

A black and white photograph of the Douglas College building, featuring a large arched entrance with the words "DOUGLAS COLLEGE" in a semi-circle above the glass doors. The building has multiple stories with large windows. In the foreground, there are trees and a set of wide concrete steps leading up to the entrance. A blue rectangular overlay covers the left side of the image, containing white text.

# DOUGLAS COLLEGE 2022-2023 BUDGET SUBMISSION



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DOUGLAS STUDENTS' UNION  
DECEMBER 2021

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# INTRODUCTION

The Douglas Students' Union is pleased to present this submission on behalf of the students at Douglas College. Through our budget submission last year, we made recommendations on the issues that were highlighted by students throughout the year, many focusing on the challenges encountered through the transition to online learning. There has been a learning curve for many students as we made our way back to mostly in-person instruction this year. For others, this semester has been their first time on campus getting a feel of what post-secondary life is like outside of the strong restrictions of the pandemic. While students were adaptable to online learning, the return to campus has been a new adjustment for all, and with that, students have faced new challenges. It is evident that students have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic vulnerable, mentally and financially, and there is a need to invest in strengthening Douglas College's services to support them.

The issues and recommendations included in this submission are reflective of the concerns raised by students gathered from the various year-round engagements over the past year. Thank you for your consideration of the ideas and comments in this written submission.





# INPUT GATHERED BY THE DOUGLAS STUDENTS' UNION

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. While engagement last year was limited by health restrictions, the return to campus this year saw new opportunities for engagement and consultation in-person with Douglas College students.

Through our many events, tabling, email and social media correspondence, conversations, and at our front desk and kiosk, we were able to collect feedback from students on their experiences here at Douglas College, outside of our normal budget consultation process.

In November of this year, the Douglas Students' Union completed its budget consultation process through in-person engagement on both campuses over 2 days each. Students were also able to submit their responses outside of the in-person engagement through social media and the use of QR codes. The consultation included 4 surveys that consisted of short open-ended questions on a variety of topics to ensure that they could provide full feedback on their experience at Douglas College and make recommendations to enhance their experience. The surveys focused on six topics: Quality of Education, Technology, Educational Resources, Services, International Student Experience, and Affordability.

This report presents a series of recommendations that Douglas College could make to improve the quality of education at Douglas College and to improve the services on which students depend, even more now that we have returned to campus. We believe that these recommendations are reasonable and affordable and are all based on feedback and needs recommended directly by students.

The recommendations, comments, and ideas are presented in the spirit of supporting continual improvement as we navigate a new year of challenges associated with a long-lasting pandemic and the return to campus.

# AN INCLUSIVE CAMPUS EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

## PRAYER SPACE

Douglas College is a diverse community with members from around the globe. To encourage and support religious diversity on campus, Douglas College can recognize and accommodate the spiritual needs of students through designated spaces for prayer. Without a designated space, students have reported using empty classrooms, change rooms, common spaces, and stairways. Having a permanent space for students would help promote a more inclusive experience for the whole student population.

*"Whether it is a Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, or a member of any other religion, they deserve to be able to observe spiritual practices without any interruptions and without causing any disturbances to members of the College."*

## PERIOD PROMISE

In September, members of the Board of Directors and Staff of the Douglas Students' Union met with members of the Douglas College Senior Management Team to lobby the institution with a detailed report "Supplying Emergency Menstrual Products at Douglas College."

The recommendations put forth in the report outlined the action that Douglas College can take to address period poverty through policy for all members of the Douglas College community. Menstruating members of the community who are women, transgender and non-binary should have equal access to necessary biological products to manage their periods.



As shown in the report submitted to Douglas College, studies have shown that period poverty is a barrier to education, with half of menstruators reporting they were late for class, had to leave early, or miss class entirely because of the lack of access to menstrual products. Supplying emergency products in all washrooms at Douglas College will help create a more inclusive space, addressing stigmas, financial barriers, and gender inequality.

*"I have experienced several occasions when I have unexpectedly started bleeding in class and did not have menstrual products with me. At those times when I am not prepared to handle my period, I have felt distress and embarrassment."*

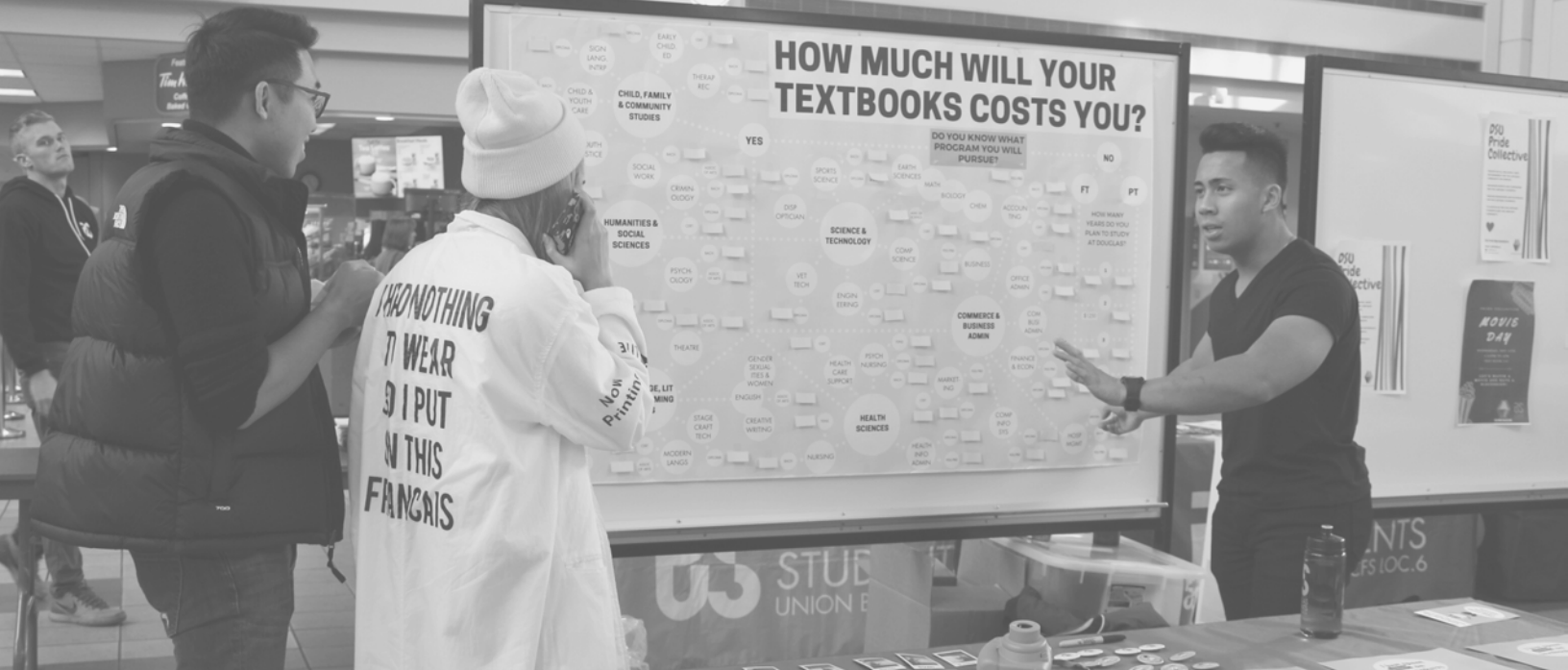
## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. SUPPLY FREE EMERGENCY MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN ALL GENDERED AND NON-GENDERED WASHROOM ON DOUGLAS COLLEGE CAMPUSES.
2. THE DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT PRAYER ROOM ON BOTH CAMPUSES THAT IS INCLUSIVE OF ALL RELIGIONS.

# TUITION AND AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL

These past couple of years, the pandemic brought financial hardships to people around the world that have continued to have a lasting effect, especially on students. The reality is that students were financially vulnerable before the pandemic and were hit hard by loss of employment, savings depleted, and lower government support than other sectors. While our communities have begun to open back up, we have not been able to fully return to normal. COVID-19 restrictions continue to affect local businesses and employment; wildfires, heatwaves, and flooding further affect local businesses and employment. Therefore, the cost of living has increased through the constant rising cost of food, rent, supplies, and materials. Many students live month to month, relying on part-time or full-time employment to live while attending post-secondary education. Douglas College intends to increase domestic tuition fees by the provincially regulated 2%, along with a matching 2% increase to international tuition fees. While the increase in percentage may seem minimal, the extensive financial instability felt by students through job losses, depleted savings, and lack of government support has created barriers for those looking to start, continue, or complete their post-secondary education. If Douglas College were to freeze tuition for the 2022-23 academic year, they would be helping improve the financial stability for all students.

Furthermore, many domestic students utilize the student loan system and work part-time to cover the cost of education and living expenses. The student loan system leaves students at the end of their education in a position of financial insecurity as they scramble to make payments while starting their new careers. Increasing grants and bursaries to include greater eligibility to low- and middle-income students and to international students would further decrease the financial instability of students and stress, while helping them focus more on being successful in their education.



*"As I work in order to pay for my own tuition, the challenge for me is being anxious to raise enough money to pay for my tuition for the next semester while juggling my studies at the same time."*

*"I have to take less classes, going to take longer to complete my degree."*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

3. INCREASED PROGRAMS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LOW-TO MIDDLE INCOME PROSPECTIVE, CURRENT STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THROUGH GRANTS AND BURSARIES.
4. FREEZE TUITION FOR ALL STUDENTS FOR THE 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR.



# CAMPUS SERVICES

With the return to in-person instruction and students being back on campus, on-campus services were repeatedly highlighted as a key issue within this year's budget consultations. While the majority of students reported being thrilled to be back on campus, they did provide feedback on changes and increases to services that would greatly improve the quality of their time at Douglas College.

## FOOD SERVICES:

We recognize that the cafeteria is not operating at full capacity during this semester back on campus. Students are struggling with the transition back to campus through changes to their coursework, juggling the (new to some) commute to and from campus and the added living expenses. With the financial instability from the past two years, students have reported wanting more affordable cafeteria options now more than ever as they return to spending long hours on campus. The average plate at the cafeteria costs a student between \$9 - \$15. This is a considerably high cost when students can go off campus for more affordable options. Providing more affordable options will not only address the financial instability facing students, but it will also encourage students to stay and utilize the food services provided on campus. With students spending long hours on campus, they have also expressed the need for food service to stay open later to accommodate those attending classes into the evenings. Furthermore, students reported there is a lack of vegan, vegetarian, and options for religious observances.

*"I usually end up walking somewhere close by to find cheaper options. The sandwich bar specifically is too expensive and some of the general items for sale are overpriced."*

*"The food on campus is more expensive than surrounding restaurants."*

## **COUNSELLING:**

With the integration to online learning, we understand Douglas College needed to move a lot of its student services to an online space with the restrictions in place. The Douglas Students Union recommended in last year's budget submission to increase counselling services by increasing staff positions, increasing drop-in sessions and increasing access outside of regular business hours. As we slowly see things go back to normal Douglas Colleges students are still very much needing the support of counselling and mental health support as they navigate the effects left by the last two years. The feedback we received this year is that students are accessing the counselling services but are needing to wait 3-6 weeks for an appointment. In the time frame of a semester, with class assignments and exams due in a short amount of time, this is a long time for students in urgent need to wait for access.

## **PARKING:**

With the return to campus, many students utilize parking on campus. With the recent integration to an online parking system by the College, students have reported feeling unsafe due to the lack of security presence in the parking garages, specifically the Carnarvon student parking garage.

Furthermore, in order for students to be eligible for a semester parking permit, students must have a minimum of six credit course load per campus. Many students with parking passes taking 2 or more classes at one campus are often required to attend another campus for one class or study requirements. They are then required to pay daily parking rates for their secondary campus on top of the semester parking permit. Parking permits should include Douglas College as a whole, and not just per campus. The creation of dual campus student parking permits would help students save money when travelling between campuses during their education.

## **WEIGHT ROOM:**

Students have reported the importance of physical health and are frequenting the weight room with the return to on-campus instruction. Students provided feedback that they would like to see an increase in the weight room hours as they do not reflect when all students are able to utilize the facilities.



Furthermore, while there have been some new equipment additions, much of the equipment is still outdated and in need of replacement. Regular maintenance and replacement of equipment, such as dumbbells, weight machines, and benches, will not only ensure that students are able to continue to utilize the gym and have a safe experience, it also provides a financially manageable annual cost for the institution.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

5. INCREASED ACCESS TO FOOD SERVICES THROUGH LONGER HOURS, MORE AFFORDABLE OPTIONS, AND MORE OPTIONS TO ADDRESS DIETARY AND RELIGIOUS NEEDS.
6. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COUNSELLORS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS TO HELP ADDRESS THE WAIT TIME ISSUE.
7. INCREASED SECURITY PRESENCE IN PARKING GARAGES TO ADDRESS THE SAFETY NEEDS OF STUDENTS, AND THE REMOVAL OF THE SIX CREDIT MINIMUM PER CAMPUS FOR STUDENT PARKING PERMITS.
8. INCREASED WEIGHT ROOM HOURS TO 7AM AND 9PM TO REFLECT THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS UTILIZING THE SERVICE OUTSIDE OF THEIR CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS, AND REGULAR ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AND UPGRADES FOR THE WEIGHT ROOM EQUIPMENT.

# EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

## PRINTING ON CAMPUS:

Over the past several years, Douglas College has reduced their environmental impact through the reduction of printing on campus. The Douglas Students' Union has supported this effort from the beginning as they recognized the environmental concerns associated with excessive printing and the benefits that come with the reduction. While printing has been greatly reduced on campus, many students reported that with being back on-campus, the printing requirements in their courses have continued with the need to print materials and assignments, at the cost to the student. With the overall successful transition to online learning during the pandemic, technology was used extensively for materials and assignment submissions, with little to no need to print, in almost all of their coursework. Removing printing requirements will not only further the positive environmental impacts, it will help lower the cost of education for students by not having to pay for additional materials.

## HARDWARE RENTALS:

Many students indicated they often utilize on-campus computers or hardware rentals as they do not have the financial resources to purchase necessary materials, such as a laptop or home computer. Currently, equipment rentals through the library are restricted to 24 hours and cannot be renewed. As we have addressed, students are in a financially vulnerable position, and many cannot afford the additional cost of a laptop or home computer to complete their assignments on, creating an unequal barrier to their access to education. Increasing funding for a hardware rental program, and more laptops students can access, could alleviate wait lists, help more students, and provide longer access times for materials.

*"Why did they cut the number of free prints, when I still have to print out assignments for lots of my classes?"*

## OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCES:

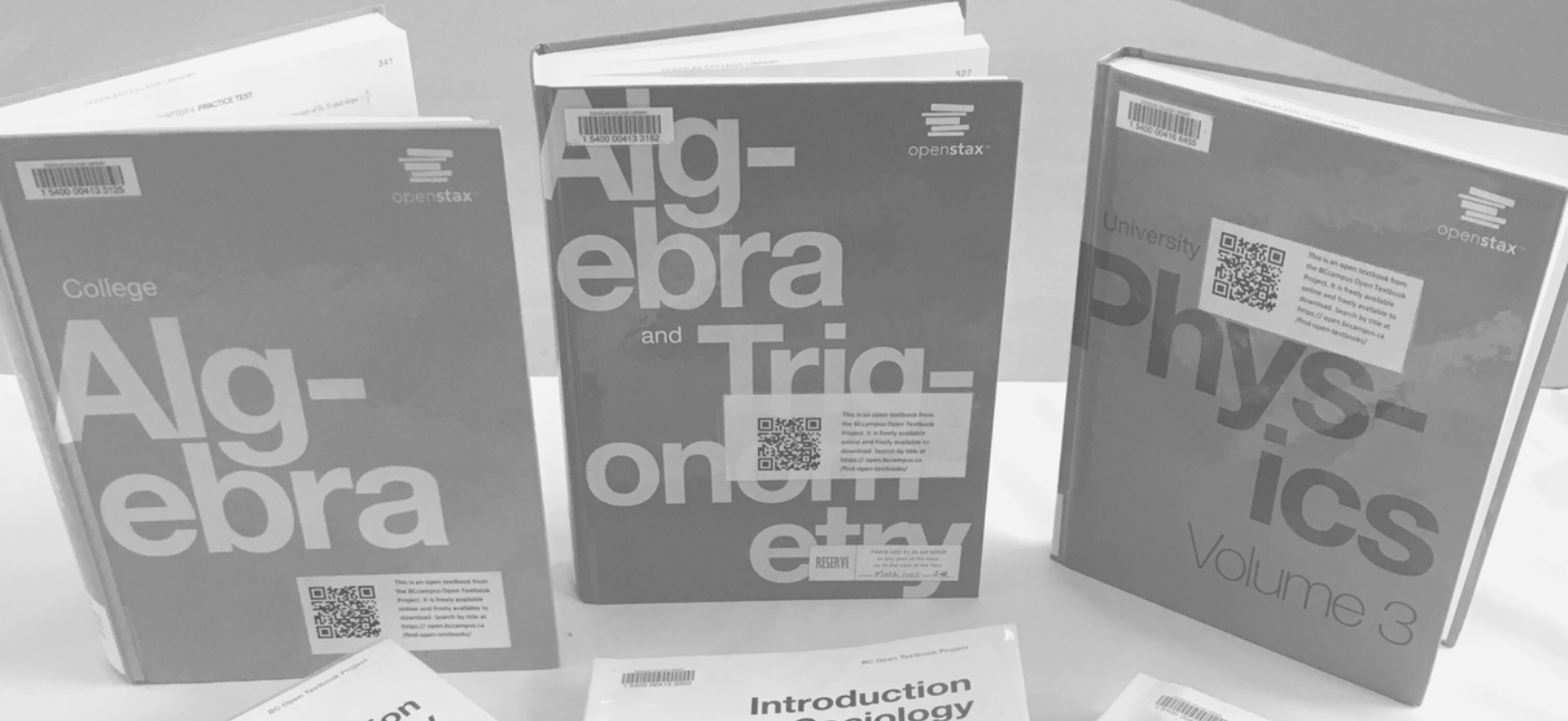
As reported in our budget submission last year, the Douglas Students' Union surveyed students about the impacts of expensive textbooks and materials. Students reported being negatively affected in their education with: their surprise at the costs of materials, having to work more or borrow more to afford materials, and not purchasing required textbooks and materials. The cost of textbooks and academic materials are a barrier to education for many. The Douglas Students' Union applauds the work of Douglas College and its faculty in being leaders in British Columbia in Open Education. Students have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars as a result of the efforts and work of Douglas College and its faculty.

While many faculties are actively using open education resources, there are still many departments using hard copy textbooks and materials that are very expensive for students. Furthermore, many instructors opt to use new editions of textbooks, which limits students from buying older, used editions. Often, the continual use of expensive textbooks is a result of either a lack of open education resources for specialized programs or the lack of time and technical knowledge to develop the materials.

Students expressed their excitement at the possibility of utilizing open educational resources in their coursework as they remove financial barriers to being successful in their education. To ensure that more programs and departments have the ability to shift successfully to OERs, more resources can be provided in the form of time, support, and specialization.







*"Textbook prices limit the accessibility of post-secondary education and keep higher education unattainable for prospective students from lower socio-economic classes who cannot afford them"*

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

9. INCREASE RESOURCES TO PROGRAMS AND DEPARTMENTS TO ENCOURAGE THE REQUIREMENT FOR PRINTING DECREASES OR IS ELIMINATED.
10. INCREASE OER RESOURCES FOR FACULTIES TO ENACT FULL SCALE CHANGE WITHIN DOUGLAS COLLEGE DEPARTMENTS BY HIRING SKILLED SUPPORT STAFF SPECIALIZING IN INTEGRATING OER'S AND THE HIRING OF CO-OP STUDENTS TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF MATERIALS AND TRANSITION.
11. FUNDING FOR A HARDWARE RENTAL PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS EXCEEDING 24HR LIMIT.

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

While tuition increases, cost of education, and financial instability continues to be key elements of the feedback from international students year after year and will be addressed in this report, much of the feedback focused on increased resources that would benefit them upon their arrival in Canada, during their education, and towards their graduation.

The transition to Canada and entering post-secondary education at Douglas College is an experience filled with culture shock, both academically and socially. While some students may have friends or acquaintances starting school with them, many do not have any established support networks. Not only are they adjusting to their academics at Douglas College, but they are also seeking out peer supports to help them adjust.

Furthermore, throughout their education, many international students need to work to continue to afford their education. This task has become increasingly difficult during these past couple of years with the economic downturns due to the pandemic. The need to rely on savings and family becomes even more prominent to cover the increasing expenses associated with living and studying in British Columbia.

This issue was one of the main themes that was brought forward and highlighted during our consultations. The ability to find employment upon arrival, during their education, and after graduation. Increased resources for international students through job hunting support, August and September employment fairs, and career fairs throughout the year, would help international students with their transition and help them attain more financial stability during their education at Douglas College.

Along with the difficulties students face with obtaining employment, they are also facing insecurities through the rising costs of housing, food, and daily life expenses. The increases to tuition have had even more of an impact on the financial stability of international students. This could be prevented by providing a level of stability through an institutional cap on tuition increases. By providing an institutional cap on tuition fees, international students will be able to more accurately budget for their time at Douglas. Furthermore, by setting the standard Douglas College will be able to encourage more international students to study at Douglas College with the transparency that students will be ensured fairness and consistency when it comes to tuition fees.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

12. INCREASED FUNDING FOR RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SPECIFICALLY AROUND THE INTEGRATION INTO LIVING IN CANADA: JOB HUNTING SUPPORT, STUDENT JOB FAIRS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, AND INCREASED PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS.
13. ESTABLISH AN INSTITUTION-LEVEL CAP ON TUITION FEE INCREASES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THAT DOES NOT EXCEED THE RATE OF INCREASE FOR DOMESTIC STUDENTS.

# ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

One of the main themes that is evident through our collection of feedback from students is that they are still struggling with the new normal of society in the wake of a significant culture shift as result of the pandemic. While not all feedback and recommendations can be directly attributed to the budget, there are measures that can be taken to help ensure the success of students throughout their time at Douglas College.

Students reported they are having difficulties accessing resources and services that are necessary for academic success, due to a lack of knowledge about the resources or a lack of knowing where to find them. We believe that increased advertising of resources and services through social media, on-campus advertising, instructor word of mouth, and email correspondence would create better awareness and better equip students to excel in their education.







## CLOSING

The Douglas Students' Union thanks Douglas College Board members and Senior Management Team for their time and consideration of our recommendations. We recognize that every year brings a new set of challenges. Everyone has been working hard to ensure that students have been, and continue to be, supported.

We look forward to working with administrators over the next year to implement improvements that will have a positive impact on the lives of all students during their time at Douglas College.

**Douglas Students' Union Board of Directors**



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