and make the necessary changes to develop a budget that moves towards a universally accessible post-secondary education system. Instead, Dalhousie University has developed a budget that outlines students as its main source of revenue but only allocates 7.9% of its operating budget to student assistance services.

Within Dalhousie University’s budget memo, they also mentioned working with the DSU to host virtual sessions for students looking to provide additional feedback on the budget. Although we are more than happy to create platforms to ensure that all students can provide feedback on its proposed budget, this statement from Dalhousie misrepresents the current state of the DSU’s involvement in the BAC’s student consultation efforts. The DSU has encouraged the BAC to provide opportunities for the whole student body to engage in consultation on the budget, including providing a better understanding of how student fees are used within the operating budget. The BAC has not included the DSU, nor made us aware of any such efforts. It is crucial that student suggestions are considered in Dalhousie’s budgeting process. Year after year, student consultation on budgets is constantly solicited from the administration, yet students' recommendations are rarely reflected in amendments made to the budget.
Students are in a financially precarious time. With the cost of housing drastically increasing and food insecurity continuing to be a growing problem among students, our needs have not changed. The urgency to address these issues has only increased. We encourage students to submit their budget recommendations to BAC@dal.ca by February 16th. We remind Dalhousie University that in order to adequately support students, we must:

- Remove all tuition increases, including differential fees, and freeze tuition for both domestic and international students
- Develop a sustainable budget model that prioritizes student services and moves towards universally accessible education
- Lobby the provincial and federal government to increase funding for the Advanced Education sector, specifically to reduce tuition costs and provide direct-to-student funding.

Sincerely,

The Dalhousie Student Union Executive & Council

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Frey Verth, Vice-President, Academic & External
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Sydney Keyamo, Black Students Representative
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Heemal Morakhia, Faculty of Computer Science Representative
Miranda Walsh, Faculty of Dentistry Representative
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Zuhair Zaidi, Faculty of Engineering Representative
Anika Declan, Faculty of Health Representative
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