Report of the President

Name: Madeleine Stinson

Reporting Period: January 20, 2022 – February 02, 2022

Council Date: February 07, 2022

Internal Affairs and DSU Committees

- Ongoing work organizing & preparing to moderate the DSU x DAL College of Sustainability Panel on the Queer Experience in the Urban Environment for DSU Winter Pride Week.
- Background work to support Nursing program students who are responding to a call to action from the province and Dalhousie that impacts their syllabus.

Executive Committee Meetings

For the semester, executive committee meetings will take place once a week on Thursday mornings.

January 27: Motions (2) to approve an outstanding list of capital projects purchases. Discussion on the allocation of $6k to Black Students programming and Indigenous Students programming. The DSU executive agreed to bring a motion to Council for the $6k for Black students to be turned into a bursary, and for the $6k for Indigenous students to be held until direction was provided from the Dalhousie Indigenous Student Collective (DISC). Discussion on a missing programming purchase, VPSL is to inquire with Amazon regarding lost delivery. Discussion on upcoming interviews between the DSU executive and the candidates for Vice Provost, Student Affairs. Several executives will spend 30 minutes with each candidate, questions to be posed during those 30 minutes were discussed.

Additional Meetings

January 20, 11am: meeting with Facilities Manager and Director of Operations to discuss the list of underway capital projects and assess outstanding project viability given the time left in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

January 20, 2:30pm: meeting with the Director, Research and Outreach to determine the budget and planning for potential isolation kits for students who get sick with Covid-19.
January 21, 11am: council prep meeting.

January 21, 12pm: meeting with staff and executives to outline the DSU’s response to Dalhousie’s proposed 2022-23 operating budget and increased student fees.

January 21, 3pm: meeting with the executive to determine what health plan fee motions would be brought to Council.

January 24, 9am: weekly check-in meeting with the Directors. They provide updates on staff activities based on their 1-on-1 meetings.

January 24, 11am: meeting with Vice-President, Academic & External and staff to prepare for an upcoming roundtable with Public Health, Nova Scotia Mental Health and Addictions, Dalhousie, and other stakeholders to discuss unsanctioned street parties.

January 24, 7pm: DSU Council meeting.

January 25, 10:30am: meeting with the DSU Policy & Governance Coordinator to de-brief from the previous night’s council meeting.

January 27, 2pm: meeting with DSU tenant, Ascension Barbershop, to discuss rent payments and cheque deliveries. Due to the decrease of students on campus and to help Ascension manage their transition to an education-focused business model, the DSU agreed to maintain their rent at ½ of the amount indicated in the lease for January and February.

January 28, 11am: council prep meeting.

January 28, 11:30am: meeting with staff and executives to follow up on action items discussed in the previous meeting regarding the DSU’s response to increased student fees.

January 31, 9am: weekly check-in meeting with the Directors.

January 31, 6pm: meeting with the Chair of the Oversight Committee to work on the implementation of the recommendations passed by Council on January 24th in response to executive Fall Term performance reviews.

February 02, 11:30am: meeting with staff and executives to follow up on action items discussed in the previous meeting regarding the DSU’s response to increased student fees.

University Affairs and Committees

January 20, 9am: meeting with the Vice Provost, Student Affairs search committee to discuss the longlist of candidates.

January 24, 3pm: Dalhousie Senate meeting – think tank session. Regrets sent for the latter ½ of the meeting due to a class conflict.
January 25, 10am: meeting with Dalhousie President to discuss ongoing priorities. Discussion centered on the proposed fee increases, communication and consultation with students about these fees, and specifically on international student tuition models. The President agreed to plan an exercise that would allow interested parties at the university to engage in a discussion around alternative revenue and budgeting models.

January 27, 2:30pm: meeting of the Governor’s Awards Selection Committee. 2022 award winner was chosen.

January 28, 10am: meeting with Dalhousie Student Experience staff to discuss plans for a student consultation project regarding street parties that I am co-leading with Heather Doyle. Discussion on previously tabled MOU’s regarding orientation and the Impact Awards that have been discussed but never acted on for several years. The MOU’s will be drafted this semester and potentially signed, depending on what is able to be accomplished before end of term. Updates to go to the executive committee.

January 31, 10:30am: unplanned phone call with the Dean of Health to discuss nursing students concerns regarding changes to their syllabus in response to a call to action from the province. The DSU encouraged the faculty and other stakeholders to listen to the demands of nursing students to make their response to the call optional, paid, and to ensure they did not miss out on core learning opportunities. The DSU also encouraged an apology from the faculty for a lack of communication and transparency with nursing students.

January 31, 1:15pm: first-round interview with a candidate for Vice Provost, Student Affairs.

January 31, 3:15pm: first-round interview with a candidate for Vice Provost, Student Affairs.

February 01, 11am: regrets sent to bi-weekly meeting with the DSU executive and DAL Student Affairs Office, as a result of a one-time class conflict.

February 01, 12pm: first-round interview with a candidate for Vice Provost, Student Affairs.

February 01, 3:30pm: committee debrief on first-round interviews for the Vice Provost, Student Affairs position.

External and Broader Community

January 26, 1pm: roundtable with Public Health, Nova Scotia Mental Health and Addictions, Dalhousie, and other stakeholders to discuss unsanctioned street parties. The meeting was incredibly ineffective, and it was clear that the party facilitating the meeting was not interested in student perspectives. A follow up email was sent to all those invited to the roundtable to encourage the invitation of more students’ unions and young people – the DSU representatives were 2/3 students invited, and the only university student representatives at the meeting.

Board of Governors Caucus Updates
The next meeting of the Board of Governors is scheduled for February 15th.

Announcements

On February 2nd, a letter was sent to the Dalhousie Budget Advisory Committee with the statement passed by the DSU Council on January 24th attached. Any response from the BAC will be included in future Council reports or agendas. A copy of the letter is attached to this report as an appendix (statement not included – see last meeting’s package)
Appendix I: Letter to the Dalhousie BAC, delivered 02-02-2022

02-02-2022

Dear members of the Budget Advisory Committee,

On behalf of over 20,000 students studying at Dalhousie University, we are sharing our concerns regarding Dalhousie University’s proposed 2022/23 budget. The DSU and its members have continuously voiced our concerns about the 3% tuition increase and the additional $1473 increase for international students that has been in place for the last four years. We have advocated for adequate support for students whose finances and wellbeing have been negatively impacted by Dalhousie’s sky-rocketing tuition, and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, Dalhousie has continued to create Operating Budgets that do not prioritize students or address their needs. Students are frustrated with a lack of services and financial support from Dalhousie University.

The DSU is recommending that Dalhousie implement the following:

- 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

Removing Tuition Increases

Students are deeply concerned about the rising cost of tuition and financial barriers attached to accessing post-secondary education. With COVID-19 restrictions constantly changing, students 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, more than double the amount of tuition that their domestic peers pay. Additionally, these students have significantly less health care coverage, and do not qualify for federal COVID-19 relief programming such as CESB (Canada Emergency Student Benefit), CWLB (Canada Worker Lockdown) and other financial assistance programs. 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.

A Sustainable Budget Model
Each year the University receives feedback from students about how precarious our financial situations are, and the needs of students remain unaddressed in the proposed 2022/23 Operating Budget. Imposing yet another increase 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.

Tuition currently makes up over 45.8% of Dalhousie’s current revenue, meaning students are now the institution’s largest investor. To ensure our campus is equipped with the support 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.

In this year’s budget draft, 7.8% of the operating budget accounts for scholarships, which 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. The budget needs to be re-evaluated and re-worked so that funds can be put towards stabilizing and then decreasing current tuition and ancillary fees for all students. Budgets are about priorities, and students need a budget that prioritizes accessible education and student services.

Government Advocacy

We can work alongside each other and lobby the federal and provincial governments to increase their funding to post-secondary institutions, specifically to make post-secondary education more affordable for students. 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, but this year government funding makes up only 44% of this revenue. More and more of the costs of running and maintaining our universities are being off-loaded 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.

Student Consultation

Each year the University solicits student feedback on its proposed Operating Budget, after its development. And each year, student feedback is rarely seriously considered and included in the final version of the budget. It is crucial that student suggestions are considered in Dalhousie’s budgeting process. Dalhousie’s budget creation process needs student involvement.
and consultation from the very beginning, and the broader student body needs to be consulted during the fall semester before the budget proposal is finalized. Students want to see a meaningful consultation process and a commitment from the University to work towards a student-centric operating budget.

In conclusion, we call on the Budget Advisory Committee to develop a 2022-2023 draft operating budget that does not include tuition and fee increases. Students need Dalhousie University to step up and seriously consider a new path forward with this operating budget and their budgeting process as a whole—one that is reflective of the long-term wellbeing of students and the need for accessible post-secondary education in our province. A statement, produced and passed by the DSU Council is attached to this letter for your review.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Stinson

President, Dalhousie Student Union
Report of the Vice President, Internal

Name: Truelee Love

Reporting Period: January 20, 2022 – February 02, 2022

Council Date: February 07, 2022

Internal Affairs and DSU Committees

- Research and Outreach meeting January 20
- Society Events Update meeting January 20. Discussed how societies and events will look upon returning to campus.
- Council Prep meeting January 21
- Communications meeting January 26 and February 1
- Executive Committee meeting January 27

University Affairs and Committees

- Student Affairs meeting February 01. Updates on work on hepatitis B vaccination done by DSU President and VPAE.

External and Broader Community

N/A

Society Review Committee Updates

N/A

Student Accessibility Fund Committee Updates

- Committee met February 01 and February 08 to finish up this round of applications. Application deadlines for the rest of the semester are February 14, February 28, March 14, March 28, April 11, and April 25.

Upcoming Dates

N/A
Report of the Vice President, Finance and Operations

Name: Mohab Brisha

Reporting Period: January 20, 2022 – February 02, 2022

Council Date: February 07, 2022

Internal Affairs and DSU Committees

1. Worked on DSU’s Reject the Fees advocacy campaign strategy.
2. Worked on securing funding for a society sponsorship campaign.
3. Conducted society audits.
4. Treasurer training held.
5. International Student Emergency Bursary Committee meeting schedule set and first meeting held.

University Affairs and Committees

1. Met with Dalhousie Student Affairs department for updates about ongoing issues.

External and Broader Community

N/A

Grants and Sponsorship Committee Updates

1. Grants Committee meeting held successfully. We were able to approve grants for all societies and members that submitted a valid application, thanks to the additional funds allocated to the Grants Committee.

Upcoming Dates

N/A
Report of the Vice President, Academic and External

Name: Frey Verth

Reporting Period: January 20, 2022 – February 02, 2021

Council Date: February 07, 2022

Internal Affairs and DSU Committees

Jan 27 - Executive Council Meeting
- Discussion regarding messaging / pushback on fee increase included in recent budget proposal from Dal admin.
- Logistics / amplification of independent student efforts.
- Discussion regarding emergent student/department issue.

Jan 28 – Tuition Campaign Meeting
- Defining explicit scope of advocacy.
- Suggested use of spaces in the SUB / digital spaces as a place to aggregate student stories of financial strife / frustration / student experiences to make clear the manifest outcomes of the strain perpetually mounting education expenses & debt burden are placing on the student populous.

University Affairs and Committees

Jan 26 - Copyright Advisory Committee meeting
- Predominantly focused on emphasizing available legal means to get around Digital Rights Management and paywalls to literary assets.
- Highlighted advocacy of library workers within extant framework and legal obligations externally imposed by the state.
- Fair dealing week (https://www.fairuseweek.org/calendar/)
- Discussion of nuances of staff concerns / student concerns regarding brightspace and where copyright expectations vs fair use and reproduction of assets fell.

Next meeting is occurring in fall semester of 2022.
Jan 27 – Academic Quality Team (AQT) meeting

- Logistics / discussion regarding COVID-19 disclosure in classes.
  - Clear emphasis regarding legality of disclosing student medical information without consent.
  - Discussion regarding distancing / masking and consistent requirements in smaller classes (~8).
- Discussion of EDI / technical and logistical barriers associated with digital access / online components.
- Requested more external facing advocacy support from members should any opportunity arise regarding Canada’s telecommunications oligopoly (monopoly of many telecom companies) as a means to apply praxis to promises in Dalhousie’s “Third Century Promise” as well as emphasizing the necessity for promises to manifest as clearly defined / tangible deliverables.

Jan 28-Feb 02 – Work on student/department issue

- Advocacy / research / reading and rhetoric prep.
- Coordination with students in emergent student/department issue.
  - Examination of broader implications of student/department conflict, labour/government facing implications, and points to improve.

External and Broader Community

Jan 26- “Unsanctioned street parties: important conversations”

- Took part in "fireside" roundtable discussion hosted with mental health / substance use lens. Roundtable featured representatives from Public Health, Nova Scotia Mental Health and Addictions, Dalhousie, and other stakeholders.
- Framing of approach read as intrinsically favoring concerns of homeowners / pathologizing of alcohol consumption & gathering.
- Found points of consensus / allies in select speakers, their perspectives were consistent with their advocacy efforts.
- Emphasized civic obligation usually necessitates a reciprocal effort in civic inclusion.
- Discussion of scientific literature specific to alcohol consumption in NS provided interesting insights into provincial government approaches to alcohol use.

Senate Caucus Updates

Jan 24th – Senate meeting (think tank session).
**Upcoming Dates**

Feb 11th – Application deadline for first round of emergency housing bursaries.
Report of the Vice President, Student Life

Name: Mazen Brisha

Reporting Period: January 20, 2022 – February 02, 2022

Council Date: February 07, 2022

Internal Affairs and DSU Committees

1. Met with the Director of Research & Outreach and the DSU events commissioner to discuss programming strategy for the winter semester.
2. Worked in advising societies on programming for the remainder of their term.
3. Met internally to coordinate #RejecttheFees efforts.

University Affairs and Committees

1. Attended a mental health week committee meeting.
2. Met with residence representatives to discuss winter semester collaborations.

External and Broader Community

1. Attended HealthyMindsNS Committee Meeting.

Upcoming Dates

N/A