Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Questionnaire DSU 2019 Elections

My three platform points are increased financial transparency and accountability, strengthening food justice initiatives on campus, and improving communications with societies. I plan to increase financial transparency within the union, and improve the accountability of the DSU executives to council and the entire membership. Students need more affordable and sustainable food options on every campus, and I’m committed to navigating our food contract to optimize conditions for both workers and students, and to creating resources for improving food justice initiatives on campus. Finally, I will commit to more communication with societies, and a restructured grant and audit process that will allow societies to get their funding more quickly, with less hassle.

Candidate Questions

1. What do you see as the top 3 issues for Dalhousie’s graduate and professional students?

Whenever I’ve talked to grad students around campus, the same issues come up over and over again: tuition increases, food insecurity, and mental health services. Tuition for graduate students has steadily increased, and will continue to do so, as grad student funding and scholarships decrease. This has created financially precarious situations for many grad students, and the DSU needs to do a better job of advocating for grad students in decision-making spaces. Food insecurity is another huge issue for grad students, who make up a huge percentage of the DSU food bank’s users. The DSU needs more affordable and sustainable food services, and I have already started to plan for a food coalition that could unite and empower many of the food justice initiatives on campus. Finally, grad students have unique mental health needs which deserve a separate system for delivery; the current walk-in system not only inconveniences graduate students, but fails to provide a safe space for grad students to seek supports.

2. How do you plan to engage graduate students to communicate information and get direct student feedback?

The DSU has historically isolated grad students from services and supports, and the relationship between DAGS and the DSU has also been complex. I plan to rebuild this relationship and have better communication between not only myself and the VPFO of DAGS, but with all of the executives. DAGS provides a line of communication with graduate students, and has more capacity for direct contact with grad students; I will always have an open door for graduate students at my office, but I am also committed to working with DAGS to get and provide feedback and information for students.

3. How would you improve the DSU to better serve graduate students?

As I mentioned in the last questions, I have a strong interest in repairing and improving relationships between the DSU and student societies. DAGS is a valuable society, and needs to be treated as such! I will streamline the grant and audit process so that societies can receive funding more easily. There is no reason for the DSU to be a barrier for societies, including DAGS, and I am committed to working with societies to provide better services for all students.

4. How would you ensure graduate students are a priority for decision makers in Government, Dalhousie University, and the DSU?

The DSU, as a distinct organization from CFS and Students Nova Scotia, is often granted seats in MOU decision making spaces, which substantially affect tuition fees and other grad student issues. Even though DAGS gets a seat at some of these discussions, I will advocate for stronger planning and solidarity between DAGS and the DSU in these spaces.

At the university level, graduate students are among the many groups of students who are disserved and ignored by our administration. The DSU has a responsibility to advocate for all students, not just undergraduate students at Studley campus, and I commit to listening to the concerns of DAGS and grad students and bringing them to the attention of other executives, and in any university decision making spaces at which I have a seat.

5. Is there anything else you want to share with Dalhousie’s graduate and professional students?

Thank you for your time, DAGS members -- I appreciate it! Feel free to reach out to me with any concerns, and I hope you vote Wright for student rights next week.