

DOUGLAS

DOUGLAS COLLEGE **2023-2024 BUDGET SUBMISSION**



DOUGLAS STUDENTS' UNION
DECEMBER 2022





2023

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INTRODUCTION

The Douglas Students' Union is pleased to present this years' submission of recommendations for the Douglas College budget on behalf of the students at Douglas College.

Over the past couple of years, we have made recommendations based on issues that were highlighted by students and were reflective of the current societal issues facing our members. In 2020 when students were facing unprecedented challenges with the global pandemic and changes in course and service delivery, our recommendations focused on important online service delivery needed by students, online learning platforms, mental health supports, and financial affordability. Last year as students returned to campus while recovering from the pandemic closures, our recommendations focused on a return to high in-person service levels, Open Education Resources, and financial assistance for all students.

The issues and recommendations included in this submission are reflective of the concerns raised by students over the past year and are reflective of the current conditions students are facing during their education at Douglas College. Thank you for your consideration of the ideas and comments in this written submission.



INPUT GATHERED

Throughout the year, the Douglas Students' Union actively engages with students in many ways, receiving feedback, both solicited and unsolicited, concerning the student experience at Douglas College. This past year saw an increased opportunity to directly interact with our members as all restrictions were lifted and we increased our presence on campus with large scale events and tabling throughout the year.

Throughout October and November, the Students' Union completed its budget consultation process with a large survey sent out to all members. Students were also able to submit their responses through links sent out on social media, and through in-person engagement to ensure students had the opportunity to provide feedback.

The survey focused on gathering information about the needs of students, their financial positions, their work/school/life balance, the ability to afford their education, their experiences at Douglas College, and the services they would like to see on campus. Over 350 students answered the survey to help us form this year's recommendations to the Douglas College Budget.



This report presents the most important recommendations that Douglas College could make to improve the experience of students attending Douglas College. The key priorities that have been reported by students focus on their financial positions and outline concerns of the quality of education they are receiving, their ability to be academically successful, and affordability during times of increased financial pressures from all aspects of life.

We believe these recommendations are reasonable, and are based on direct feedback that will put students in a position of security and allow them to be successful during their time at Douglas College.

SURVEY RESPONSE

BREAKDOWN:

DOMESTIC STUDENTS

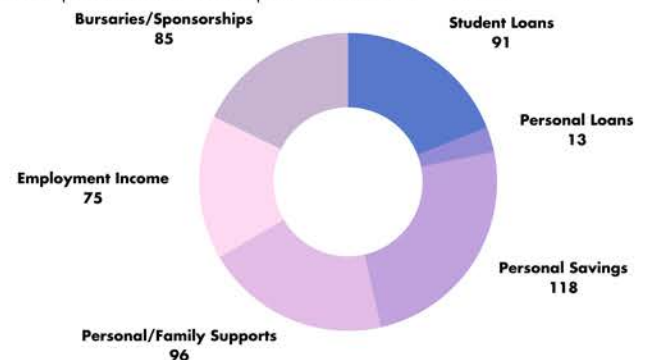
Domestic students that pay rent, pay an average of \$1001 per month. Those living with roommates have an average of 2 roommates.

Domestic students that are employed work an average of 20 hours per week, with almost 25% of them working multiple jobs.

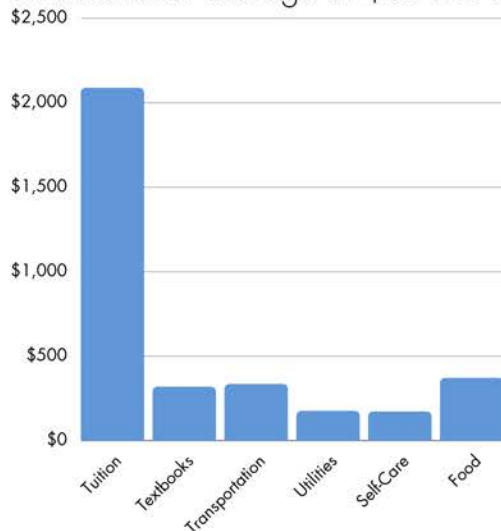
Domestic students are enrolled in an average of 3.5 courses and spend an average of 18 hours on school work and studying outside of the classroom.

How Domestic Students paid for their education (some provided multiple answers – 217 respondents):

- 91 have student loans
- 13 have personal loans
- 118 used personal savings
- 96 rely on personal/family supports
- 75 rely on employment income
- 85 received bursaries or scholarships



Domestic respondents paid an average of \$2086 for their Fall semester tuition and fees plus an additional average of \$318 in textbooks and materials for their courses.



Domestic students pay an average of \$334 per month on transportation, \$175 for utilities, \$171 on self-care, and \$370 on food per month, for a total of \$2051.

65% of Domestic respondents noted they brought their own lunch, with nearly 60% of those respondents reporting they brought their own lunch because of food being too expensive or a lack of options.

SURVEY RESPONSE

BREAKDOWN:

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

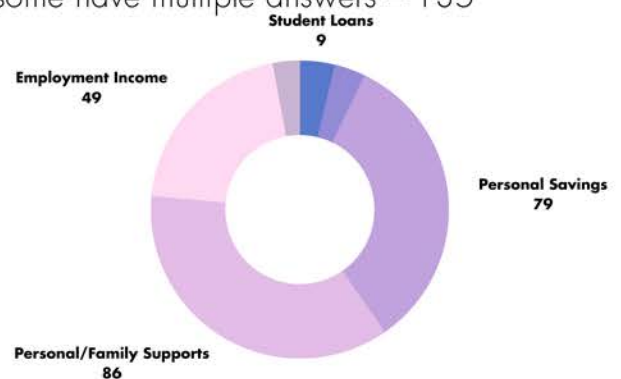
International Students pay an average of \$1367 per month for rent. Those living with roommates have an average of 3 roommates.

International students that are employed work an average of 19 hours per week, with almost 25% of them reporting they also volunteer multiple hours per week.

International students are enrolled in an average of 3.5 courses and spend an average of 20 hours on schoolwork and studying outside of the classroom.

How International Students paid for their education (some have multiple answers – 135 respondents):

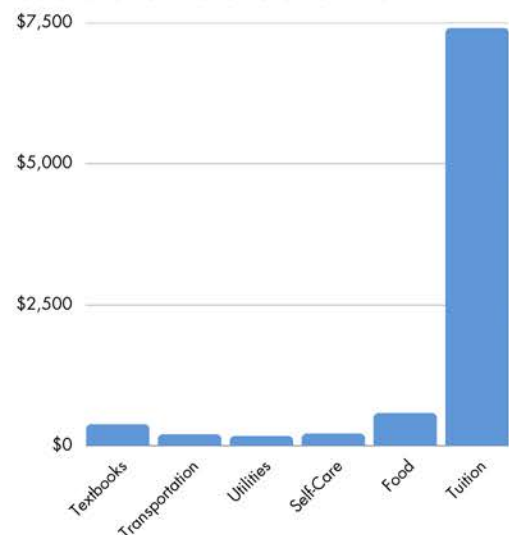
- 9 have student loans
- 8 have personal loans
- 79 used personal savings
- 86 rely on personal/family supports
- 49 rely on employment income
- 7 received bursaries or scholarships



International respondents reported they paid an average of \$7408 for their Fall semester tuition and fees plus an additional average of \$376 in textbooks and materials for their courses.

International students pay an average of \$199 on transportation, \$168 for utilities, \$211 on self-care, and \$575 on food per month, for a total of \$2520.

67% of International respondents noted they brought their own lunch, with nearly 60% of those respondents reporting they brought their own lunch as a result of food being too expensive or a lack of options.



TRAVEL TIME & LIVING COSTS

Students attending Douglas College spend an average of 53 minutes travelling to and from campus every day respectively. 71% of domestic respondents live outside of New West and Coquitlam, and 70% of international students live outside of the New West and Coquitlam.

Domestic students spend on average \$2051 on monthly living expenses. Taking into consideration the minimum wage at \$15.65 per hour, if a student works 20 hours per week (80 hours per month), they are making \$1252 per month before taxes and not even close to covering the basic monthly living expenses. Even at the 2022 Vancouver Living Wage that saw a huge increase this year to \$24.08, working 80 hours per month only adds up to \$1926.40 and living costs continue to increase.

While 20% of domestic students also reported they financially support family during their education, 37% of international students reported the same, compounding the affordability crisis faced by our members.

For international students, financial stability is a key concern. International students reported an average of \$2520 in monthly expenses and up until recently have been restricted to the amount of hours they can work. While we applaud the government temporarily removing those restrictions, putting in more work hours per week hinders a student's ability to properly allocate enough time to their studies and other responsibilities they may have. The question that needs to be considered is about what is more important, being successful in your studies (the main reason international students are in Canada) or keeping food on the table and a roof over their head? Many international students plan their time in Canada multiple years in advance and arrive with strict Federally regulated budgets that are insufficient for multiple years of tuition increases. This forces international students to constantly meet their prescribed hours of employment and even seek precarious, unregulated employment to provide basic necessities. The lack of provincial regulation around international student tuition fees removes the financial stability they require to be successful. Providing multi-year plans and restricting tuition increases to coincide with domestic tuition increases (as prescribed by the Tuition Fee Limit Policy) would provide the financial stability students require when planning their educational journey at Douglas College, allowing them to focus more on their studies and less on affording the basic minimums to survive.



SERVICES & AMENITIES

The Budget survey concluded with a section of open ended questions that asked students to provide feedback and recommendations about current service and amenity improvements, new services and amenity, and other recommendations. There were many similarities in answers by domestic and international students that focused on value, the cost of education, cost of course materials, affordability, and a large emphasis on the cost of food services on campus.

While the similarities were pronounced, the differences in recommendations are also worth noting. Many of the domestic student recommendations focused on affordability, service levels, amenities, and increased hours and study spaces. International student responses focused on reducing costs, being able to create realistic budgets, more scholarships and financial aid, and being treated more fairly when it comes to tuition costs.



PROVINCIAL ACTION

The Douglas Students' Union, alongside the British Columbia Federation of Students and other students' unions from around the province, have been advocating to the BC Government to regulate international tuition fees through the campaign 'Fairness for International Students' and to properly fund the Post-Secondary system with an additional \$200 million dollars through the campaign 'Fund It, Fix It'.

While we are seeing proposed increases at other institutions as high as 25-30% for international tuition fees, the Douglas Students' Union has appreciated the efforts of Douglas College over the past 5 years as they temporarily froze international tuition rates then minimized increases at less than 3% per year. As all costs continue to increase for all of our members at Douglas College, we are asking for a pledge of fairness and understanding as you plan the 2023/24 Douglas College budget.

**WHO'S GOING
TO TELL THEM
THEY CAN'T
AFFORD
TO DREAM?**

**TEACHER
EDUCATION COSTS:
\$48,000**



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federation of students

FunditFixit.ca



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Freeze tuition for all students for the 2023/24 academic year.
2. Cap international tuition increases to the rate of domestic increases moving forward.
3. Implement tuition policy that includes strict guidelines that international tuition increases can not exceed the domestic tuition increase rate.
4. Investigate and provide options for low cost, healthy food on campus to help students financially.
5. Continue to assess and reassess all campus services and amenities to meet the needs of students during their education at Douglas College, including: service hours, study spaces, library spaces, access to counselling, and access to affordable course materials.



2023