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# the Gazette

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Dal's Jeff Hibberts goes in hard for the ball against SMU's Rob Clayton during Sunday's game at Wickwire field. For the story see page 13.

## DAL/TUNS MERGER

# Engineers sorting out the details

BY KEITH MACMASTER

The Dalhousie-TUNS amalgamation is going to happen, but details still have to be worked out.

Last April, it was announced that the Technical University of Nova Scotia (TUNS) would merge with Dalhousie University. The two schools cited saving money through consolidation of services as the reason for their decision.

One of the benefits of the amalgamation may be its ability to give a more comprehensive engineering education to students, and to make the programs more marketable and flexible.

The process of merging is slow. The Associate Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at TUNS, Mo El-Hawasry, is working hard to complete the project. He says that he hopes to have everything in order by March of next year.

Although the project is still in its preliminary stages, there are several proposed changes to the system. El-Hawasry says that most of these changes will lead to better education for engineering students.

The proposed changes include altering the length of the degree program — switching from the usual five years to a four or four and a half year program. The curriculum will be more compact with students perhaps starting to specialize in the second year, as opposed to the traditional third year. This would make it possible for students to go to Dalhousie for one year, and then three years at TUNS.

There are also plans to add more electives for increased flexibility and comprehensiveness. This could mean more science, arts, and commerce electives offered to prospective engineers.

Mr. El-Hawasry would also like to see a combined Bachelor of Engineering degree with arts, science, business, or his personal favourite — the history of technology. This could be accomplished in only five years as opposed to the present six year route.

El-Hawasry and Dale Retallack, an associate professor at Dalhousie's Engineering Department, both say that "there would be many advantages to combining a degree."

"These advantages include more maturity and a better education gained from the longer program."

Not everything will be changed and there will not be any new disciplines. Instead, the current ones will be strengthened.

Environmental engineering is one program being eyed for improvements. Meanwhile, the co-op program — highly regarded by employers — will not be touched.

These changes, if ready in March, will affect students in the 1997-98 school year. New students, and possibly second year students, would be affected by the changes.

The alterations to the current program are still in their infancy and no changes will be concrete until an agreement between the two universities is in place.

# Health Plan deadline extended

BY JASON JOLLEY

Students wishing to be covered under the Dalhousie Student Union's (DSU) new health plan now have an extra week to do so.

The deadline for registering for Blue Cross health coverage was recently extended to October 7.

With the September 30 deadline drawing closer last week, enrollment in the plan had not met expectations. The date was changed to allow more students to register for the health plan.

"We [the DSU] put ads in the handbook, the Gazette, and around campus to make people more aware," said Getto.

"The Blue Cross... is really puzzled and concerned why more students haven't enrolled in the program. They expected — at this point — 1,500 people to be enrolled, now we have maybe 400."

This is the first year that students have not been automatically covered by the DSU.

In the past, a similar plan was mandatory for students, adding a \$50 cost to their student fees. However, many students were already insured under other plans and were against paying for services they did not need. Student views led to a referendum last spring that ended mandatory coverage.

The new plan covers most prescription drugs, paramedical services, dental accidents, medical equipment, hearing aids and acci-

dental death (to name a few). Eye exams will no longer be covered, however oral contraceptives (i.e. birth control pills) have been added to the list of acceptable prescription drugs.

Most of these services have an 80% coverage rate, meaning that students will have to foot one-fifth of the bill.

DSU executive assistant Carl Getto said that after the old plan (John Ingle Plan) was cancelled by students, the DSU put out a tender to a variety of health insurance companies. Blue Cross came out on top offering its services to students — both part-time and full-time — for \$90 per person or \$198 per family.

The Blue Cross plan doesn't discriminate against pre-existing conditions (i.e. diabetes), and retroactively takes effect September 1, 1996. Students enrolling before the October 7 deadline can receive benefits as far back as the start date, and up until September 1 of next year.

When asked if prices could increase next year as a result of the low enrollment, Getto replied that: "The [Blue Cross] is concerned that if the numbers aren't better, they don't know if they can keep the prices at the current level."

If students would like more information on the plan, contact Linda Ponee in the Blue Cross office at 423-6121, or drop by at 1874 Brunswick St., Halifax.

# Fighting the Book Tax

## DSU joins postcard campaign

BY KAVERI GUPTA

Increasing tax on books is unacceptable according to the Dalhousie Student Union Council (DSU). The Council passed a motion Monday to officially oppose a possible increase in the tax on books.

A new blended federal-provincial tax is planned to go into effect in April of next year, replacing the GST and PST. Harmonization would add an extra eight per cent to the cost of textbooks and periodicals, resulting in a total tax of 15 per cent.

In protest, the DSU is jumping on board a postcard campaign ini-

tiated by the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

Although Dal officially pulled out of SUNS at the end of the last school year, and will not be using their postcards, Dal and SUNS are happy to be supporting each other on this campaign.

"It's good for Dal to be associated with SUNS. A united front is better," said DSU president Brad MacKay in an interview.

SUNS has been working since May with the Writer's Federation of Nova Scotia on a letter-writing campaign against the tax, circulating petitions and preparing a brief to accompany the petition.

The DSU was slow getting involved. MacKay cites concentration on internal issues over the summer for the school's late entry into the campaign.

DSU vice president academic/external Chris Lydon will be making copies of Dal's postcards and distributing them in classes and at the SUB late this week.

The postcards will act as an information/petition card by giving background on the issue, and then offering a place for students opposing the tax to sign. The postcards will be collected and sent to Federal Minister of Education, Paul Martin.

SUNS has already received 1,500 postcards back from the 10 universities province-wide, and a number have been sent to Paul Martin.

Both DSU and SUNS realize that the postcard campaign will be the last form of action each individual student can take part in.

"After that it will be up to student council presidents and SUNS to send the information to Ottawa," said Jennifer Smiley, president of SUNS.

But student pressure will not end when the postcards reach Ottawa. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations plans to take up the fight and continue placing student pressure on the federal government.

"I am meeting with Atlantic M.P.'s next month and will try to get them to admit to students that books, computers, and other supplies should be recognized as educational expenses," CASA national director Matthew Hough said while visiting Dalhousie on Tuesday.

Hough wants students to be able to either receive an income tax rebate for tax paid on books and other school supplies, or to be exempt from the book tax altogether.

The federal government will be making a decision on the tax status of books within the next month, with the final document coming out at the end of October.