

# President

**What is your experience in student politics and how has it prepared you for this position?**

I'm currently involved in student politics. I'm on the executive of the Dalhousie Student Union and I'm the Community Affairs Coordinator.

As Community Affairs Coordinator I'm a liaison between the students and the community. Community events, whether it be from Terry Fox to OXFAM fundraisers to different lobby groups in the community who want to participate with students here on campus. And being on the executive I'm part of the decision-making body of the DSU whereby we put forth everything that goes to council.

I've also been at Dalhousie since 1983 and have spent a lot of time here being independent. I did a Bachelor of Science in Biology, a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and am currently working towards my Masters of Developmental Economics.

So, I have a lot of experience with a diversity of groups and I feel very well qualified as having experience to manage the student union and also act as a political arm for students in order to lobby for student concerns.

**Nova Scotia elections are coming up soon. The government has made some changes in student aid such as raising the bursary maximum and increasing the funding for student jobs by 10 per cent. How important do you think these changes are and why?**

The changes are important but they aren't enough. We need to have further increases in order to get up to a national standard of student aid because currently, for example, we got an increase of \$300, but that's nothing in comparison to New Brunswick, even though Nova Scotia has the highest tuitions in Canada.

With an election coming up the student union would be directly involved, given that the students are eligible to vote. Therefore we would be having on-campus events. Community affairs would probably take on having a debate of the candidates running locally. We would also have our external affairs people actively working to get students to be aware of student issues so that the candidates can be fully lobbied at election time. So they can be more aware of what students' concerns are and about the crisis of our cutbacks and our funding.

We have SUNS people involved with that Task Force on Student Aid so we should have some representation to help improve that in Nova Scotia. Of course this committee, which is looking at reviewing the whole student aid program is just starting, but our role is to keep pressuring these people to make sure these issues get dealt with. There should be a radical change in the student aid program, not only in increasing funding for students but also increasing the responsibility of the office. As you know, last fall they lost 300 applications. In the spring right now everything is totally out of order, with people who can't get through to the office and those who can't get their checks. There have been a lot of problems so this has been one of the areas we have been looking into, to make sure our external affairs people are actively working on the student aid issue, because it affects half of the students at Dalhousie.

About the increase of 10 per cent for employment, one of the things that ends up happening when increasing employment for students is that, for example, the Department of National Defense (DND) gets a lot of money to hire students to be gardeners. We would like to push for increases in funding for student employment, but in areas that are preferably to do with their education and forwarding their academic studies.

**Many students do not even know what CFS is. Why is Dalhousie a paying member of CFS?**

The Canadian Federation of Students is a national group that not only provides services but actually lobbies the government to increase funding for post secondary education, to take various stands, whether they be international stands or stands locally, endorsing issues of accessibility to the physically challenged, to native Canadians, to increasing the number of black Canadians in universities.

So, I think it's really important that we belong to CFS because it is thanks to CFS that we actually haven't had worse cutbacks in post secondary education. A lot of that can be attributed to this national organization which is actually lobbying the government for better summer programs as well. On the other hand, it is also important for Dalhousie to be connected nationally into a national body of students. I went to a CFS conference in Ottawa in November and I think that for student leaders at Dalhousie to be participating in national conferences, it is very enriching. For me personally, I became further aware of what was happening nationally, and what student concerns are nationally, which is really important because coming back to Dalhousie I came with all this knowledge of what issues should be priorities right now at Dalhousie, where we should be spending our energies and why we should actually exploit the fact that we are in CFS.

I think the benefits we get out of it are greater than those that we concede by paying our \$4 per year. To have people nationally lobbying, it is actually a good deal. We also enjoy various services from CFS like Travel Cuts, the Canadian University Travel Service. To have them here on campus providing good services to students and also, they are always co-sponsoring events on campus. They are one of the biggest co-sponsors of events on campus. Also, the CFS card is very important.

One of the most important things we need to have is someone who is very keen and active in the external affairs position. The VP External has an extremely important job to do for the students as it is that person who is the liaison between CFS and SUNS and the students here. This person should be very active in distributing all of the CFS cards and make sure that every single student on campus has a student saver book and a card and can become aware of CFS nationally, and SUNS as well. They must network with both these provincial and national bodies in order to ensure that the DSU's concerns are getting dealt with.



*Juanita*  
**MONTALVO**

**What are your plans for restoring the financial health of the DSU, taking into consideration this year's deficit situation?**

It is important to understand the history of what is happening in the student union. We got a new general manager who is extremely competent, a new technical director, and we basically altered the staff in the student union to provide better services and generate greater revenues.

We have a new Grawood being renovated and opened downstairs which is much larger and can provide more services to the students. We are also looking at having cheaper photocopying and a bigger system of photocopying. Also, we wish to better the food services in the building. Basically, we are providing the services which will generate more money.

Most importantly, we have better management and have implemented a change in the foundation. Now we can implement better services. In the past we have been able to build surpluses up to \$250,000 and there is no reason why we should have a deficit. I have a very positive outlook for the financial future of the DSU, simply because we have more qualified people involved - people who are pulling up their socks and are fully aware of what is happening.

**How effective do you think the DSU administration has been this year?**

The administration is currently going through some restructuring. We have hired a vice-president of academic research and are currently looking for a vice-president of student services. So, the university is strongly trying to look at education at the Symposium on Undergraduate Education. This is an expression of their concern here, that there is something wrong here and they would like to change it.

It is really important and I like the fact that they have gotten a number of students involved with this and pushed that classes be cancelled, trying to add some Dalhousie spirit as well into this, which is a very positive thing.

However, in this new restructuring, it is very important to have strong leadership in the DSU. If we do not establish our position early as to the power of the students and the power of the student union, then we are going to get looked at as this sort of high school mini model parliament, which we are not. We are a very powerful organization. It is important that we establish our position this year because of this.

**The Gazette adheres to Canadian University Press principles which oppose racism, sexism and homophobia. What stand should the DSU take on these issues?**

The Gazette adhering to a national body, CUP, is similar to the DSU adhering to a national body, CFS. Certainly very positive resolutions such as that have been adopted by Dalhousie. We definitely oppose this, as we oppose any type of discrimination. Also, with our hiring practices, the university has a hiring policy in which they will not discriminate against people based on gender or sexual preference or religion or race, creed or whatever. This would apply to the DSU as well.

**What do you think is Dalhousie's responsibility on AIDS education?**

Dalhousie is really one of the first to take a policy on AIDS. At the last SUNS conference the issue was strongly discussed. I think that one of the biggest roles that Dalhousie has right now is AIDS education on campus.

We have done some positive things this year but it certainly isn't enough. We do have a local Dalhousie committee on AIDS and I think in the future we will see more AIDS education, which the student union will actively enter into.

**What would you like to see come out of the President's Symposium on Undergraduate Education?**

I think that if one important thing could happen out of this symposium is that it is not a conference to rehash old issues but one which will take stands on things and actively work for those stands. We all know that cutbacks are a very strong issue here at Dalhousie. The fact that we are operating with antiquated equipment and we have less tutorials and fewer tutors for classes and many of the places, such as the residences, have become run-down.

If this symposium would actually take a stand on actually lobbying for further funding, it would be a very positive step - not just in complaining about it but literally taking a strong stand and making this a political issue. We must have the government allocate more money to post secondary education.

If the symposium would generate a lot of genuine concern for student problems it would also be a very positive step.