

Strengthening Advocacy



**DALHOUSIE
STUDENT UNION**

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Acronyms

AMS- Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia

ANSSA – Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (later renamed Students Nova Scotia)

ARC – Advocacy Review Committee

ASSE- Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante

CASA – Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

CFS- Canadian Federation of Students

CUP- Canadian University Press

CUS- Canadian Union of Students (historical)

DSU – Dalhousie Student Union

FEUQ- Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (Quebec University Student Federation)

HRSDC- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

LAE- Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education

NUS- National Union of Students (historical)

SNS – Students Nova Scotia

SSMU- Student Society of McGill University

STUSU- Saint Thomas University Student Union

TaCEQ- Table de concertation étudiante du Québec (Quebec Student Roundtable)

UMSU- University of Manitoba Student's Union

Introduction and Background

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) has been a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) since 1995. The DSU has also been a member of Students Nova Scotia, formerly the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations, since 2003. In the winter of 2013, the DSU council decided to review its membership in CASA by changing its membership status from full membership to associate membership, and striking an Advocacy Review Committee. The committee was tasked with reviewing the DSU's advocacy priorities, evaluate how the two external organizations are advancing those goals, and provide recommendations.

The cost of membership in CASA for the DSU is roughly \$44,441 for full membership plus roughly \$7000/year in conference and travel fees. The cost of associate membership is half of that, at \$22,220 with equivalent conference/travel fees. The cost of membership in Students Nova Scotia is \$92,377 per year. The DSU is accountable to all Dalhousie students and is responsible for ensuring that all money spent on behalf of Dalhousie students are in their best interests. Thus, the Advocacy Review Committee wants to ensure that the \$114,598 - \$136,818 spent on CASA and SNS, from the general DSU budget, is done so in the best interests of Dalhousie students.

On March 27th, 2013 the DSU council approved a motion, moved by president Jamie Arron, to change the DSUs membership status to associate member and begin the Advocacy Review process. The motion read as follows:

Motion: Be it resolved the Dalhousie Student Union change to associate membership status within the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations for the 2013/14 academic year.

Motion: Be it further resolved that DSU Council initiate a comprehensive review of advocacy goals and strategies, commencing May 1st, 2013, built around the following terms of reference:

PURPOSE: The review process shall focus on four essential questions:

- ü What are our goals and strategies for effective advocacy?
- ü What are the pros and cons of being members in CASA? If we continue our membership, how can we ensure maximum effectiveness?
- ü If we were to pursue self-directed advocacy, what would be the pros and cons and what would this model look like?
- ü What other alternatives might there be?

This review may entail (at the discretion of the committee) discussion of topics such as:

- Discussion and clarification of the historical and current challenges and support structures for students with regards to tuition, debt, employment, etc
- Further discussion of Dalhousie's role within the provincial landscape and of the particular challenges faced by Dalhousie (eg. per capita vs. per student funding, provincial funding formula)
- Discussion and clarification of the core goals of the DSU's external advocacy efforts
- Discussion and clarification of the effectiveness and appropriate roles of varying strategies of external advocacy (eg. direct political lobbying, street level mobilizations, direct political pressure, etc)
- Historical review of Canadian student movements, and the roles of organizations such as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, the Canadian Federation of Students, and of Students Nova Scotia (formally ANSSA)
- Discussion about the opportunities of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and the DSU's role within the organization
- Exploration of potential alternative models of external advocacy, separate from current membership organizations

The committee shall ultimately work towards a recommendation whether to

- a) re-establish full membership within the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations,
- b) remain an Associate Member for an additional year, or
- c) leave the organization altogether in lieu of an alternative advocacy structure. Recommendations regarding university level and provincial advocacy are also welcomed.

MEMBERSHIP: This review shall be led by a committee consisting of one representative from each faculty (as determined by appropriate society/societies), as well as one member at large of the Union. A chair and secretary of the group shall be chosen from within the group with the intent to be responsible for scheduling meetings, collecting and disseminating meeting minutes, and facilitating meetings in a fair and equitable manner. The committee shall meet at minimum once per month, or as determined by the chair. The committee shall have the authority to form subcommittees as it deems necessary. The DSU President, Vice President Academic and External, and 1 DSU staff member may also sit as ex-officio members.

PROCESS: The review should include multiple means of consultation, which may include:

- faculty specific discussions
- at large education campaigns and consultation through general surveys, intercept surveys, focus groups, and broad-scale consultative events
- discussion with current and potential partner organizations and ally organizations (eg. other schools facing similar challenges, faculty unions, other federal advocacy groups interested in education, etc)

REPORT: The committee shall present back its findings and recommendations to DSU Council in Winter 2014 and shall make all information easily and widely accessible through DSU Website and any other appropriate means of communication.

The Advocacy Review Committee, mandated by council, was struck in May 2013. It has completed the tasks assigned to it. The committee began work in the May 2013 and continued throughout the summer and fall semester. The committee's work included discussions, surveying and outreach. The discussions included: what advocacy is, the context in which student

advocates operate in, the pros and cons of the organizations the DSU is part of, other student organizations in the country and the organizing models they use, and what other possible alternatives might exist to the DSU's current strategy. The outreach included contacting students' unions which have left or reviewed CASA in the past, a survey on what students want their union to advocate for and how they relate to CASA and Students Nova Scotia, a town hall, and meetings with student societies.

This report outlines the findings of the Advocacy Review Committee and recommendations by the DSU executive for the Dalhousie Student Union.

History of the Student Movement

Overview

The history of the student movement in Canada stretches back to the beginning of the 20th century, with student organizations of some form being formed in universities for the purpose of academics, social activity or services. The Canadian University Press was founded in 1938ⁱ. The first national student organization which did political advocacy was formed in the 1960s, called the Canadian Union of Students (CUS)ⁱⁱ. It was a relatively low-key organization for sharing services and expertise, and eventually collapsed under internal divisions in no small part to the Quebec section exiting it during the Quiet Revolution. In 1972, another attempt at a national student organization was attempted, and the National Union of Students (NUS) was founded. Representing roughly 350,000 students, the NUS did national campaigns and lobbying against tuition fee increases and deregulation. The NUS began talks in 1977 about a merger with the Association of Students Councils, a service organization once run by the CUS. In 1981, the NUS and AOSC merged to form the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

The Canadian Federation of Students has functioned as a national student union since then and is the largest national student union in the country with roughly 500,000 members at approximately 80 students' unions. In 1994-95, five student associations from across Canada met to discuss the formation of a separate organization that would differ from the CFS in its policy creation and lobby efforts. The result was the formation of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) in 1995. The five founding members were the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta Students Union, The University of Saskatchewan Students Union, the University of Waterloo Federation of Students, and the Student Society of McGill University. More student associations later joined CASA, and the organization reached a peak to date of 25 members.

Where the CFS had representative components at the national and provincial level for lobbying, policy, and campaigns on a variety of student issues including tuition fees, federal funding, Aboriginal issues, women's issues and the environment, CASA would take a more focused, specialized approach focusing strictly on post-secondary issues that the federal government accepts as its responsibility.

CFS and CASA both have played roles in the Quebec student movement but largely they have been minor players. The Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) was founded in 1989 in response to the lifting of a tuition freeze and remains today as the largest student organization in Quebec. The Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSE) was founded in 2001, and the Table de concertation étudiante du Québec (TaCEQ) was founded in 2009.

Organizations which take a similar approach to lobbying and policy as CASA but operate at a provincial level have been founded across Canada. In Nova Scotia, the schools which had joined CASA (Dalhousie, Acadia, Saint Mary's, St. F.X.) did not have a provincial wing and they worked with CFS-affiliated schools under the umbrella group of the Nova Scotia Student Advisory Coalitionⁱⁱⁱ. It collapsed in 2003 due to ideological differences between CFS and CASA schools, and the CASA schools formed the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations (ANSSA) in 2003. In 2012, ANSSA changed its name to Students Nova Scotia.

The structures, methods and successes of these organizations will be discussed in greater detail later in this document.

The History of the DSU in National and Provincial Advocacy

The DSU has been a member of CASA since 1995 and ANSSA/SNS since 2003. During this time, the DSU has regularly sent delegates to CASA's lobby and strategy conferences and in many cases, Dalhousie members sat on committees and executive positions within CASA. Likewise the DSU has participated in the ANSSA/SNS board throughout these years. At no point during this time has there been a formal review of these organizations and whether they are serving Dalhousie students adequately.

Current Context

Post-secondary education in Canada has gone through several paradigm shifts in the country's history. Once an institution for the male children of wealthy families, in the post-war period there were large public investments in universities which made a university education affordable and accessible to a much greater number of students. Many European countries opted to make university tuition free, such as the United Kingdom. In North America this did not happen, although Canada made more substantial per-student subsidies to keep tuition fees down than in the United States. Another paradigm shift in post-secondary education took place in the early 1990s. In 1993, the federal government moved to eliminate federal transfers for post-secondary education, declaring its funding to be a wholly provincial responsibility and the federal jurisdiction would only include the Canada Student Loans Program, aboriginal education, military education, and some copyright issues.

This new separation of responsibilities (or some may say, abdication of responsibility) defines the current climate for education and advocacy related to it. Since 1993, tuition fees have risen at three times the rate of inflation^{iv} as provincial governments were largely unable to absorb all

the expenses downloaded onto them by the federal government. Students collectively owe over \$15 billion dollars^v to the federal government, and the average student graduates with \$28,000 in debt (In Nova Scotia it is higher, at \$35,703^{vi}).

Nova Scotia has been among the least affordable provinces in the country to get a university education for many years. Until 2007 when a tuition freeze was won by students, NS had the highest fees. Today NS has the third highest fees, led by Ontario at #1 and New Brunswick at #2. Nova Scotia is still considered by some studies to be the least affordable province to get an education, however, when family income and the related ability to pay is taken into account^{vii}. Some positive reforms have been won in Nova Scotia the the last 5 years, such as the implementation of needs-based grants and subsequent increase of the grants-to-loans ratio. On the other hand, funding for universities has been cut by ten percent in the 2011-2013 years, the 2007 tuition fee freeze was lifted to allow fees to rise by three percent per year, and professional and international student fees have been deregulated. The recently-elected Liberal government is promising to eliminate interest on the provincial portion of student loans, but has not made any hints that funding will be restored, or that tuition fees will be frozen or reduced. In addition to rising fees and student debt, Nova Scotia's universities have a combined \$800 million in deferred maintenance costs.^{viii}

It is within this climate of government cuts and the absence of federal post-secondary education transfers that students' unions must act.

Structures of Student Organizations

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

- Website: <http://www.casa-acae.com/>
- Student associations are members of CASA, rather than individual students being members.
- CASA maintains an 'easy in, easy out' policy for membership in CASA, requiring only a vote by the council of the member student association to join. To leave CASA, the union's council must vote to become an associate member for one year before again voting at council to leave.
- A board of directors is elected at an annual national assembly. The board includes a board chair, treasurer (ex-officio), and 4 directors at large.
- CASA employs 6 staff members at their head office in Ottawa. These positions are: national director, two policy and research officers, a government relations officer, a stakeholder relations officer, and an office manager. The national director must be a Canadian citizen.
- CASA has three conferences per year, one for transitioning the new members, one for policy and strategy, and one for an annual general meeting and lobby efforts in Ottawa.
- CASA has a one school, one vote policy at conferences, however only one delegate from each member school is allowed to speak at conferences at one time.
- The movement of information, opinions or directives from students to CASA is limited. Students must present their opinions/directives to the executive of their student union, and then rely on that executive member to present this information to the CASA board of directors at a conference or teleconference.
- Associate members may attend CASA conferences, be active in committees, and speak to issues at conferences but do not have a vote.
- Member associations pay fees to CASA using a formula based on the number of full time

equivalent students at the institution, weighted by the size of the school (bigger schools pay less per FTE). Full membership for the DSU costs \$44,441 per year currently. The CASA board is able to raise dues at the rate of the consumer price index each year without consultation, and any greater increases must be voted on by the membership.

Students Nova Scotia

- Website: <http://Studentsns.ca>
- Student associations are members of StudentsNS, rather than individual students.
- StudentsNS is made up of staff and a board of directors. The board consists of the president and one vice president of each member association. However, each member association has one vote. The board of directors has three officers:
 - Chair - responsible for upholding the internal policies of StudentsNS, organizing and chairing meetings, and is the secondary spokesperson for the organization
 - Vice-chair - plays the role of Chair when the Chair is unavailable, and is responsible for ensuring proper record-keeping.
 - Treasurer - responsible for assuring the financial accountability of Students Nova Scotia, including the creation of the budget for the following fiscal year, reviewing basic statements, assuring all financial regulations and procedures are followed and seeing that the Board of Directors receives regular reports on the organization's finances.
- No policy actually exists in StudentsNS' bylaws on entry and exit. It is assumed, therefore, that to enter/exit StudentsNS, a vote at a student association council is required.
- StudentsNS holds regular board conference calls and several in-person board meetings per year.
- Each member association has one vote in StudentsNS.
- StudentsNS has three permanent staff: an executive director, a research director, and an outreach director. It has several part time and contract staff, some of which are a limited term due to government grants. It has several part time and contract staff, some of which are a limited term due to government grants.
- The Dalhousie Student union paid \$92,377 last year to StudentsNS.

Quebec Student Roundtable (TaCEQ)

- Website: <http://www.taceq.org/> (Français)
- Student associations in Quebec are members of the TaCEQ.
- The TaCEQ is joined via a successful vote of the student union's governing body, a letter from the student union executive explaining their reasons for joining, and unanimous approval from the TaCEQ table. Exit requires a vote of the student union's governing body and a letter from the executive.
- TaCEQ does not charge any membership dues. Expenses of the TaCEQ are funded on a cost-sharing model of the member unions, which is subject to change through meetings of the TaCEQ Table.
- TaCEQ elects a board of directors once per year at a general assembly. The board of directors consists of:
 - Coordinating Committee (2)
 - One Representative per member association
- TaCEQ elects its main spokespeople and staff, the Secretary-General and Vice Secretary-General, at a general assembly. These two roles form the Coordinating Committee. They can be removed from their position with a 2/3 vote at a special general assembly.
- The TaCEQ holds at least one general assembly per academic semester. Individual students or student unions are able to call additional general assemblies.
- The TaCEQ Table meets more regularly to discuss and implement the organization's agenda.
- Member schools send representatives to the TaCEQ Table and general assemblies. Member associations get 1-3 delegates depending on the number of students the association represents.

Canadian Federation of Students

- Website: <http://cfs-fcee.ca>
- Individual students are members of the CFS.

- Membership in the CFS is decided through a referendum of the students' unions.
- A national executive is elected annually, with members-at-large elected at general meetings and provincial representatives elected by their respective provincial bodies. It is comprised of:
 - National chairperson
 - National deputy chairperson
 - National Treasurer
 - Provincial Representatives (10)
 - Graduate Student Representative
 - Francophone Representative
 - Aboriginal Representative
 - Women's Representative
 - Racialized Student's Representative

provincial level.

Quebec University Student Federation (FEUQ)

- Website: <http://feuq.qc.ca/> (Français)
- Student associations and/or faculty-level student associations and/or department level student associations are members of the FEUQ.
- FEUQ has a 'national' (provincial) executive committee consisting of:
 - President
 - Vice-President
 - Vice-President Academic
 - Vice-President of Sociopolitical Affairs

- General Secretary
- Internal coordinator
- Regional Affairs Coordinator
- President of the National Council for Graduate Studies (CNCS)
- FEUQ has 4 permanent staff: Executive Director, Policy Attaché, Press Attaché, Translator.
- The Annual general meeting is the highest decision making body in FEUQ. The executive committee is elected here and broad direction for the organization is decided for the year.
- FEUQ congress is held four times per year. Policies are proposed, debated, and voted on here. A 2/3 vote is required although they strive for consensus. Proposals that get voted in plenary of the congress must first be proposed by commissions, grouped by themes.
- FEUQ collects dues based on the number of students each student association represents.

Association for Student Union Solidarity (ASSE)

- Website: <http://www.asse-solidarite.qc.ca/> (French)
- Individual students are members of the ASSE.
- Membership in the ASSE is voted on by department-level, faculty-level and/or campus-level student unions with referendums and general assemblies both considered valid for entry. Associations must leave the ASSE in the same manner that they joined.
- ASSE elects an executive committee at its annual congress:
 - Coordinating Secretary
 - External Relations Secretary
 - Financial Secretary
 - Internal Relations Secretary
 - Information Secretary
 - Academic Affairs Secretary

- Spokesperson
- The ASSE congress is where major organizational decisions are made and the executive committee is elected. Department and/or faculty-level member associations may send up to three delegates to the congress, and campus-level member associations may send one delegate to the congress. There is one congress per year, although additional congresses may be called with the support of at least 1/3 of the member associations.
- Between congresses, regional councils around Quebec meet several times per year to discuss policy and strategy.
- ASSE charges dues to associations based on the number of student members.

Principles, Policies & Approach

CASA - Principles

All CASA policies are based on four policy principles. These form the core beliefs of the organization.

They are:

- *Accessibility*- CASA believes that any academically qualified student with the desire to pursue post-secondary education should not face a barrier – financial, social, political, physical, cultural, or otherwise.
- *Affordability*- CASA believes that students should not accumulate an unreasonable or insupportable amount of debt in the pursuit of a post-secondary education or in continuing such an education.
- *Innovation*- CASA believes in a post-secondary education system that has sustainable research programs across all disciplines, with the benefits of such research shared across all levels of the student body.

- *Quality*- CASA believes in a quality public post-secondary education system that is properly funded, effective and accountable; and co-operatively maintained and enhanced by the federal and provincial governments.^{ix}

CASA- Policies

Based on their principles, CASA develops policies that determine their positions on post-secondary education issues. These act as the basis for position papers, lobby efforts, and policy submissions.

CASA categorizes policies under the four policy principles. While these four principles deal with a vast range of student issues, most of CASA's policies (and resulting lobby efforts) are limited to financial-related issues in post-secondary education. While this does give a high level of detail to these issues, it can undermine their accessibility policy by ignoring non-financial issues.

CASA's policies are crafted by the policy committee, in coordination with their research and policy staff. All new policies are approved by the membership at the annual general meeting.

CASA's current lobby priorities are related to student employment and student loans, calling for an exemption of in-study earnings from loan calculation, and increasing the federal cap on student assistance from \$210 to \$245. CASA additionally has policies on the post-secondary student support program, mental health, and tuition fees. Notably, CASA's tuition fees policy does not support reducing fees, but instead calls for “policies that will help to mitigate tuition increases.” A motion from the DSU, calling for a tuition fee reduction, was rejected by at the 2013 CASA policy & strategy conference (see appendix A for the motion).

CASA- Approach

CASA's approach is to use research and lobbying in order to achieve the goals set forth by its members. When CASA policy is developed, the policy is turned into a position and published in a position paper.

These position papers are submitted to government and used as the basis of their government lobbying. CASA's lobby strategy involves an annual lobby week, where student union executives book meetings with federal politicians. Throughout the year, CASA staff takes on the lobbying work.

Policies are filtered through a 'policy diamond' where policies are rated by two measures: political opportunities and quality. Only policies which are perceived to have substantial political opportunity and to be sufficient policy will be included in lobby efforts. Policies that may be necessary will be de-prioritized if it does not appear that the current government does not wish to implement it. Casa has recently altered their practice to exclude the blue category, however CASA does not (generally) try to create opportunities for policies that students need, such as the restoration of federal post-secondary transfers to the provinces. Rather, their approach is mostly limited to direct lobbying of politicians, which only includes meetings with federal politicians.

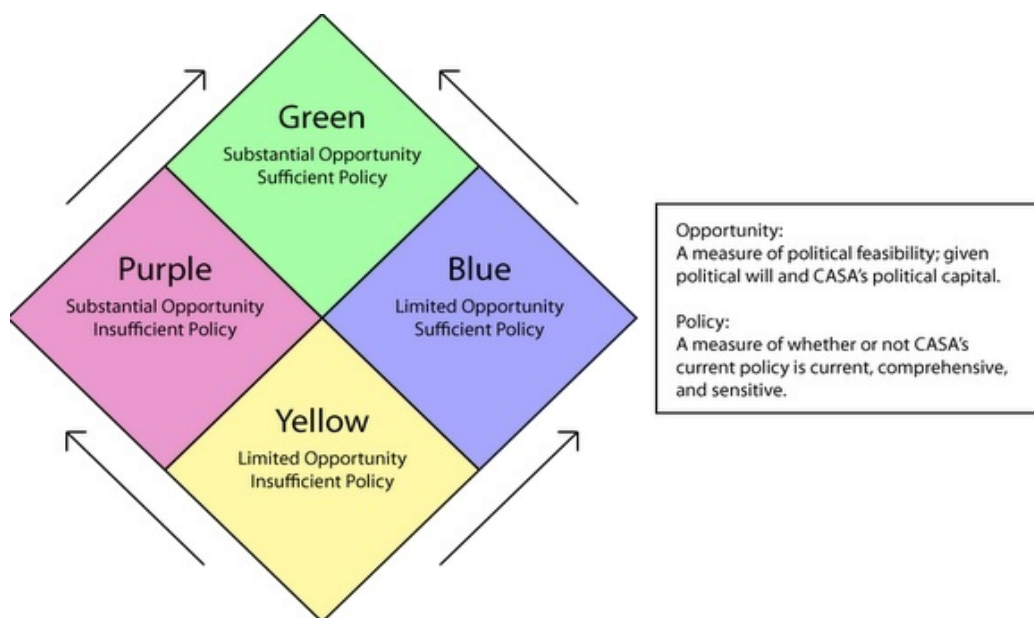


Illustration 1: CASA Policy Diamond

On occasion, CASA does attempt to engage in campaigns to engage the public with federal post-secondary education issues. Their most recent campaigns were in 2007 in an attempt to save the

Millennium Scholarship Fund, and in 2011 during the federal election. These campaigns have not been successful: the stated goal of the 2011 campaign was to build a database of contacts for future work, but they only collected 111 emails^x. In 2007 the campaign was more successful, with 621 petition signatures and 40 written letters collected^{xi}. However, as a point of comparison the DSU's petition to reverse library cuts collected 1,281 signatures and national petition drives from the CFS from the same year as CASA's millennium scholarship petition collected over 85,000 signatures. .

CASA does not address provincial issues in any capacity, leaving lobbying on post-secondary education up to its member associations and does not provide materials, briefs or information sheets as resources. CASA does have limited, informal relationships with some provincial student organizations, such as StudentsNS in the sense that most StudentsNS members are also CASA members. However, the working relationship between the two organizations is limited. The clear separation of provincial and federal jurisdiction when the two are quite connected are a likely impediment of both groups' ability to affect change to post-secondary education.

CASA- Successes

CASA's lobbying efforts have impacted government and policy over the course of its existence. Although it might not be considered a success, CASA successfully lobbied for the creation of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation in 1998. Some other examples include tax credits for textbooks, and tax credits for scholarships. Whether or not the Millennium Scholarship Foundation was a win is a controversial topic: on one side, it was a significant amount of money earmarked for students, but on the other it was done so through an unaccountable, bureaucratic third-party organization rather than through transfers. The Millennium Scholarship Foundation's structure was quickly implemented with limited coordination with the provinces, and the idea was to dole out scholarships through existing provincial grants programs with the goal of reducing student debt in Canada by \$12,000. What this resulted in, in many cases, was that incoming grant money displaced existing provincial programs such

as the Loan Remissions Program and funded other government operations^{xixiii}. In Nova Scotia, the auditor general and even the Millennium Scholarship Foundation criticized the minister of education for it, but there were no mechanisms for accountability. The \$2.5 billion program did not achieve its goal of lowering student debt, yet CASA considers the MSF as its most important achievement to date.

Determining long-term successes of CASA is more difficult. During the length of CASA's existence, student debt levels in Canada have more than doubled, while public funding for education has fallen. CASA's lobby strategy focuses on small, immediate gains from government rather than larger, more substantial changes. CASA does appear to achieve many of the goals they set out to, but their cumulative successes do not appear to have made enough of a difference to benefit students in the bigger picture. Such a criticism could also be directed at other federal student organizations, which have also not successfully reversed the post-1993 post-secondary education mindset of the federal government. However, the fact that CASA does not lobby to reduce student debt and tuition fees but rather 'to mitigate increases' to them arguably contributes to the continued increases in national student debt and tuition fees and decline in education funding.

Students Nova Scotia - Principles

StudentsNS has four Values that guide their research and lobbying, and form the core values of the organization.

Accessibility: Every qualified Nova Scotia student who wishes to pursue post-secondary education should be able to do so, irrespective of their financial situation, socioeconomic or ethnic background, physical, psychological or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, or any other factor other than qualification.

Affordability: The cost of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia should not cause undue hardship

upon any student, restrict their ability to pursue the career path they choose, or make them financially unable to live in the community that they choose.

Quality: Policies, programs, and services in post-secondary education should meet student expectations to help prepare them for lifelong success, including in their citizenship, careers, and personal wellbeing.

Student Voice: Nova Scotia students must be empowered to actively participate in setting their post-secondary system's direction via engagement through their representative student bodies, within their post-secondary institutions, and through the broader democratic process.^{xiv}

Students NS- Policies

SNS develops their policies based on research conducted by staff and forms recommendations based on the organization's values. Unlike CASA, where policies are voted on by members in plenary sessions of conferences and later are articulated in position papers, SNS staff proposes policy in position papers, based on board consultation. Drafts of the position papers are circulated to SNS board members for comment and discussion before they are finalized and released publicly. Afterwards, these position papers are sent to the DSU councils to be voted on, to determine if the DSU backs it. Each board member organization has their own process for ratification of these documents. There does not appear to be any consequence in terms of SNS lobby strategy if a member association votes against a position paper.

Students Nova Scotia has released four position papers in the last two years, on topics such as university funding and tuition fees, international students, the provincial funding formula, and student assistance. SNS uses these position papers as tools in their lobby efforts. StudentsNS' position paper on international students included recommendations such as providing medical services insurance to international students on arrival in Canada, but also proposed that international students pay for the full

cost of a university education (domestic tuition + value of provincial per-student subsidy), a formula to replace differential fees. Their paper on the university funding formula advocated for funding to be allocated based on the government's policy objectives. SNS's paper on university funding stated that tuition fees should be tied to the youth unemployment rate, i.e. That they should increase at the rate of inflation if youth unemployment decreases and remain frozen (in real, not nominal terms) when youth unemployment is not improving, as well as arguing that universities are not underfunded currently. The Dalhousie Student Union council only approved one position paper, on student assistance. This paper calls for the NS graduate retention tax rebate to be eliminated and the funds for it be redirected into needs-based grants. Notably, the DSU had identified this as the top priority when advocating to the provincial government, and had been doing campaign and lobby work for 13 months prior to this paper being released.

SNS- Approach

SNS staff carry out the majority of StudentsNS's lobby work, often accompanied by the chairperson. Their lobby strategy is similar to CASA's, favouring immediate reforms that they believe will be well-received from government. Their strategy appears to be to generally accept the direction of the government of the day and make amendments to their post-secondary education policies. The benefits of such an approach is that it can provide access to numerous working groups and committees of government departments. Risks to such an approach is that asks need to be more constrained to what will likely be welcomed in such committees, when necessary policy changes may be larger in scope.

StudentsNS does not emphasize campaigns to engage the public with post-secondary issues, although there are some limited examples. SNS currently has a "Mend the Gap" campaign, which aims to address the lack of representation of women in student politics. To date, the campaign has released some infographics for social media and produced a short report on women in student politics. It is unclear what impact this campaign can or will have at addressing issues of gender inequality and

privilege in student politics. Additionally, SNS has a #studentsspeakout campaign, where some students are interviewed about their experiences with student debt. There has been a change.org petition circulating since the start of January related to the campaign, calling for the implementation of StudentsNS's asks related to tuition fees and student assistance. The DSU has not actively promoted the petition due to disagreements over tuition policy, as well as the fact that the Nova Scotia legislature will only accept physical petitions. At the time of writing, the online petition has roughly 170 signatures. Broader efforts to engage students in order to inform future position papers and popularize their current policies and build public support for their asks include two student assemblies per year on member campuses. The organizing and promotion work for these assemblies is mostly shouldered by the member student unions, while SNS staff facilitates them and provides funding.

Similar to CASA, their approach to lobbying is focused on direct lobbying of provincial politicians and civil servants in the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. SNS uses its position papers as lobby documents, which staff use in meetings. They do not focus on the federal government in any way, much like CASA does not focus on provincial jurisdiction in any way.

SNS- Successes

StudentsNS and the former Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations have made some impact on government policy. Most of their achievements have been related to student assistance: an increase in the maximum student loans allowance, an increase in the grants-to-loans ratio, an increase to the in-study earnings allowance, and an increase in the textbook allowance. StudentsNS lists what it claims as achievements and setbacks on their website, at <http://studentsns.ca/advocacy/results/>. A sample of their record for 2013:

- **Result:** Increase in the grant:loan ratio of Nova Scotia student assistance from 35:65 to 40:60. An individual student can receive a maximum \$306 benefit from this change.
- **Result:** Increase in the weekly maximum Nova Scotia student assistance amount by \$10. An individual student can receive a maximum \$340 benefit in 2012-13 from this change.

- **Result:** Helped to have the provincial minimum wage tied to the Low Income Cut-Off and reach \$10.30/hour.
- **Set-back:** The Province announces a 3% cut in operating grants to universities in 2013-14. [authors note: the cut is worth \$10,467,000.]

As with CASA, determining long-term successes of SNS is more difficult. During the length of SNS/ANSSA's existence, student debt levels have risen^{xv}. SNS's lobby strategy focuses on immediate, short-term gains from government rather than larger, more substantial changes, with the intention that they build up over time. Some ability to measure long-term success could be the result of multi-year memorandums of understanding signed between university presidents and the government of Nova Scotia. The last MOU, signed in 2011 allowed for a 3% per year tuition fee increase, a 10% funding cut over three years, and deregulation of international differential fees and law, dentistry and medicine student tuition fees. Before that, the 2007 MOU put in place a tuition fee freeze. Indeed, with SNS telling government officials in their lobbying that universities do not need more funding and that tuition and international student fee reductions are not a priority, it could be argued that they are part of the problem with regards to rising student debt. SNS does appear to achieve some of the goals they set out to, but their cumulative successes do not appear to have made enough of a difference to benefit students in the bigger picture, i.e. rising student debt, concerns about quality, reductions in services to students, accumulation of deferred maintenance costs, and large cuts in funding to post-secondary institutions. Because it is an organization representing over 80% of Nova Scotian university students, Students Nova Scotia bears a lot of responsibility for its inability to stop the erosion on Nova Scotia's university system.

Analysis

The question of what the DSU hopes to achieve with its advocacy efforts, how it plans to advance those interests, and what, if any, external organizations to work with remains open. Another question to be addressed is whether the DSU has been well served through its membership in CASA and SNS. 2014 will mark twenty years since the federal government moved to eliminate post-secondary education transfers and provides an excellent opportunity for review and an opportunity to modernize its advocacy goals and methods.

As has been mentioned before in this document, tuition fees are rising faster than inflation, as well as means of government support such as grants, scholarships with the result being students taking on greater amounts of debt. The effects of growing student debt are many: some provinces such as Nova Scotia face challenges with youth outmigration, the economy is negatively impacted as graduates put off major purchases such as houses to service their debt. Social and economic inequality increases as people from lower incomes are increasingly unable to afford education. A study by the Bank of Montreal shows that students are finding that their top source of stress is financial, followed by employment-related- with academic matters coming third. On average, One in five Canadians have a mental health issue, yet for university students the figure is one in four. Comparing the BMO study with the existing mental health data paints a frightening picture of how the current climate of rising education costs are contributing to significant public mental health problems^{xvi}. Because of these financial challenges facing students, student unions need to be pushing for reduced student debt and its root cause, tuition fees, if they are to meaningfully service their constituents.

It should be concerning that not only do CASA and StudentsNS not advocate for lower

tuition fees, or even that there is internal resistance by staff at both organizations to adopt such an advocacy goal, but that in their public messaging and lobbying, they actively discredit the idea of reducing the most significant financial barrier to education for students. The organizations when at their best will claim to support reducing tuition fees, but will also claim that other means of reducing debt are more practical in the immediate political and economic climate. While increasing needs-based grants is also good for students, it should be noted that longer-term reforms of greater substance are needed and a strategy for achieving them are needed. This is where the two organizations have a structural flaw. Through their approach of only pushing for small, technical reforms, using only lobbying as a tactic, and only focusing on one level of government with limited contact with other groups at the other level, CASA and StudentsNS are incapable of system-level changes. Without the skills or infrastructure to run effective campaigns, both students and the general public will not be as informed on pressing student issues and will lack the needed information to put pressure on their elected officials. Public opinion is one of the most important factors that influence the actions of politicians. It follows that to develop a strategy based solely on lobbying (as CASA and SNS do), they lack the needed ability to follow up on their lobbying asks with public pressure. CASA, which formally uses a policy diamond and SNS, which informally behaves the same way, will only adopt lobby asks that they feel will be well-received by politicians. But the purpose of public campaigning is to change that very lobbying climate and expand the scope of what is possible. Over the course of the DSU's membership in CASA and StudentsNS, the government's policies regarding tuition fees have generally worsened: the student movement in Nova Scotia was not capable of maintaining a tuition fee freeze (at the time already in place) under an NDP government. Given the party's social democratic views and history of working with student unions, that should not have been a challenge.

Beyond evaluations of their methods, the actual goals of CASA and StudentsNS are worth

critical examination. Since changing their name in 2012, StudentsNS has released several position papers setting the agenda for the organization. The topics covered include the funding formula for NS university programs, the level of funding for universities and what tuition fees should be, international students, and student assistance.

Students Nova Scotia

Their first paper recommended adjusting the bin weights used in the funding formula for universities so that programs not regarded by the government of the day as being part of their economic development strategy would receive less. There are numerous problems with this approach: first, universities are independent institutions rather than government bodies; focusing on immediate job training needs or commercialization-based research does not use the university to its full scientific research potential (pure science is very important in the long run); humanities, social science and fine arts education would be negatively impacted.

On funding and tuition fees, StudentsNS argued that universities do not need/should not receive more funding. Given that the Dalhousie library ran out of money to buy books in a climate of university budget cuts, this is a strange thing for a student advocacy group to say. On tuition fees, their stance was to link tuition fee increases to the youth unemployment rate: when youth unemployment rises or falls tuition should be frozen but if youth unemployment is falling then tuition fee increases can be justified. The initial observation is that the status quo in tuition is too expensive, and a freeze on fees as the best case scenario is an inadequate position for a student advocacy organization. Beyond that, implementing a link in the price of tuition and youth unemployment is difficult for a government department to implement and/or enforce, plus youth unemployment is influenced by factors broader than post-secondary students and graduates so is an imprecise tool for determining university accessibility. Further, creating a negative relationship between youth unemployment and tuition fees creates an unfortunate choice for students: education

would become less affordable as good jobs become available, and only when the economic climate is worsening for young people should fees stop rising. A possible rebuttal to the previous point is that a tuition fee freeze is a “real reduction” because tuition prices would hold constant despite inflation. However, such an argument is weak. Everything else getting more expensive does not make something cheaper, it only makes it cheaper relative to something else. The only real reduction is an actual reduction in fees. Finally, since this policy recommendation is grounded in the idea that university education should be priced based on the return on investment, it should be noted that lowering fees is the best way to increase the return on investment of a university education.

StudentsNS's paper on international students is more varied and contains some good recommendations, such as increased staffing ratios at international centres, writing support geared towards international students needs, and automatic and free medical services insurance coverage when they arrive in Nova Scotia. Further, it challenges the stereotype that international students all come from a privileged background and can easily afford to pay tens of thousands of dollars for their education. Given the latter point, the report makes a troubling recommendation on international student fees. StudentsNS recommends that international students pay the full cost of a university education (domestic student tuition plus whatever the government pays towards a students education). This would mean a reduction in funding from the government for international students. At Dalhousie, it would mean a modest increase of fees because the international student differential fee is already higher than tuition costs. In other universities where international student differential fees are much lower (such as MSVU), this proposed fee formula would result in an increase in fees in the thousands.

StudentsNS's position paper on student assistance is the only one that earned DSU council

support. Significantly, it calls for the elimination of an ineffective tax credit for recent graduates and calls for the funding to be redirected into needs-based grants. This policy was included at the insistence of the DSU and not as a result of StudentsNS staff. Initial drafts included as a point of principle that “students favour targeted needs-based assistance over broad tuition fee reductions.” While targeted grants are definitely important, why opposition to tuition reductions would be included in policy is troubling. The DSU successfully excluded that from the final draft. It is worth mentioning that this is not original work from StudentsNS or even the DSU. The first organization to make such a proposal was the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an economic policy think tank.

Overall, StudentsNS's vision for post-secondary education is not adequate for students. If everything they ask for were implemented, tuition fees would be higher, especially for international students, and problems with underfunding would continue. In the big picture, universities would be brought very close to the governments economic development agenda to the detriment of important science and humanities research/education faculties. Students deserve an education that is high-quality, transformative, well-rounded, affordable and accessible. With only a few notable exceptions, StudentsNS's goals and methods do not bring students in Nova Scotia closer to that.

CASA

CASA's most recent lobby priorities have been based on three 4-6 page lobby documents, titled “Setting the Access Agenda,” “Taking on Canada's Commitments,” and “Student Mental Health.” The organization has a larger database of policies that it draws upon to produce these lobby documents, but listing all of them is beyond the scope of this paper. The organization does not produce as many position papers as StudentsNS, and produced none in 2013.^{xvii}

CASA's most recent lobby asks related to university accessibility have positive and questionable asks. The positives include increasing the weekly limit for student loans by \$35, bringing the proportion of Canada Student Grants in line with inflation since the program began,

expanding needs-based grants by an unspecified amount, and appointing a student to federal granting agencies (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR). The more questionable asks include an exemption of personal investments of up to \$10,000 and a vehicle worth over \$5000 from student loan assessment. It is curious that their document on limiting financial barriers doesn't even suggest freezing or reducing tuition fees, yet makes asks to help students with \$10,000 personal investments.

Their lobby document titled "Taking on Canada's Commitments" calls for the 2% funding cap be removed from Post-Secondary Student Support Program (which funds aboriginal education), and a one-time investment to clear the backlog of aboriginal students that applied for but did not yet receive funding for their education. This is sensible and important policy which is worth supporting. It is also a telling case study which proves that lobbying alone won't win major reforms. Although the proposed policies are relatively inexpensive, lobbying for the changes has gained little traction despite it being an issue since 1999. This is likely because it is an ideological issue (some politicians are opposed to aboriginal students receiving a fully-funded education, even if the legally-binding treaties obligate the Canadian state to do so). Therefore in addition to government meetings, additional tactics will be necessary in order to sway enough MPs to make the needed change.

CASA's third lobby document is about mental health. The two specific asks of CASA are a step in the right direction regarding student mental health. The first is to ask the government to make mental health in young people (aged 15-29) a priority in the pan-Canadian healthy living strategy. The second ask from CASA is to increase funding by 4 million dollars to fight stigma of mental health issues across the nation. These are steps in the right direction towards a culture shift in Canada around mental health as a priority. However, neither of these asks actually increase our campuses' capacities to handle the volume of mental health concerns. Where at Dalhousie, there can be up to a 2-month waiting list to see a psychologist and the demand is growing each year, it is

important we work on building our ability to provide adequate health service to students. Advocacy efforts should be focused on the service while simultaneously fighting stigma and creating a new culture shift.

All things considered, CASA's asks are not as troubling as the things StudentsNS advocates for. At the same time, they are less impactful. In many ways this is acceptable; as federal-provincial relations currently stand the provinces have much more responsibility for post-secondary education. On the other hand, it is this very lack of federal participation that is producing much of the problems for students, such as soaring student debt. A lobby session that does not stress the need for restored federal post-secondary education transfers is a lobby session wasted. On this critical issue, CASA's policy is to support a "Pan-Canadian accord" on post-secondary education. What this actually means is not well defined. It is a cold comfort that CASA prioritizes other issues because their minimal working relationship with their provincial equivalents makes getting the needed stakeholders (federal and provincial leaders) into a room very unlikely. Student debt will continue to grow as a problem until federal funding and initiative is restored, and CASA seems unwilling and unable to achieve it.

In summary, there are significant concerns with the institutional goals and practice of CASA and StudentsNS. Alternative means of pursuing advocacy goals should be interrogated to determine if better uses of DSU resources are available.

Independent Advocacy

Alternatives- Available Options

Given the concerns identified about the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and Students Nova Scotia, the DSU needs to determine the best way to move forward. The options available include reforming the organizations, pursuing advocacy independently, joining a different existing student organization, or initiating dialogue with other student unions in order to establish a new organization. Only the first two options, reform and independent advocacy, will be considered in this document.

Internal Reform Efforts

Given that the DSU has a stake in both CASA and SNS, and because internal structures exist for members to push reforms, it makes sense to pursue this path first. Members of the DSU executive have been working diligently to push CASA and SNS to improve their policies regarding student debt, tuition fees and international students, to diversify the organizations tactics/strategy, and to adopt positions on issues important to Dalhousie students.

Internal Reform- Students Nova Scotia

The 2012-2013 academic year presented an excellent opportunity to enact reforms in Students Nova Scotia, as in that time the organization had increased its membership dues at all but one member campus (increasing capacity) and undergoing re-branding from the Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Associations to StudentsNS. Given that Dalhousie students pay nearly half the organizations budget and it is supposedly a membership-driven organization, the DSU should be able to throw its weight around effectively. Attempts at internal reform were made in the policy area, as well as reducing partisanship from StudentsNS staff, expanding on the number of advocacy tactics employed, increasing cooperation with other student unions, and orienting towards a more member-driven

culture.

The DSU had concerns with many of StudentsNS's position papers, as well as on some smaller issues, such as responses to government announcements, political developments, and the release of independent reports. For example, StudentsNS did not hold the provincial government to account in the 2013 budget, even though it made funding cuts to universities worth millions of dollars. The DSU members of the SNS board called on staff to include references to the cuts in responses to the budget, but the staff insisted that maintaining good relationships is priority over holding government accountable to the students they represent. When the numerous problematic position papers came to the SNS board, the DSU was the most vocal in discussions under two separate DSU presidents. Despite vocal opposition to many proposed policies in the papers, the DSU only has a single vote. In one case, the DSU was able to make significant amendments to a position paper about student assistance. The DSU had been advocating that the provincial government redirect funds from the graduate retention tax credit into needs-based grants for slightly over a year, during which time StudentsNS staff would speak against at government-student roundtables. However, the DSU was successful in getting StudentsNS to change their proposals regarding student loans and grants, and include the DSU's policy. Additionally, a statement of principle in the paper was deleted which stated (paraphrased) "StudentsNS does not support broad-based tuition reductions, favouring targeted needs-based grants." The DSU's position is that such a comment was at best unnecessary and at worst a justification for tuition fee increases.

During the provincial election in October 2013, StudentsNS chose to evaluate the platforms of political parties and how they affect students. The NDP was given the best grade, despite the fact that the NDP did not make a single commitment in its platform regarding post-secondary education. The only youth-focused policy in the NDP platform was a vaguely worded promise to help graduates buy houses. The Liberal party, however, promised to eliminate interest on the provincial portion of student loans and expand graduate scholarships. The SNS election page gave the NDP

good marks because of changes they made to student assistance while in office, ignoring the funding cuts and tuition hikes. While partisan issues can be loaded and subjective and this report is not meant to suggest an endorsement of any political party, the simple fact that the NDP platform contained zero promises regarding post-secondary education yet got the best grade should raise eyebrows. The DSU lobbied StudentsNS not to make endorsements or imply an endorsement of a political party but staff chose to disregard that. The DSU executive is concerned that the staff's refusal to criticize policies that increased hardship for students, bizarre election analysis, and policy proposals that seem to be more pro-government than pro-student may have been coloured by partisan bias.

The previous DSU president, Jamie Arron, placed a particular emphasis at the SNS board on building unity among student unions in Nova Scotia. SNS and the Canadian Federation of Students have a divisive working relationship which makes it difficult to present a united front to government. The DSU has opposed staff proposals to direct organizational focus towards encouraging CFS-affiliated schools to join StudentsNS on the grounds that there are no shortage of more pressing issues facing students. Nonetheless, staff proposals to fight other students continue to surface, such as a proposal at the October 2013 board meeting to have StudentsNS fund legal battles with the CFS at the University of Cape Breton. The DSU voted against this motion, yet resources will be allocated to this. At student-government roundtables hosted by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, StudentsNS staff regularly criticize other student unions, including when the DSU would call for the graduate retention tax rebate to be redirected into grants (before it became SNS policy). The DSU's concerns over this antagonistic behaviour, no matter how often they are raised, do not appear to be taken seriously by the StudentsNS staff.

Internal Reform- CASA

The DSU's approach towards reform at CASA has been different, as the organization is

larger and the processes different. Because of geographical distances, opportunities to discuss issues in plenary are more limited. The best chance to enact reforms, then, is the conferences. The DSU has proposed policy resolutions on four occasions in the last two years: one resolution called for the policy diamond approach to policy formation be retired, in order to remove excessive constraints on policies. CASA's policy on tuition fees expired in 2010 without a new one proposed (policies do not stay on their books permanently and need renewal), so the DSU put forward a motion in favour of reducing tuition fees. Two other motions were based on what the DSU council voted in favour of, one to call on Canada Blood Services to end its discriminatory ban on blood donation by men who have sex with men, and another calling on the federal government to respect its treaties with First Nations, Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis people by not passing numerous pieces of legislation that many aboriginal argued violated those treaties. Not a single one of these four resolutions passed. The resolutions on the policy diamond and ending the blood ban were indefinitely tabled after manoeuvring by CASA staff, while the other two were defeated on the conference floor. It is particularly telling that the DSU is part of an organization where most members oppose reducing tuition fees. At this point, the DSU has tried all the available options for reform: through policy resolutions, and through signalling that the union is unhappy with a vote for reducing its membership status. Despite the efforts by different DSU executives, no openness to reform, or other possibilities for it have been observed.

Internal Reform- Analysis

The DSU had made vigorous and sincere efforts to bring StudentsNS and CASA more in line with the needs of Dalhousie students without success. An organizational culture opposed to engaging rank-and-file students and public campaigns, as well as highly problematic opposition to lowering student debt and tuition fees are barriers to internal reform. Both organizations are highly staff-driven despite claims to be membership-driven, and the concerns of the DSU seem to have

been simply dismissed. Given the gravity of the concerns with StudentsNS and CASA, and the limited opportunity for reform on the inside, exiting the organizations and pursuing advocacy independently appears to be the best, lowest-risk way to represent the interests of Dalhousie students.

Independent Advocacy

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks of an independent approach to advocacy should be considered. Numerous factors should be considered that could make independent advocacy effective or ineffective, such as the size of the union, resources available for advocacy efforts, external political situations and relations, other external organizations and student unions, and whether joining an existing external organization could closely align with the needs of Dalhousie students. To consider each factor, the DSU is not well-represented by StudentsNS or CASA. In addition to StudentsNS in Nova Scotia, there is the Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia, which has roughly 6,000 members. The Dalhousie Student Union has 18,000 members and is by far the largest university in Nova Scotia. This gives the DSU a level of political clout that no other student union has. For example, the DSU is capable of securing meetings with the Minister of Advanced Education on its own, even when a member of StudentsNS. No other student union is able to get an audience so easily. Beyond simple strength in numbers, the DSU has considerable resources that enable it to maintain a diverse staff, something that other unions cannot afford to do. Developing expertise and capacity in an advocacy department is within the means of the DSU. Finally, should the DSU withdraw from StudentsNS and CASA, the move would be noticed by government and policy-makers and clearly show that Dalhousie student's priorities are unique. In this sense, it would improve the lobbying climate for Dalhousie students, not worsen it.

These alternatives are meant to be used for comparison's sake. External lobby organizations

have been considered “tools” for the DSU to do advocacy. If students and council are to decide what tools, strategies and tactics are most appropriate and effective in taking on the issues that matter to students then they need to have a sense of what other possibilities there are. So these alternatives are meant to embody certain principles of how the DSU could do advocacy as well as an example for what this might actually look like practically and tangibly. This is not necessarily what will be implemented and the budgets are rough as there is more discussion needed about how this will look.

Principles of Independent Advocacy

These are the principles and identified areas for the DSU to improve on or build on in doing advocacy. Any move towards independent advocacy should attempt to follow these principles.

a) Staff experience (for advocating independently or through external lobby organizations)

Executives should be elected for more than their skills, ability and experience. Students should choose their leadership because they relate to their message, their vision or feel represented by them. The position of VPAE currently requires a unique skill set with a learning curve for incoming members. Without experience in running issue-based campaigns, lobbying or deep knowledge of the post-secondary education system they would be set up to fail. Given this, it is considered of high importance that this position be supported by staff who have these skills and experience and who can train, prepare and support the VPAE towards success. Staff would also be able to lend knowledge of the DSU’s efforts historically and be able to give insight into specific people, tactics and policies with an historical nature.

b) Campaigns, Outreach and Student Engagement

The DSU does not have the appropriate systems in place to run campaigns to raise awareness of issues with students or to organize those interested towards action. The efforts of the DSU in recent years have been successful and have received positive student feedback but could be vastly improved with greater resources.

c) Accountability and Directive from Students

An expansion in advocacy capacity would be to allow for a closer connection between students and the people advocating on their behalf. Having staff to handle much of the logistics of the DSU's advocacy would allow DSU executives to spend more time engaging students and talking to them about the issues that matter to them and helping them to overcome them. Research, policies, political stances, campaigns and lobby issues could come more directly from the student body and could change as students change

d) Expansion into New Areas

The DSU has identified that there are many areas that it either has not typically been involved in or doesn't have the capacity to as much as it would like. Especially in the last year issues within the institution of Dalhousie have become particularly important to students. Last winter a \$17 million deficit was announced with cuts to faculties and services. This year students were frustrated by having library acquisitions frozen. These are all issues that the DSU has been involved in but hindered from participating in or acting on fully due to the limited staff and executive capacity. A staff researcher would be able to understand and look further into these financial issues and produce reports. The Dal Faculty Association's report on Dal's finances is a good example of what the DSU could do with the staff capacity. The following proposal is meant partly to acknowledge the limitlessness to the issues within the university. There could also be a new focus on municipal

issues, which can have a huge impact on students but which are currently not taken on by the external lobby organizations. Equity and accessibility issues are also something the DSU has been expanding into with success and good feedback. While these efforts may not be initiated by new staff or VP's they could be supported and overseen. Expansion into new areas could encompass work on issues of discrimination based on race, gender, ability, class etc as well as general advocacy for marginalized groups on campus. Any issue would be taken on strategically, within the union's capacity, and not necessarily all at once. These issues come up at different times and require different responses. Advocacy staff, all of the executives, DSU Council and all students would be responsible for determining priorities of the union.

The Advocacy Department

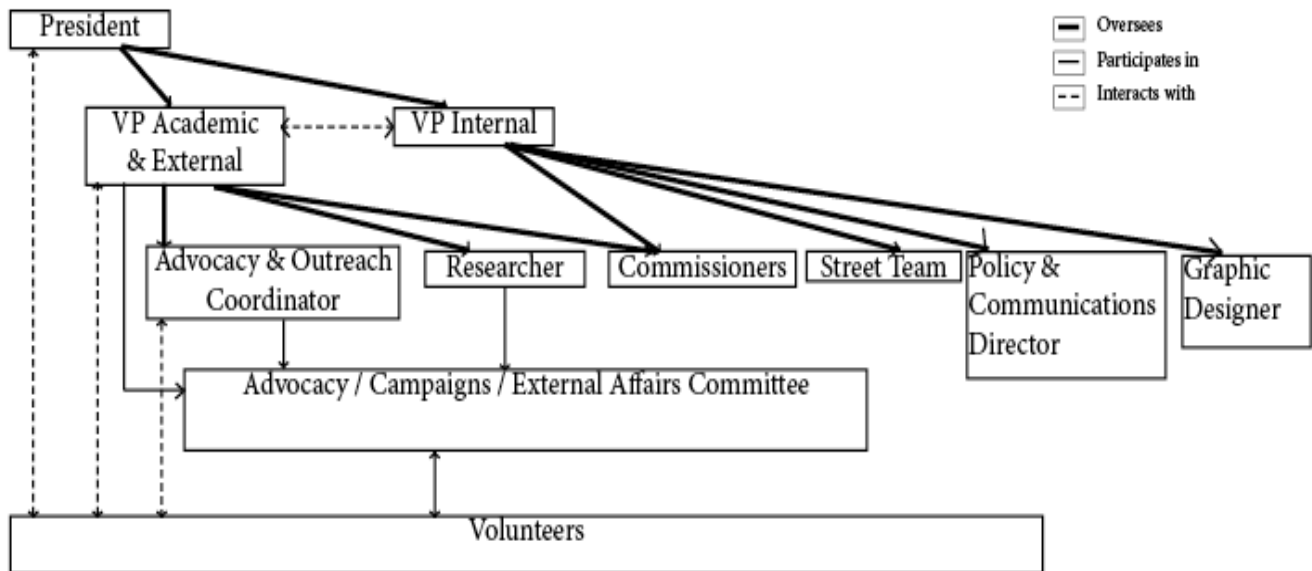
The combined value of the DSU's membership in StudentsNS and CASA is \$136,818.¹ How to re-allocate this money is a source of continued discussion among the executives, though there is some degree of consensus regarding some things. The most pressing need for the DSU's advocacy efforts is to improve in-house research capacity. To fulfill that need, the executive is proposing that a new researcher position be created. An additional asset that would benefit independent advocacy efforts is an outreach coordinator. The vice-president academic and external, as well as the president, are the public faces of DSU advocacy. However, because they have a diverse portfolio and many pressing tasks, a full-time staff person focused on advocacy would greatly improve the quality of such efforts. In addition, because it is normal in student unions to have incoming executive members with limited advocacy experience, these new executives would benefit from the mentorship of experienced professionals and institutional memory these two positions would add.

Under an independent advocacy model, the DSU would place a much greater emphasis on

¹ Calculated assuming full membership in CASA. Half the value of that membership, \$22,000, has been directed to other advocacy efforts this fiscal year.

advocacy than it currently does. The advocacy work of the union, as it currently consists of the Vice-President academic and external, with guidance from the president and support from commissioners, the policy/research/communications director, and has access to the graphic designer. A team of volunteers is relied upon to complete most tasks and events. Lobbying is mostly carried out by the VP academic and external, attending nearly all meetings with politicians including the government-student roundtables. The president, commissioners and/or volunteers will sometimes accompany the VPAE. Campaigns, which consist of a series of planned events run in parallel to outreach and promotion efforts, are carried out by volunteers and commissioners under the coordination of the VPAE. The model has had some modest successes, such as securing high-level meetings such as the Advanced Education Minister and leader of the NS Progressive Conservative party, and numerous media hits. It also has some limitations. The VPAE's portfolio also requires that energy and time be invested in academic and university affairs, while other DSU executives, busy with their own work, often regard advocacy as outside their portfolio and give it only an afterthought. The addition of two full-time staff, the researcher and outreach coordinator (described in detail further on) will expand capacity. But some changes in the DSUs methods will need to change. Without an external organization doing research and policy creation, the DSU will need to do this. Holding meaningful consultations with diverse groups of students will be essential. A deep understanding of the Dalhousie student experience, placed in the context of the local, provincial, and national situation should provide the basis for policy asks which represent the needs and aspirations of Dalhousie students.

DSU Advocacy Department: Organization Chart



The organization chart above is an example of what a strengthened advocacy department of the DSU could look like. It makes use of existing staff, such as the communications director, with the addition to new staff solely focused on advocacy. The main body for planning DSU lobbying and campaign efforts is an external affairs committee, which would be a group open to any interested student. It would be chaired by the VP external, with the A&O Coordinator and Researcher present at meetings as resources. The committee would be the source of ideas for events and other programming related to advocacy, such as panel discussions, lectures, media stunts, awareness campaigns, skill-building sessions, etc. The VPAE and staff would take direction from the students on the committee and prepare resources and complete the logistical work, involving volunteers where necessary/possible. The VPAE will need to keep the VP Internal in regular communication so that the messages of the campaign can be effectively carried to students through the existing DSU channels.

The DSU will increase the quality of its campaigns. In addition to keeping a core of active volunteers in the VPAE's action group, integrating societies into the campaign strategy is key. The DSU should make a sincere effort to reach out to societies for input, as well as providing information about the latest education issues and offering opportunities to participate in their own way. It must be recognized that not all people will want to get involved in advocacy in the same way- not every student wants to attend a protest or feel comfortable lobbying a politician. A student shouldn't need to identify as an activist to find advocating for their interests an inclusive and inviting experience. Finding new, unique and creative ways to include diverse groups of students with varying skills and levels of knowledge will be key to expanding the student movement on Dal campus.

The DSU will have to participate in government lobbying on a more advanced level. Examples of new tasks for the DSU advocacy department include government-student working groups, such as Memorandum of Understanding negotiations, tuition fee working groups, and others. The DSU will be expected to produce pre-budget submissions for the provincial government, and could also do so for the federal government. Without attending CASA conferences for the national level, the DSU will have to focus on Nova Scotia-based members of parliament. In addition to the MPs in the Halifax area, the DSU may want to consider travelling to other areas of the province to meet with other MPs and senators. Independent advocacy will mean a greater volume of media interviews, both in terms of journalists approaching the union for a student voice, and the union needing to be more aggressive in increasing its profile.

In summary, a successful independent advocacy model will see the DSU expand the capacity of the advocacy department and elevate its priority among the union executive, staff and volunteers. Greater attention must be paid to the needs and wants of Dalhousie students through frequent consultations, and a closer relation with the provincial government will be needed.

The two proposed new staff positions are outlined as follows:

Researcher

Responsibilities: A DSU researcher will be highly knowledgeable in post-secondary education policy, with knowledge of federal, provincial, municipal and university politics, with the student movement, and with campaigns and other advocacy tactics. They should also be able to produce research, both technical when necessary but also in clear language and in engaging formats for easy public understanding. The researcher should work closely with members of the executive to provide issue briefings. The researcher will work with the policy and communications director and executive to translate research into effective communications, with the graphic designer to produce quality infographics, and the advocacy and outreach coordinator and executive to set advocacy priorities.

Estimated Costs (\$)

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Researcher Payroll | 40000 |
| Resources | 2000 |
| Conferences | 2200 |
| Printing | 1000 |
| Office Supplies | 300 |
| Events | 500 |
| Telephone | 1000 |
| TOTAL | 47000 |

Notes: When the DSU council voted to reduce its membership from Full to Associate member in CASA in 2013, the researcher position was cited as a top priority as an alternative. This was not achievable because the \$22,000 from reducing membership half-way could not attract a high-quality researcher. However, a \$47,000 budget is much more competitive and capable of attracting

equal or greater talent than is currently at StudentsNS. An additional benefit to sourcing research in-house is that the researcher will be able to do more qualitative and quantitative research, as well as consultations with Dal students and therefore better reflect Dalhousie student priorities.

Advocacy & Outreach Coordinator

Responsibilities: Assist in training executives on their positions, educate all executive as well as student volunteers on how to lobby, run campaigns, and develop advocacy skills. Provide briefings to executives before lobby meetings. Maintain a database of lobby meetings, policy asks, responses and promises from policy-makers. The Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator is a resource to assist the executive in developing and implementing campaigns, as well as running consultations for students to engage and have their concerns and opinions reflected in the advocacy the DSU does.

Estimated Costs (\$)

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Coordinator payroll | 38000 |
| Conferences | 2000 |
| Printing | 1000 |
| Materials | 2000 |
| Events | 1000 |
| Advertising and Promotion | 1000 |
| TOTAL | 45000 |

Constituent Outreach Workers

One option for increasing the effectiveness and representation of independent advocacy is to hire part time coordinators from different constituency groups to make sure that the DSU is directly representing those different groups. These groups could include (but are not limited to): Graduate students, international students, professional students, sexton campus students and agricultural campus students.

Responsibilities:

- Take direction from their constituency group
- Organize consultations with specific constituency group
- Assist in developing and implementing programming
- Communicate with DSU executives regularly.

Based on the number of desired outreach workers, the wages and hours of the positions will vary.

Estimated Costs (\$)

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Coordinator Payroll | Variable. \$34,818 / Number of coordinators |
| | X3 – \$11,606 each |
| | X4 - \$8,704 each |
| | X5 – \$6,964 each |
| | X6 - \$5,803 each |
| | |
| | |
| TOTAL | \$34,818 or less |

Additional Possibilities

The researcher and outreach coordinator positions will go along way towards making the DSU capable of high-quality, independent advocacy. However, the entirety of the original budget is not re-allocated with these two positions alone. The executive has not reached consensus on what to do with the remainder and welcomes feedback from all Dalhousie students on this. Some options include, but are not limited to:

- Specialized “street teams” tasked with disseminating information to Dalhousie students, consulting students, collecting petition signatures, etc.
- Hiring students on contract to organize particular projects or events, such as conferences.
- Public advertising campaigns (bus ads, unaddressed ad mail, billboards).
- Video and other multimedia content production.

Benefit Analysis

Some of the benefits of independent advocacy are as follows:

- The DSU will have greater access to government, such as student-government working groups, memorandum of understanding negotiations, pre-budget lockup.
- The DSU's advocacy efforts will be subject to greater accountability from Dalhousie students, due to council and annual elections.
- The DSU will be able to better engage the “conscientious achiever” type of student (as Dalhousie President Dr. Florizone describes them): students that are very socially engaged and care about their education, but not necessarily attracted to other union programming.
- Greater freedom for the DSU in policy creation. Policy can be more easily shaped by student consultations and input from DSU council.
- Greater control for the DSU in setting lobbying and campaign strategy.
- Dal students will benefit from having advocacy staff based on campus rather than downtown Halifax or Ottawa.
- DSU will be able to advocate for more relevant and effective policies than those of StudentsNS and CASA.
- Running campaigns in addition to lobbying will help to win public support for students, and increase the pressure on politicians.

Risk Analysis

It is important to consider the risks in addition to the benefits that independent advocacy could present. Risks include the possibility of the DSU being isolated in its lobby efforts, diminished capacity without access to CASA or StudentsNS resources, and a reduced ability to influence the federal government due to geography. Risks are not the same as definite detriments, and these risks do have mitigating

factors:

| RISK | MITIGATING FACTOR(S) |
|---|--|
| DSU could lose connections to politicians, civil servants and political parties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independence from StudentsNS could potentially strengthen Dal student voice: access to new areas such as pre-budget lockup, student-government working groups, Memorandum of Understanding negotiations. Currently, the DSU cannot independently access these due to SNS membership. |
| Lose access to valuable resources from StudentsNS, such as research. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DSU already has capacity to pursue lobby efforts independently, outreach coordinator position will improve position.• Hired researcher position will nullify this risk. |
| Lose access to valuable resources from CASA | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CASA's research output is several 4-6 page lobby documents per year; loss is minimal. Plus, available to general public. |
| Reduced ability to influence federal government without CASA. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At CASA lobby conferences, Nova Scotian student leaders meet with Nova Scotian MPs and Senators. DSU can easily meet these officials in their districts instead. |
| No formal external supports to DSU if independent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other student unions are happy to share best practices and ideas. |
| Would need to take on full responsibility for lobbying and research, production of materials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DSU has capacity and funds to source these in-house.• CASA and StudentsNS don't produce campaign materials for distribution so this is not particularly burdensome. |
| Could lose connections to other student unions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dalhousie is the largest student union in Nova Scotia and is not easily ignored. It is unlikely that other unions would refuse to work with the DSU. |
| A quick move that could leave the DSU vulnerable | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DSU Council will be able to ensure that the advocacy department is up to speed in a timely and efficient manner |

Work of the Advocacy Review Committee

In March 2013, the DSU council voted to change its membership status in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) from full member to associate member. The council additionally struck a committee to review the union's advocacy goals and methods in order to inform the final decision on the union's membership in CASA. The committee began work in the spring of 2013 and continued throughout the summer and fall semester. The committee's work included discussions, surveying and outreach. The discussions included: what advocacy is, the context in which student advocates operate in, the pros and cons of the organizations the DSU is part of, other student organizations in the country and the organizing models they use, and what other possible alternatives might exist to the DSU's current strategy. The outreach included contacting student unions which have left or reviewed CASA in the past, a survey on what students want their union to advocate for and how they relate to CASA and Students Nova Scotia, a town hall, and meetings with societies on invitation. The outreach portions of the committee's work is discussed in this section.

Survey

A survey was conducted online and on paper to gauge what students knew about CASA and StudentsNS, what they thought about DSU Advocacy and if they thought the DSU should remain in these external advocacy organizations. The survey was advertised on posters, handouts, through social media and in group consultations, 89 surveys were submitted. It should be noted that this is not a scientific opinion poll.

After approximately the first 50 results, the survey was modified as the committee decided it would be more helpful to know what issues students care about and then to compare those to the values and

advocacy initiatives of CASA and StudentsNS instead of asking more general questions about advocacy.

There were two quantitative questions asked in the survey. The questions and results are as followed:

How much do you know about CASA?

| | |
|---|--------|
| 0 - Nothing. | 51.6 % |
| 1 - I've heard of them but don't know what they do. | 25.8 % |
| 2 - I've heard of them and I know a bit about what they do. | 6.8% |
| 3 - I know of them and understand what they do. | 15.8 % |

How much do you know about StudentsNS?

| | |
|---|--------|
| 0 - Nothing. | 48.3 % |
| 1 - I've heard of them but don't know what they do. | 24.7 % |
| 2 - I've heard of them and I know a bit about what they do. | 12.4 % |
| 3 - I know of them and understand what they do. | 14.6 % |

Town Hall

The Advocacy Review Committee held a Town Hall for students to discuss issues that they care about as well as CASA and StudentsNS, and how they function in relation to their concerns. Attendance was not strong. Those that did attend provided very detailed letters written to the Advocacy Review Committee as a result of the town hall.

Opinions expressed in the Town Hall responses were:

- The decision to leave or stay in CASA should not be made by referendum because although democratic, it will not be the most informed decision
- Any advocacy that the DSU is involved in should be public and have a presence on campus
- The DSU should be having regular advocacy consultations with students
- Some LBGTQ, Aboriginal, and International students feel strongly that their concerns aren't being addressed by CASA or Students NS

- CASA and Students NS are not actively trying to get tuition decreased and do not encourage student action to challenge the root cause of unaffordable and degrading education
- CASA federal lobbying has not been effective and does not represent Dalhousie students
- The money spent on CASA and StudentsNS should be used to advocate for students on university issues specific to Dalhousie students
- CASA and StudentsNS have not shown their value in relation to the amount of money in student fees have been paid to them

Society Consultations

Societies and other student groups were contacted and given the opportunity to schedule short presentations/consultations for their student group to learn more about CASA and StudentsNS. With very few students knowing anything about these two organizations, most meetings were not engaging and offered little opinions of CASA and StudentsNS. The work of the committee was challenging in that it was often necessary to both present introductory education on what the organizations are, and then expect students to develop opinions about them.

There are, however, exceptions. The student groups with greater background knowledge of the groups and engaged in debate about the impending decision to stay or leave CASA felt like more information or a plan was needed for what alternatives to CASA and StudentsNS would look like.

Of these first two noticeable trends, some common suggestions included:

- The DSU should do more to make all student-related advocacy publicized, be it a DSU effort or effort of an external organization.
- All advocacy efforts must be more engaging to students.
- A clearer sense of alternatives needs to be presented if exiting the external organizations is to be

thoroughly and adequately considered.

Another noticeable trend among groups which appeared to have greater familiarity with the organizations previous to their meeting with Advocacy Review strongly opposed the DSU being a part of these organizations on the basis that:

- DSU efforts to make changes to either organization are seen as being ineffective
- CASA and StudentsNS do not run campaigns / have a limited public profile.
- It is troubling that CASA and StudentsNS do not advocate for reduced tuition fees.
- Students felt like the DSU could do a better job advocating for Dal students independently.

Communications with Student Unions

The student unions at McGill University, University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia, University of Waterloo, Saint Thomas University, and Mount Royal University were contacted by members of the advocacy review committee. These unions were selected because they have either withdrawn from or reviewed their membership in CASA in recent years. These are useful as case studies for what a student union can do if pursuing an advocacy strategy outside of CASA. There is no definite trend among these case studies: some remained in CASA, some became independent student unions, some joined the Canadian Federation of Students, and one even founded a new student organization.

Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia (AMS)

The AMS decided to leave CASA after a review process. The AMS has remained an independent student union. The reasons they cited for leaving CASA are:

- Tuition fees not addressed by CASA
- \$300 hotels rooms at CASA conventions, not accessible and wasteful
- Profit made from conventions, went into surplus fund
- No campaigns, attempts to bring ideas re met with resistance from staff
- Little outreach – CASA visited twice in 3 years
- CASA constitution not passed by UBC or Industry Canada (required for non-profits), not legally binding
- New constitution changed the way schools can leave organization
- When UBC wanted to leave, CASA bypassed liaison people and contacted council directly
- Legal action threatened but never pursued
- Rejoined as associate members one year, reviewed advocacy during this period
- Committee was established to review advocacy and recommend course of action to council
- Council voted to leave once again
- No affiliation with federal advocacy group for 3 years now, all advocacy is done within the student union

Student Society of McGill University (SSMU)

The Student Society Of McGill University (SSMU) left CASA in 2005, after being a member since its founding. The SSMU was also at the time a member of the provincial advocacy group called the Quebec Student Federation (FEUQ), which it left in 2006. The SSMU cited as reasons for leaving CASA:

- Poor service: CASA rarely visited the campus, and when they did, it was to organize pickup

soccer games. SSMU did not feel that dues were being well-used.

- **Partisanship:** SSMU wanted to avoid student federations which have close ties to one political party or bring partisan rhetoric into lobbying messages. CASA's closeness with the Liberal party was cited. Notably, this was a factor in SSMU leaving FEUQ the year later, which is closer to the Parti Quebecois.
- **Policy:** SSMU cited that CASA is not an effective advocate for restored federal transfers for post-secondary education, which SSMU considers the top priority demand for federal-level advocacy.

After leaving CASA, the SSMU remained independent until 2009, when it became a founding member of the TaCEQ, or Quebec Student Roundtable, which represents 60,000 students.

When leaving CASA, the SSMU voted in a September council meeting to leave the organization entirely. The SSMU paid CASA membership dues up until that point but not the remainder of the school year. CASA sued the SSMU as a result. SSMU argued that because it was no longer a member of the organization it was not bound by CASA's bylaws, but did offer to pay until the end of the semester. CASA rejected the offer and continued the suit, winning the case. SSMU was ordered to pay \$35,000 to CASA.

Saint Thomas University Student Union (STUSU)

The STUSU reviewed its membership in CASA but opted not to leave the organization. Although it was ultimately decided that STUSU would remain in CASA, they did raise some areas that they believed needed improvement in CASA:

- **Financial ethics:** STUSU claimed that a new staff position was created and a person hired

after members passed a budget, and the position was not in the budget. The creation of another new staff position was only brought to a vote after an employee was hired and the contract had been signed. The contract for the National Student Survey was also signed before it was brought to a retroactive vote, and the contract was worth tens of thousands more than what was stated. After a national director was fired for stealing money from CASA, STUSU claims that CASA did not attempt to retrieve the funds because it might make the organization look bad. Finally, they cited that CASA hired a consulting firm which a former CASA staff person worked at without inclusion in the budget or a vote by membership.

- Research ethics: Much of CASA's research has been supported by the results a national student survey conducted with the cooperation of provincial affiliated organizations, such as StudentsNS and the New Brunswick Student Alliance. However, the student survey was rejected by the St. Thomas University research ethics board citing 'serious methodological concerns.'
- STUSU raised concerns that CASA is supposed to be a membership-driven organization, yet the voice of membership is expected to be balanced with the 'stakeholder relations' work of staff. They cited that "Staff routinely ignored motions passed by the membership and instead treated the membership as one of several 'stakeholders' to be consulted before deciding the direction of the organization... The only stakeholders in a student organization are students - not government, university/college presidents etc."
- Concerns with the exclusive focus on lobbying at the expense of campaign work. Without being able to influence, mobilize, and harness public opinion, CASA risks being unable to achieve bigger, long-term goals.
- STUSU claimed that CASA spent more time debating internal structural issues than

substance issues.

University of Manitoba Student's Union (UMSU)

The University of Manitoba opted to review its membership in CASA twice, once in 1999 and again in 2004-5. In 1999 the UMSU opted to remain in CASA, while in the second review they decided to simultaneously review CASA and explore alternatives. In addition to sending the student union president and a councillor to CASA conferences, they sent their Vice-President External and a councillor as a non-voting, non-speaking observer to the annual general meeting of the Canadian Federation of Students. A student affairs committee of the UMSU council reviewed both CASA and the CFS and produced a report comparing the two organization's approaches, benefits and weaknesses. The report recommended that the UMSU end its membership in CASA and continue to explore the possibilities of participating in activities of the Canadian Federation of Students. The UMSU later joined the CFS.

The conclusions of the UMSU review were:

- “CASA is lackluster in government relations and submissions, and sloppy and unrefined in its campaign materials and work”
- The structure of CASA does not promote a member-driven culture. It is too staff-driven and lacks representation from traditionally marginalized groups.
- CASA has too limited a scope of policy, has too limited a campaign strategy, and fails to adequately lobby for change on non-financial barriers to education.
- The disconnect between federal and provincial political work is a serious strategic flaw.
- CASA does not provide materials or staff resources to help organize campaigns, which they note the CFS does accomplish.

Conclusion And Recommendations

Students Nova Scotia and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations have significant misalignments with the DSU in terms of their overall approach and their vision for post-secondary education. When rising student debt as a result of rising tuition fees is a significant and growing issue, neither student organization advocates for more affordable education and even resists attempts towards reform. The absence of federal transfers for post-secondary is one of the most blatant barriers to reducing tuition fees, and yet CASA has not yet called for anything more than a vaguely-worded “Pan-Canadian Accord.” The limits to their advocacy priorities are a result of their approach to advocacy, which is to lobby politicians at the federal/provincial level exclusively, with limited coordination between the two organizations. By not developing expertise in or directing resources to public awareness and/or pressure campaigns, the two organizations do not adequately utilize the opportunity to influence and harness public opinion to sway politicians. Without campaigns, their asks are limited to small amendments to the education policies of the government of the day. It is much more difficult to leverage the student voice when so much of the initiative is ceded from student organizations to the government.

The DSU therefore has the option of remaining in StudentsNS and/or CASA or exiting them. Given the problems inherent to StudentsNS and CASA, the risks of remaining in the organizations outweigh any risks associated with independent advocacy strategies while offering greater benefits in terms of available advocacy strategies, quality of policy recommendations, and increasing the ability of the Dalhousie Student Union to represent students to the provincial and federal government.

To this end, The DSU executive recommends that the DSU council approve the following motion for decision at an Annual General Meeting:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the following constitutional amendment be voted on by council to send to a

GM (amended portions in red),

By-law VII - Other Organizations

6. The Union shall not renounce its full membership within an external advocacy group unless a successful referendum is run according to By-law XIV of the Constitution in which the result is in favor of renouncing its full membership with its external federal advocacy group. the appropriate process consistent with that organization's bylaws is followed.

Following the approval of such an amendment, the executive recommends that the DSU council vote to determine its status in these external organizations. The following motions re proposed:

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union voted to change its membership status in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations from full member to associate member in March 2013, and

DSU Membership in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union has been formally reviewing its advocacy for one year, considering the union's goals, methods and affiliations with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, and

Whereas the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations has not been advocating for policies which are in line with the priorities of Dalhousie students, and engage in too limited a range of advocacy methods, and

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union has attempted to work in good faith to get the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations to better reflect Dalhousie students' priorities with limited success, and

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union is unique in Nova Scotia due to its size, enabling it to pursue independent advocacy as a viable option,

Be it therefore resolved that the Dalhousie Student Union terminate its membership in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Any unpaid membership dues for the 2014 winter semester shall be paid to the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations.

DSU Membership in Students Nova Scotia

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union has been formally reviewing its advocacy for one year, considering the union's goals, methods and affiliations with Students Nova Scotia, and

Whereas Students Nova Scotia has not been advocating for policies which are in line with the priorities of Dalhousie students, and engage in too limited a range of advocacy methods, and

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union has attempted to work in good faith to get Students Nova Scotia to better reflect Dalhousie students' priorities with limited success, and

Whereas the Dalhousie Student Union is unique in Nova Scotia due to its size, enabling it to pursue independent advocacy as a viable option,

Be it therefore resolved that the Dalhousie Student Union terminate its membership in Students Nova Scotia. Any unpaid membership dues for the 2014 winter semester shall be paid to Students Nova Scotia.

APPENDIX A – DSU MOTION TO CASA; VOTED DOWN

Policy Statement

Reducing Student Debt and Tuition Fees

Category: Accessibility

Whereas:

CASA believes that any academically qualified student with the desire to pursue post-secondary education should not face a barrier - financial, social, political, physical, cultural, or otherwise. Nor should said student accumulate an unreasonable and insupportable amount of debt in the pursuit of that post-secondary education.

Since the mid-1990's when the federal government made significant cuts to post-secondary education, tuition fees at universities have soared to compensate for the lost revenue. Students have had to take on ever-rising burdens of debt in order to finance their education as a result. The collective debt owed by students across Canada reached \$15 billion in January 2013.¹ The average tuition fee for a year's education in Canada is currently \$5581.² According to a Bank of Montreal poll, 58% of students expect to graduate with more than \$20,000 in debt while 21% expect more than \$40,000 in debt.³ The average debt upon graduation is currently \$28,000.⁴

The impacts of high debt loads affects students well-being in addition to the economy as a whole. The direction of the federal government however appears to be one of austerity, both ideologically and as a response to the global financial crisis. Public services, including post-secondary education, are facing funding cuts that reduce the quality of education and result in higher student debt. But the logic of austerity is often contradicted by the government's actions. While speaking to the virtues of reducing spending, \$1.3 billion in public subsidies are offered to the profitable fossil fuel extraction industry in Alberta.⁵ Other examples of excessive federal spending are not hard to find: \$114 billion in bailouts to Canadian banks⁶; \$1 billion in supposed 'G8 security' funds used to build gazebos in cabinet ministers ridings⁷; \$21 million in advertisements for government policies.⁸ In the face of such questionable expenditures, it is hard to maintain the assertion that there is no funding available for students.

Dispelling the 'myth of scarcity' is an increasingly necessary component towards eliminating barriers to accessing education. Public awareness campaigns designed to highlight questionable spending and emphasizing what the money could do to make university more affordable can improve the climate for lobbying for reducing student debt and tuition fees.

Be It Resolved That

CASA rejects the post-financial crisis discourse that cutting public services like post-secondary education is necessary and instead sees strong public services as a wise investment.

Be It Resolved That

CASA calls on the federal government to make reducing student debt loads and tuition fees a priority.

Be It Resolved That

CASA implement a public awareness campaign to challenge the “myth of scarcity” by highlighting questionable government spending. The central message of such a campaign would be that smarter spending could make it possible to reduce student debt loads and tuition fees.

Be It Resolved That

CASA maintain a section of its website for this awareness campaign and supply member unions with posters, pamphlets and stickers to promote the campaign.

1http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?ArticleID=3405

2<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ50a-eng.htm>

3Bank of Montreal, as cited in: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2012/08/17/student-debt-survey.html>

4http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3390%3Aby-the-numbers-student-debt-in-canada&catid=6%3Adirections-newsletter&Itemid=6&lang=en

5<http://bluegreencanada.ca/sites/default/files/resources/More%20Bang%20for%20Buck%20Nov%202012%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>

6<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2012/04/Big%20Banks%20Big%20Secret.pdf>

7<http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/10/06/%E2%80%98rules-were-broken%E2%80%99-over-g8g20-summit-spending-auditor-general/>

8<http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/03/12/feds-spent-21m-on-economic-action-plan-ads-in-2011-12-annual-report/>

Appendix B: CASA Summary of DSU Activity



CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS
ALLIANCE CANADIENNE DES ASSOCIATIONS ÉTUDIANTES

The Dalhousie Student Union and Full-Member participation in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

March 2013

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is committed to providing effective representation for Canada's students at the federal level. Members gather annually at three national conferences to discuss, debate, and promote issues affecting students on their campuses and across the country. CASA committees and staff develop well-researched, meaningful policy solutions to problems chosen as priorities by our membership and advance an advocacy agenda that has proven its effectiveness.

Our vision is that CASA will achieve an accessible, affordable, and high quality post-secondary education system whose students enjoy an excellent quality of life.

Every student at Dalhousie University is impacted by the advocacy work CASA has done. The Dalhousie Student Union has been an active participant and full-member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations for the past 14 years. For 12 of 14 years, Dalhousie Student Union representatives have held leadership positions within the organization. Here is a small sample of what the DSU has helped CASA and its members accomplish:

2012 — Federal government implements interest-free part-time student loans
January 1, 2012 the Government of Canada made part-time student loans interest free. This represents an investment of **\$17.5 million** over the next five years with additional funding to follow. Government attributed this change to the advocacy efforts of CASA stating "This change will support one of the key advocacy objectives of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations over the past few years."¹

¹ Canada Gazette. *Order Fixing January 1, 2012*. December 21, 2011. <http://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2011/2011-12-21/html/si-tr112-eng.html>

- 2011 — \$30 million annually to support borrowers who work while studying**
CASA lobbied extensively for changes to the needs assessment mechanism of the Canada Student Loans Program. In 2010, CASA advocated during pre-budget consultations that the in-study income exemption should be increased from \$50 to \$100 per week. Government responded and now allows students to earn up to \$3400 during the school year, as opposed to \$1700, before loan dollars are clawed back. **This gives \$100 million to students annually to pay for tuition, books, or living expenses** at a \$30 million cost to the government. (Governments at various levels budget approximately 1/3 of dollars distributed to service student loan debt)
- 2011 — Copyright and Canadian Students**
CASA was a leading voice in the recent debate surrounding Bill C-11, The Modernization of Canada's Copyright Act. This Bill received Royal Assent June, 29th, 2012. As a result, and against the wishes of the publishing industry, education was included as a category of fair dealing. This will ensure that students benefit from more affordable, alternative academic materials, and instructors may make use of copyrighted **materials for classes that will improve the affordability of delivering courses.**
- 2009 — Repayment Assistance Plan**
CASA has advocated for interest relief and debt repayment assistance since 1999. The Repayment Assistance Plan (RAP) was implemented August 1, 2009 to provide borrowers experiencing difficulty with relief from their debt through reduced payments and interest relief. **RAP and it's predecessors have provided over \$1 billion** in additional financial aid to individuals struggling with debt repayment. In 2010-2011 **RAP benefitted some 164,800 borrowers having difficulty repaying their loans.** RAP ensures the repayment period for student loans will not exceed 15 years. This program has had a meaningful impact, coupled with improved awareness efforts; the default rate on student loans fell from 28% in 2003 to 13.8% in 2009-2010.

Dollars and Sense

To be a full member of CASA, the Dalhousie Student Union pays \$2.58 per student, per year. CASA aims to clearly demonstrate to its members that federal advocacy is important for all students in Canada while remaining by far the least expensive option for federal student representation. CASA was founded on the principle of doing more with less and has lived

up to that expectation. Student dollars are limited and this fact must be respected by the organizations that represent them. CASA's advocacy efforts continuously recognize the contribution each student makes to the organization.

Since 2011, Canada's student population has seen **investments totalling over \$167 million for the next five years secured by CASA's advocacy efforts.** With a small budget, CASA has demonstrated an exceptional ability to pursue public funding and student focused policy changes at the federal level. It is important to recognize that, for these investments, CASA was recognized as the sole advocate. **This represents a return of \$98 on every dollar invested in the organization. CASA is proud of the results it gets for students.**

A Study of Methods

Advocacy initiatives undertaken by CASA in Ottawa are recognized as some of the most significant undertakings in the Canadian lobbying community. CASA's advocacy week overshadows other associations in the number of meetings held most every year. In 2012 CASA had 132 meetings at its annual Advocacy Conference. "Hill Days," as they are referred to in the advocacy community, demonstrate grassroots support for issues to government officials and compliment the ongoing advocacy efforts of staff throughout the year. In 2013, having a presence on Parliament Hill is essential to be recognized as a legitimate stakeholder. This truth extends beyond MPs and Senators who represent citizens to the bureaucrats who work for them.

"By understanding how decision are made at the federal government level, and targeting its efforts at key pressure points in the policy development process, CASA has been able to influence government policy. The organization's leadership had developed close relationships with key decision-makers and has been able to present its policy proposals and concerns in a credible way... The Alliance's success in the regard reflects an understanding of the nature of the political process and an awareness of the kinds of policy proposals and lobbying techniques that can have an actual impact on policy outcomes rather than those that are simply political statements."

- Institute on Governance

Beyond working just with students and politicians, having a presence in Ottawa provides the opportunity to work with other groups who share our priorities to advance them in unison. CASA can reach out to other groups at the national level on behalf of students that individual members would have difficulty doing on their own. CASA has advanced student issues with the following organizations:

Assembly of First Nations

Canadian Chamber of Commerce
 Canadian Association of Research Libraries
 Canadian Association for Graduate Studies
 Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 Associations of Canadian Community Colleges
 Polytechnics Canada
 Campus Stores Canada
 Economic Developers Association of Canada
 Canadian Association of University Teachers
 Canadian Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences
 Nine provincial student associations in Canada, including Students Nova Scotia

Being located in Ottawa, CASA can participate on behalf of our members frequently at roundtable events and committee hearings held in Canada's capital. In the past year CASA has appeared before three parliamentary committees, participated in the NDP post-secondary education accessibility roundtable, and discussions on international education at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This is another of the many useful reasons to continue to have Dalhousie students represented in Ottawa. Pooling resources with other associations from across the country ensures students will continue to have a voice around the tables where decisions are made.

Next week, CASA will attend the first conference held by the federal granting agencies to harmonize Open Access policies, with the objective of achieving free, online federally funded research by early 2014. This was one of CASA's 2012 lobbying priorities and it is about to come to pass.

A Final Thought

CASA is comprised of 24 student organizations from across Canada with a combined membership of over 300,000. This breadth, understandably, makes it difficult to focus on campus specific issues. Each year, representatives of our member associations determine CASA's priorities. These priorities are a direct expression of the concerns of students on member campuses. CASA pushes student priorities persistently to get students the best deal. For CASA, being member driven requires driven members.

Appendix C- Letter to DSU Council From Some Previous Executives

February 14, 2013

Dear Dalhousie Student Union Councillors,

We are writing to express our concern with the decision made by the Executive of the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) to recommend downgrading the DSU's membership in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

Over the past decade CASA has leveraged a remarkable amount of federal funding and positive policy changes for students in Canada. Through the diligent work of student leaders, on and off campus, the Dalhousie Student Union has consistently been a strong voice at the CASA table and has contributed proactively to the success of the organization.

Since 2011, CASA has secured \$167 million for students in Canada through its lobbying efforts. Over those three years CASA's cumulative budget was just under \$2 million. This demonstrates a remarkable return on investment for students from coast-to-coast. This success stems directly from the advocacy efforts of CASA and has been acknowledged by federal decision-makers on numerous occasions. Over the past decade CASA has met with dozens of cabinet ministers, hundreds of MPs and Senators, and every official national party leader in Canada, including Prime Ministers.

CASA is a leader in the national discussion of post-secondary education policy. The work CASA does is not possible without its informed and engaged national membership.

As full members of CASA the DSU has shaped the role students play in federal policy decisions. Representatives of the DSU have filled the position of National Chair of CASA on numerous occasions, served as chairs of CASA committees, and shaped the policies and priorities of the organization. As associate members of CASA the DSU will lose its voting position in the organization and its ability to hold a position on the board of CASA or committee chairpersonship. This is a step backwards for the DSU, and more importantly, Dalhousie students.

We can't help but wonder why those bringing forward this motion would prefer to walk away from CASA instead of trying to fix it. CASA was built on the understanding that students are stronger together than apart. The needs of students will change over time, and the democratic nature of CASA means that if members like the DSU put in the effort, so too will CASA change. Like any democratic organization, nobody is going to be happy with all of the decisions all of the time. Walking away from CASA is calling it quits on democracy.

With Concern,



Chris Saulnier
Dalhousie Student Union President 2010-2012
Chair, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations 2011-2012



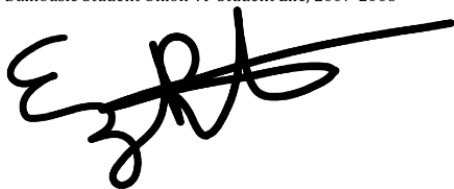
Shannon Zimmerman
Dalhousie Student Union President 2009-2010



Courtney Larkin
Dalhousie Student Union President 2008-2009
Dalhousie Student Union VP Student Life, 2007-2008



Mike Tipping
Dalhousie Student Union President 2007-2008
Dalhousie Student Union VP Education 2006-2007



Ezra Edelstein
Dalhousie Student Union President 2005-2007
Chair, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations 2006-2007



Shawn Tracey
Dalhousie Student Union President 2001-2002
Dalhousie Student Union VP Community Affairs 2000-2001



Mark Coffin
Dalhousie Student Union VP Education 2008-2009

Appendix D - CASA Press Release Criticizing Student Actions



CASA The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
ACAF L'alliance canadienne des associations étudiantes

NEWS RELEASE

Why bother?

For Immediate Release: Thursday, October 24, 1996

Students will denounce Day of Action

OTTAWA (ON). The Day of Action to be held in Toronto on Friday will attract an estimated 250,000 people from many sectors of society. Included in this group will be a modest number of students. The membership of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) encourages these students to represent themselves, and treat others, with dignity and respect.

Matthew Hough, National Director for CASA, has provided the following statement for the public and for the students participating in the Day of Action:

"The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is committed to working towards achieving the highest levels of quality and accessibility throughout the Canadian post-secondary system. To this end CASA's mandate is to assist and lobby legislative bodies across the country for policy strategies that make sense. The members of CASA believe that to be effective in the legislative process you must be at the table. Research, meetings, providing alternatives, and being prepared to admit that issues facing students operate within a complex system of demographics, politics, and economics are all part of realizing your goals when advocating on behalf of students.

Fearmongering

"It is my hope that the students that choose to participate in this weeks Day of Action realize the detrimental effects their actions may have on the reputations, public perception, and the effectiveness of student advocates across Canada. Everyone has the right to protest. Participants in the Day of Action will be sending a strong message to Government due to the number of people attending. This message, however, will be lost if students promote and participate in violent acts to advertise themselves and their position.

"Throwing eggs, destroying public property, and cursing elected representatives are actions that have been used by small radical groups of students. These acts should be avoided at all costs. They are not used or condoned by the majority of students. They are not representative of the abilities and personalities of the Canadian student population. If they are part of the activities of the students participating in this weeks Day of Action, I have been entrusted by my membership to denounce these activities and the students participating in them."

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For more information please contact:

Matthew Hough at (613) 236-3457 or at the Liberal Party Convention, Ottawa.

- i <http://www.cup.ca/about/history/>
- ii Documents of the CUS and NUS can be found here: <http://www.studentunion.ca/cfs-documents/documents-of-the-national-union-of-students-canadian-union-of-students-and-national-federation-of-canadian-university-students/>
- iii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova_Scotia_Student_Advocacy_Coalition
- iv <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/degrees-of-uncertainty>
- v Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Canada. Actuarial Report on the Canada Student Loans Program (2006). Retrieved from: <http://www.osfi-bsif.gc.ca/Eng/Docs/cslp06.pdf>
- vi Statistics Canada (2008), based on 2005 data. http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5012&Item_Id=122603&lang=en
- vii <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2012/09/Eduflation%20and%20High%20Cost%20Learning.pdf>
- viii Nova Scotia Legislature, Public Accounts Committee:
http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C7/pa2013may15
- ix <http://www.casa-acae.com/about/what-we-do/>
- x CASA 2011 Election Wrap-up report
- xi CASA National Director's Report, 2008
- xii Nova Scotia abuses Millennium - <http://www.gazette.uwo.ca/2002/December/3/news4.htm>
- xiii NS Legislature, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, 2000
http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C7/pa001129
- xiv <http://studentsns.ca/about/approach/>
- xv <http://studentsns.ca/research-policy/fact-sheets-data/tuition-and-student-debt/>
- xvi <http://newsroom.bmo.com/press-releases/2013-bmo-student-survey-canadian-students-relying-tsx-bmo-201308130891837001>
- xvii <http://www.casa-acae.com/policy-and-advocacy/research-and-advocacy-documents/>