

# **The real issue is the budget choices being made by Dalhousie's administration and board of governors. It is crucial they focus more on academics, which is the core of the university's mission.**

— David Mensink President, Dalhousie Faculty Association

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What's the most important thing for a university: the quality of the education it offers to its students, or the number of administrators and new buildings? To most of us, the answer to that question should be obvious, but it isn't for Dalhousie University's administration and board of governors.

In March 2013, the Dalhousie Faculty Association released an analysis of Dalhousie's audited financial statements showing that the proportion of the university's operating budget devoted to teaching, research and libraries had declined significantly

over a 10-year period, while the proportion allocated to administration had increased. The study also showed that millions of dollars had been diverted from Dalhousie's operating budget to fund new building construction.

During the summer and fall of 2015, the faculty association updated its analysis to reflect the university's financial statements for the 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15 fiscal years, and the situation has worsened.

We discovered that:

The percentage of Dalhousie's operating budget spent on academic activities continues to decline, from 73.5 per cent in 2002-03, to 63.5 per cent in 2011-12 to just under 61.9 per cent in 2014-15.

At the same time, the percentage of the operating budget spent on "administration and general" is going up. It was 7.3 per cent in 2002-03, 8.4 per cent in 2011-12 and over 8.6 per cent in 2014-15.

In the past three years alone, more than \$83 million has been transferred out of Dalhousie's operating fund, with virtually all that money going into capital expenses. The total amount transferred out of the operating fund since 2002-03 is a whopping \$168.5 million.

What's particularly ironic about these figures is that Dalhousie is one of the few universities in Atlantic Canada where student enrolment has consistently increased. Yet each year, Dalhousie's academic programs are forced to take cuts — the recently released budget plan for 2016-17 calls for a 2.5 per cent cut to all programs. This is in spite of a proposed three-per-cent across-the-board increase in tuition fees, and massive tuition increases in such programs as pharmacy, agriculture and engineering. In many programs, Dalhousie's tuition fees are already among the highest in Canada.

We also know that in many departments, professors who retire are either not replaced or replaced by part-time or limited-term faculty. So enrolment has gone up, tuition has gone up and Dalhousie's complement of full-time, tenured faculty has declined.

We strongly urge both the provincial and federal governments to invest more in post-secondary education; but the real issue is the budget choices that are being made by Dalhousie's administration and board of governors. It is crucial that the administration and board focus more on academics, which are the core of the university's mission.

This brings us to the question we started with: Should a university focus its investment in its academic programs — and the professors and instructors who teach

them — or on administrators and buildings? The future of Dalhousie as one of Canada's top universities will be determined by how that question is answered.