**Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students Questionnaire
DSU 2019 Elections**

Ruby Coles

VP Student Life Candidate

5th Year in Sociology and Social Anthropology with a Certificate in Disabilities Management

Candidate Questions

1. What do you see as the top 3 issues for Dalhousie’s graduate and professional students?
	1. Access to resources
	2. Mental and physical wellness
	3. Financial and food security
2. How do you plan to engage graduate students to communicate information and get direct student feedback?

I plan on building strong interpersonal relationships with the folks on DAGS to encourage productive feedback and create pathways for ongoing exchanging of ideas. I aim to restructure student services to make them more accessible to graduate students and to advocate for them within the university. Given I am not a Grad student, it is important that I listen to your needs and concerns and ensure I have a solid understanding of the issues you face as a community. By improving outreach initiatives to DAGS and working on creating more accessible and brief student surveys to collect and review feedback is extremely important in this. The DSU can repeat the lines “your feedback matters and we support you” as much as we want, but until students are able to really feel that themselves, to feel supported and engaged in their union, feedback will be seldom. By helping folks feel engaged in their Union through events and programming we can bridge these gaps, tighten bonds and ensure graduate students feel engaging with the union is worth their time and foster a supportive community for all graduate students.

1. How would you improve the DSU to better serve graduate students?

My main platform operates on improving and incorporating all new wellness programing, catered to student needs! Graduate students are at higher risk than the general student body for depression and at higher risk of suicide. It is important the union works actively to support folks who are struggling with their mental health.

I will create a wellness caucus, hopefully with representatives from DAGS to unite all student societies and groups with a focus on wellness. This will help ensure resources are used effectively and that our outreach is as wide as possible to recruit folks to come to these events.

I will ensure programming runs often enough and at times in the day/week that work with graduate student schedules. Making workshops short enough that they are not an unreasonable time commitment but where folks are able to gain valuable knowledge and skills to support them in the future.

Graduate students do have unique needs than that of an undergraduate, and I hope to tap into unused student potential to unite graduate students, to advocate for them through the university and to the DSU, to ensure the right programming exists. The intersectionality of identities as graduate students is very broad, each coming with its own set of barriers and I aim to give graduate students all the support and tools you need to succeed and to feel supported throughout your career here at Dalhousie.

1. How would you ensure graduate students are a priority for decision makers in Government, Dalhousie University, and the DSU?

I will work on a more personal level with graduate students, creating friendships with folks on DAGS and ensuring they feel supported by me as an individual to instil more trust in the potential of me as a VPSL. I will actively advocate for graduate students through the union, the university and amongst the government to fight the gross increases in tuition and differential fees. I will ensure services like health and wellness, financial aid and bursaries and the food bank are as accessible as possible to benefit graduate students.

Graduate students are often put in a situation where the university treats them however is convenient for the institution and in such a way, that graduate students hardly get the benefits they deserve for the work they are doing. You are treated like students when it is convenient and like staff when that feels more convenient. This inconsistency is not fair.

I would like to bring these voices to the university. I would also like to offer more workshops on workers’ rights and relevant issues to ensure graduate students are aware of their rights and are not taken advantage of by the very institution that is supposed to be supporting you.

1. Is there anything else you want to share with Dalhousie’s graduate and professional students?

I aim to restructure O-Week by faculty, which would not only benefit undergraduates but would greater benefit graduate students. This would provide more opportunity for you to meet more graduate students, engage with students in similar faculties and make programming more accessible and interesting to graduate students.

I am passionate, driven and empathetic. I aim to ensure all students, of all identities, of all faculties and levels of study feel supported and are given all the opportunities they need to create their own support systems. I aim to educate students to create a more inclusive and supportive environment rid of stigma and discrimination. I will work with the survivor support centre to run more programming based around fostering a consent culture on campus.

I will support graduate students, I will listen to concerns and trouble-shoot solutions. I care about your student life and I aim to make student life a lot sweeter by increasing community engagement, improving wellness initiatives and creating more personal and professional development opportunities for students.