


Students Nova Scotia	Board of Directors	students 
	<i>Meeting Minutes</i>	

Meeting Name:	Board Meeting		
Meeting Date:	Oct 26, 2013		
Meeting Time:	2:30 PM, AST		
Venue:	The Hub Halifax	City:	Halifax, NS
Attendees			
Primary and Secondary Delegates:	Amy Brierley (Chair/StFXSU), Matthew Rios (Vice-Chair/ASU), Patrick Visintini (DSU), Benjamin Gunn-Doerge (StFXSU), Aaron Beale (DSU), Jeremy Mott (Kingstec NSCCSA), Gorba Bhandari (SMUSA), Paul Rukidi (SMUSA), Jessica Compagnon (DASA), Aaron Beale (DSU).		
Other attendees:	Jonathan Williams (Executive Director), Allison Sparling (Campaigns Coordinator), Jacob Voye (Engagement and Communications Officer), Danielle Andres (Research Officer), Bob Parker (Director of Research), Bethany Rains (Waterfront NSCCSA).		
Absent:	ASTSU (regrets), Matthew Latimer (CBUSU/Treasurer, regrets), Brennan Boudreau (CBUSU, regrets).		
Quorum (50% of Members represented?): YES			

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Roll Call
- 3) Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve amended agenda
Approved by general consent

4) Approval of Minutes from October 2, 2013

Motion to approve minutes.

Approved by general consent.

DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL

5) Associate Membership of Kingstec Nova Scotia Community College Student Association

JM (NSCCSA): Long road to get here, really excited to get involved, I think I can bring a different perspective to the discussions.

Motion to move in camera

Approved by general consent

Motion to move out of camera

Approved by general consent

AB (Chair/StFXSU): Can I entertain a motion to approve the Associate Membership of Kingstec NSCCSA?

Darcy Shea (ASU) **moved** and Gorba Bhandari (SMUSA) **seconded the motion: Be it resolved** that the Kingstec NSCCSA be admitted to StudentsNS as an associate member.

ASU – Yes

DASA - Yes

DSU – Abstains

SMUSA – Yes

StFXSU - Yes

Motion approved

6) Position Paper on Student Financial Assistance and Tax Credits: Discussion and Approval

Board meeting recessed for presentation from Bob Parker (Director of Research) on Position Paper.

AB (Chair/StFXSU): discussion around student assistance paper?

JW (ED): You talked spoke about the Repayment Assistance Plan (RAP) being really good, can you talk more about that Bob and specifically the issue regarding defaulting?

BP (Director of Research): Defaulting would only happen if you do not choose to participate in the RAP. The RAP eliminates the need for defaulting all together.

MR (Vice Chair/ASU): Acadia and StFX have nutrition programs where you need to go through an intern process and you can't apply for student assistance. Where does it fit in here?

BP (Director of Research): These internships happen after you graduate so Student Assistance has no recourse to offer financial aid for those students; it is not a part of the program. If they were to offer a Co-op program that became a part of the degree program, it would be a different story. I think the place to deal with it is as part of the employment paper.

MR (Vice Chair): Public policy should be supporting the needs of individuals and not push them away. It is not doing what it is intended to do.

BP (Director of Research): I think there is space to talk about that in the employment paper. Part of it is making sure people have smooth transitions into those programs (internships). I feel like this is a real issue, we could push on this but the evidence does not exist yet.

AB (Chair/StFXSU): Discussion around, extending the program to all students and the 100% upfront grant?

BP (Director of Research): Should the debt cap be extended to all people as opposed to just undergraduates?

JW (ED): Tax credits don't work, we want to move funding into programs where it targets people who need it. In terms of cost, our thinking has been how do we make PSE accessible first, I would suggest the key recommendations are related to those amounts one can be eligible for, so that you are making sure someone has enough money to get to school, and then how do we minimize debt. Bob has outlined recommendations on the debt cap, we have a couple of other alternatives: 100% grant or 100% grant on a first degree at a public PSE institution.

AB (DSU): Eliminating the maximum assistance amount, would that increase debt?

BP (Director of Research): If we went for 100% grant, it would not increase debt at all.

AB (DSU): The debt cap extended past the standard term of a degree, what are the implications of that?

BP (Director of Research): For undergrads, a 28K cap for four years, the 35K would be the new debt cap for the fifth year, so it would go up by 7k per year. We can't control what the feds do so the cap is at the maximum federal loan. The question is does the debt cap apply to all students.

JW (ED): A few debt options. 1) Extend debt cap to students for program + 1 year, 2) 100% grant for people qualifying for low income Canada Student Grant 3) the other option is 100% grant for any student at a public institution. 4) The other option is 100% grant only applying for your first degree at a public PSE institution – would allow to save some money.

AB (Chair): from here, we should decide which option we want to pursue.

AB (DSU): I think the 100% grant on any public degree is good. (*Consensus reached*).

MR (Vice Chair): In terms of tax credits, my recommendation is to scrap the GRR (graduate retention rate) but leave the other ones. I think Bob has made a case that it would make sense to scrape it and put the money into a program that would help students.

JW (ED): I don't think they (Government) see the GRR as targeting students in general, but aimed at graduates.

MR (Vice Chair): It is much easier to put money into the system then to take money out or reallocate it.

BP (Director of Research): The bottom line is it does not work; it is not doing what it is supposed to do.

JW (ED): I'd recommend to go all the way and get all the tax credit money and scrap everything: i.e. tax credits and GRR. With the GRR it is argued that the money is not going to students, so we may have difficulty getting that money reallocated to student assistance.

JM (NSCCSA): I agree.

JC (DASA): if we are going to get rid of the credits, we should make use of it.

B-G-D (StFXSU): It makes sense to go for all of it.

AB (Chair): Do we make the recommendation to go forward and scrap everything?

MR (Vice Chair): Unless we can clearly articulate why we are scrapping everything, it could do more harm than good and could make people view us as irresponsible. I think we need to be very careful.

AB (Chair): Are there any comments on why would want/not to pursue that option

JM (NSCCSA): It could cut off a lot of people who are looking to come back and get another degree. *(Consensus reached to ask for all tax credits to be moved into targeted assistance).*

MR (Vice Chair): 100% grant for any degree, these people are already eligible for a CSG, so it is going to the right people anyway.

JW (ED): I think we are comfortable with 100% grant but not knowing the exact cost could present a problem. I would ask that we maintain this recommendation, but if we need to negotiate a little bit less to make the numbers add up this be the place where we do it, so we ensure students can access the money that they need to get through school first and foremost.

JC (DASA): I am friendly towards that idea.

JM (NSCCSA): I agree.

GB (SMUSA): I agree it is good to prioritize things.

AB (DSU): I am hesitant for us recommending it especially without a cap, maybe if we said this is a grant.

JW (ED): Something to be aware of is if we got to 100% grant the low-income students would be completely immune to tuition increases as they would be completely covered.

MR (Vice Chair): I think I would agree with everything on that list of options I say lets advocate for the 100% grant option.

AB (Chair): if everyone is friendly with this then we can go forward and pass a resolution.

Motion to recess for lunch.

Approved

Motion to move out of recess

Approved

JW (ED): Review of principles, concerns, recommendations

AB (Chair): If anyone has objections or comments we will hear them.

AB (DSU): I find we have a lot of wishy-washy recommendations is it necessary to have this kind of language?

BP (Director of Research): Some recommendations are symbolic possibly, but most of them are pretty meaty. Necessary to ask for further research in some cases because we just don't know enough.

AB (Chair): Entertain motion to approve the whole document and recommendations.

Darcy Shea (ASU) Moved and Benjamin Gunn-Doerge (StFXSU) Seconded the motion: Be It Resolved that StudentsNS approve the following policy resolution:

WHEREAS, *Students Nova Scotia* believes in the following PRINCIPLES:

- 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 ability, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, or any factor other than qualification.
- The cost of post secondary education in Nova Scotia should not cause undue hardship upon any student or make them financially unable to live in Nova Scotia.
- The concepts of accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education are not equivalent to one another, but are inextricably linked.
- Expanding access to post secondary education for individuals with high financial need is prioritized.
- Any increase in post-secondary education costs must be matched by available student financial assistance. Otherwise, accessibility for students with the greatest need will be diminished.

AND WHEREAS, *Students Nova Scotia* has identified the following CONCERNS:

- A lack of data on the post-secondary participation of different social groups – including but not limited to African Nova Scotians, Aboriginal Nova Scotians, low income Nova Scotians, and first generation students – hinders effective policy analysis on the accessibility and affordability of PSE for Nova Scotians.
- The requirement to establish a Registered Education Savings Plan excludes most Nova Scotian families from receiving the universal benefits of the Canada Learning Bond and Canada Education Savings Grant programs.

- The largest beneficiaries of federal Pre-Study Financial Assistance programs – the Canada Education Savings Grants and Canada Learning Bonds – are higher income families.
- The student assistance appeals process is inadequately advertised and therefore, poorly understood, by many individuals that could benefit from engaging in this process.
- The students assistance appeals process can be an invasive and emotionally challenging experience that may be unhealthy for individuals with health-related grounds for appeal.
- The moderate standard of living assumption overestimates the parental contribution of some parents of dependent students.
- The moderate standard of living assumption fails to consider important financial priorities including parental retirement savings, registered education savings for other children, and registered disability savings for any family member.
- For married or common-law applicants, the financial contributions expected of a student's spouse are unrealistically large.
- Married couples containing at least one person on student financial assistance are expected to live well below a moderate standard of living, as defined by the Canada Student Loans Program.
- The student contribution assumptions fail to consider potentially important financial priorities including personal (and/or spousal) retirement savings, registered education savings for dependent children, and registered disability savings.
- The maximum assistance amount is inequitable to students with the greatest financial need.
- In spite of many positive changes to in-study financial assistance, the vast majority of post-secondary students in Nova Scotia continue to come from higher income backgrounds, as defined by student financial assistance policy itself.
- Student loan repayment conditions and debt management programs available to student loan borrowers are poorly advertised and poorly understood by the student population.
- The existing Debt Cap eligibility criteria exclude many post-secondary students from the benefits of this program, including all non-university students, graduate students, and professional students.
- The 4-year limit on Debt Cap benefits is impractical relative to the actual time-to-completion for many students.
- Post-study student financial assistance delivered through tax credits disproportionately benefits higher income students and families.
- Post-study student financial assistance delivered through tax credits are poorly timed to assist students when they need financial help the most – while they are studying.
- Post-study student financial assistance delivered through provincial refundable tax credits, in particular, are less generous and also redundant incentives to the analogous federal tax credits.
- The Graduate Retention Rebate is an expensive and ineffective approach to youth retention and student financial assistance.

Be it resolved that Students Nova Scotia makes the following RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Province of Nova Scotia and all interested PSE stakeholders should join with StudentsNS to investigate the existing social barriers to PSE access and create a comprehensive strategy to eliminate these barriers, including a commitment to collecting and disseminating system-wide data on accessibility.
- The Province should engage the federal government to encourage reinvestment of pre-study student financial assistance spending on programs that enhance accessibility and affordability for Nova Scotians. In particular, it should advocate that Nova Scotians receive a proportionate share of pre-study financial assistance investment, relative to the size of our population.

- The Province of Nova Scotia should eliminate the Graduate Retention Rebate, the Tuition and Education Tax Credit, and the Student Loan Interest Tax Credit. All current and future cost savings should be reinvested in student financial assistance to improve accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education.
- Eliminate the limit on provincial student financial assistance, currently \$180 per study week, for all SFA-eligible students studying at public institutions in Nova Scotia.
- Develop and implement mechanisms to inform all students about the existing student assistance appeals process and to make the Higher Appeals Board more accessible to individuals across the Province.
- In consultation with StudentsNS and representative students, develop and implement a more compassionate appeals/dispute resolution process for all students but in particular those individuals facing serious and verifiable health issues.
- When assessing student assistance applications, the calculation of expected resources should give consideration to additional student and/or family costs, including, but not limited to, registered retirement savings and registered education savings for dependent children or registered disability savings for any family members. With appropriate documentation, an applicant's resources calculation should be reduced by the actual amounts contributed to a registered pension plan (RPP), registered retirement savings plan (RRSP), a registered education savings plan for a dependent child (RESP), and/or a registered disability savings plan (RDSP).
- The cost allowances used to calculate each applicant's available resources should be sufficient to allow all applicants (and/or their families) a similar standard of living, regardless of the applicant's student category.
- Develop and execute a public education campaign using moral suasion to inform parents about the costs of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia and educate them about the risks their children face without financial help.
- The Province should provide supplementary student loans to dependent students with parents who cannot or will not contribute the expected funding to their child's education.
- Develop an engaging and user-friendly informational web portal clearly explaining the essential features of the student assistance program, from application to repayment.
- Create an interdepartmental strategy for disseminating information about the student financial assistance program between the Department of Labour and Advanced Education and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The key objective of this strategy should be to deliver timely, accurate information on postsecondary education and student financial assistance to students within Nova Scotia's public education system.
- Students reliant on government loans to finance their education should be provided with all necessary information to better understand their potential debt burden throughout their program of studies. At a minimum, this should include a clear explanation of the total amount of repayable financial assistance being offered, a reminder of any existing debt the borrower already holds, and the expected terms of repayment based on the total estimated debt amount.
- The Province should provide all provincial student financial assistance in the form of an up front grant for students studying at a public post secondary institution in Nova Scotia.
- Together with StudentsNS, the Province should commit to studying its approach to debt relief for students repaying supplemental student loans.

Vote:

ASU – Yes

DASA – Yes

DSU – Yes

SMUSA – Yes

StFXSU – Yes

Motion Passes unanimously

7) Employment position paper brainstorm

Motion to recess

Approved by general consent

Motion to resume meeting

Approved by general consent

8) Defining quality and quality position paper brainstorm

Be it resolved that StudentsNS define quality as: Policies, programs, and services in post-secondary education should meet student expectations and help prepare them for lifelong success, including in their citizenship, careers, and personal wellbeing

DS (ASU): Important to make clear that the student expectations are tied to supporting their success, as some students may seek primarily to have fun for example. Could we change the “meet student expectations and help prepare them” to “meet student expectations to help prepare them”? (*Consensus support for this change*).

PR (SMUSA): Just to be clear, is citizenship intended to refer to immigration or to community engagement? (*More community engagement*).

Corba Bhandari (SMUSA) **Moved** and Jeremy Mott (Kingstec NSCCSA) **seconded the motion** that StudentsNS define quality as: Policies, programs, and services in post-secondary education should meet student expectations and help prepare them for lifelong success, including in their citizenship, careers, and personal wellbeing

Vote:

ASU – Yes

DASA – Yes

SMUSA – Yes

StFXSU – Yes

(*DSU absent for vote*).

Motion to move into recess for quality position paper brainstorm, for resumption the following morning.

Approved.

Motion to resume meeting.

Approved.

AB (Chair/StFXSU): If the board is friendly we would like to move the agenda around slightly, as our minute-taker must leave early.

9) Appointing board reviewers for employment and quality position papers

AB (Chair/StFXSU): MR (ASU) and Darcy (ASU) volunteered for the quality and employment papers respectively, anyone else who would want to put their name in?

SJ(DSU): I would be interested in the quality report

DS (ASU): Appointment to employment paper draft review by general consent

MR (Vice-Chair) and SJ (DSU) appointment to quality draft paper review by general consent

10) Policy amendment on sharing of legal fees

JW (ED): Based on the proposed amendment, StudentsNS would share legal costs if legal action were pursued against a member of StudentsNS in a way that the board views as contrary to our values and principles. Two current members of our organization have either been sued or are being sued right now. We have sought a legal opinion, and generally speaking StudentsNS would incur no liability if we agreed to share these costs. StudentsNS would pay half the member's legal fees per year to a maximum of \$4,000.

DS (ASU): I am worried that if more than one organization is getting sued how will we pay for all that.

AB (Chair/StFXSU): Should we move in camera to discuss this.

Motion to move into camera
Motion approved by general consent

Motion to move out of camera
Motion approved by general consent

MR (Vice Chair/ASU): I think that any school who is looking for this kind of support should need to do a presentation, it should be a formal process.

AB (DSU): I suggest we have people look into accountability measures for member organizations.

MR (Vice Chair/ASU): We could have a proposal that would outline the expectations of all of members.

JW (ED): I recommend reducing the \$4,000 cap per member. It is better to set the number lower than higher from a policy point of view, the board could still have the discretion to offer more money. \$2,500 would be a more reasonable max.

AB (Chair): Entertain motion to amend. Is the amendment friendly to the board?

BG-D (StFXSU) **moved** and Darcy Shea (ASU) **seconded the motion** that the maximum legal fees assistance to a member be reduced to \$2500.

Passed by general consent.

Darcy Shea (ASU) **moved** and Gorba Bhandari (SMUSA) **seconded the motion** that the following clause be added to the StudentsNS Governing Policies:

52 *Where the Board of Directors determines litigation is being threatened or pursued against a member association in serious violation of the Values and/or Principles of StudentsNS, StudentsNS will fund 50% of the member's related legal fees to a maximum outlay of \$2500 per fiscal year.*

Vote:

ASU – Yes

DASA – Yes

DSU - No

SMUSA – Yes

StFXSU – Yes

Motion passes.

BG-D (StFXSU): We are in favour but would want to be very careful in applying this rule on a case-by-case basis.

11) Giving signing authority for cheques to a board member in Halifax

JW (ED): Having three officers who can sign cheques but are all located outside Halifax is somewhat painful. Would a board member in Halifax be open to having signing authority and is the board alright giving someone in Halifax signing authority?

SJ (DSU): I'm happy to have signing authority.

Motion to give Sagar Jha signing authority on the StudentsNS bank account passes by general consent.

12) Housing report

JW (ED): There is an off-campus housing report set to be completed this fall. It has been delayed and is still not quite there yet. Between BP, BF and I, I believe we could get this ready for public draft in the month. Strongest recommendations would be around damage deposits. Since change of government this report may need revision, looking for approval from board on this.

AB (Chair): Is everyone okay with the board releasing this in two weeks?

SJ (DSU): I think this is a great opportunity for folks who are interested in affordable housing options and university and police as there is a lot of stuff that happens with the quality and culture of a house. Excited about this, hopeful for something great.

13) Reports of the Officers

AB (Chair/StFXSU): I have been in touch with Jonathan. I am still getting up to speed with my new duties.

MR (Vice Chair/ASU): I have been in touch with Jonathan in preparation for Student Life Summit.

Treasurer: Absent

14) Reports of the Staff

JW (ED): We have been preparing for this board meeting, welcoming new hires. NSCCSA is now on board, lot of work ahead on how to find additional resources to build capacity. We have a lot of work to put into the housing report. On the sexual assault and alcohol projects, Anne has done all her interviews except at SMU, we are in touch with the President's committee in responding to chant that took place there. The steering committee for Sexual Assault project meets this week. The Mend the Gap committee appointed its Chair: Amanda Kolwich. We hope to assemble a fact sheet on factors in women's underrepresentation in student politics but have been held back. Partnership working groups are active. Jonathan Williams is joining the Quality group instead of Bob Parker; decision made around resource allocation. Access and affordability working group will look at measuring representation to set targets, identify university best practices and identify possible government initiatives. The tuition policy working group met for first time, will report when I know more. International student working group needs to be a decision-making space and talk about how we are going to do things better as opposed to what we should do in an ideal world. On-going work on Students Speak Out campaign. Student Assemblies planned for SMU, Acadia, StFX in November. I was invited to Workforce for the Future Table meeting: good opportunity, with group including presidents from universities and executives from NS Power, taking action on five areas of focus 1) youth retention 2) tying young people to growth sectors 3) apprenticeships 4) increasing entrepreneurship 5) improving math skills.

15) Reports of the Members

MR (ASU) & DS (ASU): Won MTV pump it up. Homecoming was a big success. Acadia was involved in Halloween events. The executive team met. We had a symposium on undergrad research, which was a successful, met with Jeremy from NSCC, and had a good opportunity to talk about student issues.

JC (DASA): There is still some confusion around roles such as who is responsible for what. We received a grant that was for 10K to redo our student lounge. Had "college royal" event: showing cows and sheep, very fun. New dean on campus, nothing negative to say about him. Plan to do a big Movember campaign on campus. Lumber-jacking competition coming up, again very fun.

SJ (DSU): Halloween programming includes campaign about culturally ethnic costumes and how that is wrong. Library cuts, journal access being denied, cuts to hours; decided to run a campaign on it to increase awareness. Hosting presidents round tables of societies and al; of the faculties to talk about academic issues they have encountered. Finishing a renovation of the SUB building We have health plan issues with the university. Looking at governance reforms of the student union, changing who does what; possible split of VP academic and external roles as it is ridiculously time consuming. New president, 'The zone', stellar to work with and is very energetic.

JC (DASA): Where does the money for renovations come from? (*Student fees*).

JM (Kingstec NSCCSA): Joined StudentNS!, we had an NSCCSA conference last week on StudentsNS and everyone was quiet eager to get involved. Seems like we are stepping up as a college. Pre-screening tickets to hunger games, communicating about what we are doing to other NSA's.

BG-D (StFXSU): Attended a conference in Halifax and worked on energy challenge month. Also participated in town cleanup where students partnered with town. Student centers conciliations – Amy facilitate it. Working with students around campaign on budget cuts to bring these services back. Working on mental health initiatives. Working on bringing in a student assistance program (health), would be a 24 hour service. Open forums for students coming up. Movember kick off party this November. Working to bring farmer's market to campus. New student food resource centre more accessible than previous location. External reviews to speak to student life office looking at seeing the feasibility of the services offered as well as best practices. Working with LGBTQ groups to do an event and campaign/fundraiser.

GB (SMUSA): Internal structure changes, seeking representatives for StudentsNS committees, we are working on Halloween events and Movember campaign kick off is next week.

Benjamin Gunn-Doerge (StFXSU) **moved** and Darcy Shea (ASU) **seconded the motion to adjourn.**

Motion passed by general consent.