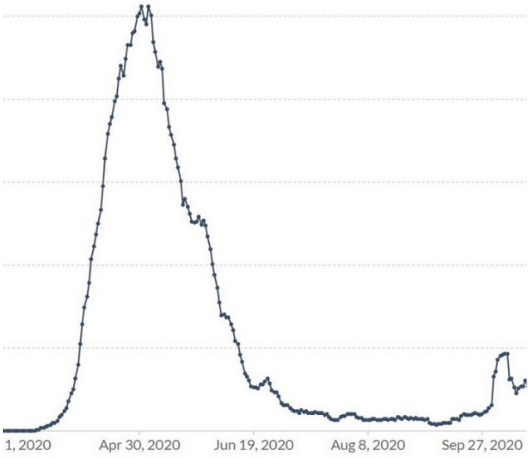
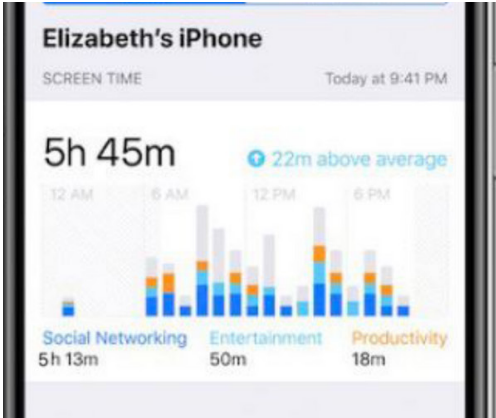


DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

NORTH AMERICA'S OLDEST CAMPUS NEWSPAPER *EST. 1868*



FROM ZOOM BURNOUT TO THE RACE FOR VACCINES: IT'S BEEN QUITE A YEAR. (CREDITS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: APPLE INC., HAKANGERMAN ON PIXABAY, LANE HARRISON, GEOFFREY HOWARD, GEOFFREY HOWARD, PIXY.ORG, LYNN FRIEDMAN ON FLICKR, CDC, GEOFFREY HOWARD)

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A look back on these tumultuous months

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Here's to the end

Dear reader,

In the July 11, 1919 issue of the *Dalhousie Gazette*, contributor Alice L. Wickwire writes a history of her graduating class:

"When Dalhousie opened its doors to us again [in 1918], we came back in a much more cheerful frame of mind, for the war situation had vastly improved during the summer. Classes had been going on for about a week, the Influenza epidemic began and we were sent home for five weeks. Then we had scarcely settled to work again, when the glorious news of Peace came and set us all in a whirl of excitement. The whole college seemed to gain new life, the boys began gradually to come back from France and to Dalhousie and some of the old pre-war customs were revived."

Wickwire's words comfort me.

I don't mean to draw a simple comparison between the current state of the world and the year 1918. A lot is different today. We aren't facing a world war (though there is plenty of ongoing violence across the globe). I suspect many young adults like me, who make up most of Dalhousie University's student body, aren't as worried about catching COVID-19 as Wickwire and her classmates were about getting the Influenza A(H1N1) virus, which was disproportionately fatal to our age group, killing tens of millions of people.

Despite these differences, just as Wickwire must have grappled with extreme situations when completing her degree in 1919, students face many similar issues today. It's not just the global pandemic factor. Many nations are in economic, political and social disrepair. The idea of leaving university and entering the real world is at the very least unflattering. Individually we're all pushing through weekly assignments, and trying to reach the end of a year marked by violence and death.

But what's hopeful in Wickwire's writing is the simple fact her graduating class made it to the end. They survived (and quite miraculously so — the 24 men in her cohort who went off to war all returned home).

We will overcome this pandemic, even if it takes more time than we wish. For now, there is hope and unless things change for the worse (which they very well could), Dal plans to hold many in-person classes in the fall.

Through all the wins and losses of this school year, the end is approaching. I accept it with open arms. Though I'll no longer be at Dal in the fall, I hope we'll see this university "gain new life" when the pandemic is over, just as it did after the First World War. I hope the *Gazette* has a life very different from the largely virtual one it's lived this past year.

By the way, this is our only print issue of the year. If you've been reading online this whole time, I thank you. If you're reading this in paper and realizing you never noticed we were out of print, still, I thank you. As readers, you are the reason the *Gazette* has continued to publish articles during this hectic time and will do so for years to come. It's been an absolute honour of mine to work at this paper with brilliant staff and contributors. It's hard for me to admit the end of this particular journey is in sight.

By the time this letter is published, there will only be two weeks of classes left. Like Wickwire and her graduating class of 1919, all of us students, staff and faculty will make it to the end. We too will survive.



-Tarini Fernando, Editor-in-chief

DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

NORTH AMERICA'S OLDEST CAMPUS NEWSPAPER,
EST. 1868

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Apology and retraction

On April 1, 2016 (in issue 148-21), the *Dalhousie Gazette* published an article titled "Dignity is Salvation," which included negative statements in reference to Angelita Sparks. Although Sparks was not mentioned by name in the piece, there was identifiable information about her (including the name of her ex-boyfriend, who the *Gazette* mistakenly indicated was her ex-husband). The statements in this article characterizing Sparks as abusive were misleading, false and unsubstantiated. The *Gazette* sincerely apologizes to Sparks for our mistake and fully retracts the article.

Women working for change

Dal students join politically minded women across the country for a weekend of inspiration

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: KATHERINE MEAGHER, EMILY STAPLETON, CALEIGH WONG AND CHARLOTTE MOASE WERE AMONG THE STUDENTS FROM DAL SELECTED TO ATTEND THIS YEAR'S VIRTUAL DAUGHTERS OF THE VOTE CONFERENCE. (PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY KATHERINE MEAGHER, EMILY STAPLETON, CALEIGH WONG AND CHARLOTTE MOASE)

A group of Dalhousie University students got a chance to experience the future of Canadian politics at a virtual conference with federal party leaders earlier this month.

Six Dal students were selected to attend the Daughters of the Vote conference from March 5 to 8, 2021. The conference held once every two years is hosted by Equal Voice Canada, a multipartisan organization that strives to increase the involvement of women in Canadian politics at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

The conference selects 338 delegates from across the country to represent all federal ridings. Usually hosted in Ottawa, the weekend culminates in a mock House of Commons session attended by national media, federal party leaders and the prime minister. Each delegate who's admitted to the conference is put in touch with their riding's actual member of parliament (MP).

Delegates chose three ridings they would be interested in representing on their application for the program. With the conference being virtual this year, there was also space for more than 338 delegates, resulting in there being some delegates-at-large who did not represent a riding.

In attendance from Dal were students Caleigh Wong, Tatiana Portelli-Graham, Jenna Andrews, Charlotte Moase, Emily Stapleton, Katherine Meagher and teaching assistant Stacie Smith.

The weekend aims to teach young women how they can make a difference in their communities through politics, an attempt to further Equal Voice's ultimate goal of gender parity in politics.

Daughters of the Vote 2021 built on this vision.

"I never really considered running for a House of Commons seat before," said Meagher, who studies

international food business. "But it's definitely something that's kind of now in the back of my mind for later in the future."

An opportunity with Trudeau

While most students apply to the conference because of their interest in politics and improving their community, Wong, an international development studies and civil engineering student, applied to the conference for a more specific reason.

"My main reason, honestly, for wanting to do it was the fact that I knew that if you got accepted into this program, you would have a chance to make a statement in an audience with the prime minister, with all the federal party leaders and the national media as well, on something that you really feel needs to be brought up to that level of a platform," Wong said.

She was selected as one of 30 delegates to give a 60-second speech at the House of Commons session, which she used to shed light on systemic oppression within the Canadian Forces — an issue with renewed public interest as two of Canada's former chief of the defence staff are being investigated for sexual misconduct.

Wong is a queer woman of colour who serves as a reservist in the Canadian military. In 2020, she took time off from Dal to serve on a NATO mission in Latvia where she said she fully came to under-

stand the racism, homophobia and misogyny embedded within the top ranks of Canada's military, and the culture of its soldiers.

"What I know is that every woman and racialized member I've met in this career has experienced discrimination serving this country," she said in her speech at the House of Commons session, the full video of which is on YouTube.

Usually, delegates get to make their speech in person with the prime minister present. But this year, due to COVID-19, the speeches were pre-recorded and broadcast during the virtual session.

The opportunity to be in the same room as federal party leaders was seized by the last group of Daughters of the Vote delegates. In 2019, several members turned their backs to Trudeau as he spoke, protesting his handling of the SNC-Lavalin scandal of that year.

Delegates are also normally granted a question and answer period with the prime minister.

In 2019, delegates similarly questioned Trudeau about his decision to eject former attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould and former Treasury Board president Jane Philpott from the Liberal caucus.

But this year, Trudeau chose to opt-out of a question period.

"There was definitely some disappointment," Wong said. Trudeau's decision provided no opportunity for real discussion around the delegates' statements toward him, Wong said.

"I never really considered running for a House of Commons seat before... but it's definitely something that's kind of now in the back of my mind."

Building a community of future leaders

"Learning to network with people from every region and demographic in Canada I think was what I was most looking forward to," said Moase, a political science student.

This came to fruition over the course of the weekend, Moase said. She said she learned the most from her Indigenous colleagues about their experiences in political settings and how they'd like to continue to be involved in Canadian politics.

Portelli-Graham, who's from Toronto, wanted to take the opportunity to learn about challenges affecting Canadians in other parts of the country.

"I come from a large city. So, the issues I face are very different than someone who lives in rural Saskatchewan within a farming community," said Portelli-Graham, who studies social work at Dal.

Meagher, who's from rural Saskatchewan, provided delegates with this perspective. In discussions with delegates, she raised the issue of the pandemic's impact on the agricultural industry, which has been affecting her home riding of Cypress Hills-Grasslands, Sask. (the same riding she represented at the conference).

"There are a lot of beef producers around where I live. They were experiencing large demand drops because of the food service industry essentially shutting down," Meagher said.

"So I just saw how that was impacting them, how they had to euthanize a lot of their animals and how hard that was for them," she said.

Because of Daughters of the Vote, Meagher was able to discuss these issues with her MP Jeremy Patzer.

Even those who are still waiting to hear back from their MP have had the opportunity to meet with other members of parliament through the conference. Stapleton, who represented the riding of Dartmouth-Cole Harbour, N.S. was most recently chatting with Fredericton MP Jenica Atwin.

"A bunch of the Atlantic delegates, we have a Facebook group, and we got together and we had a little Zoom chat with [Atwin] last night, which is pretty neat," said Stapleton, a student at Dal's Schulich School of Law.

Being part of the community of more than 300 young women eager to make change boosted morale in a time where it's been hard to find, Portelli-Graham said.

"When I kind of see what's going on in the political realm, I get a little bit discouraged," said Portelli-Graham. "[Daughters of the Vote] inspires me to go make a difference. It inspires me to not be held back by my fears, or the discouragement that I feel."

DSU raises student health plan fees

The union hopes a small increase now will prevent a big one in the future

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



THE DSU ANNUALLY REVIEWS THE STUDENT HEALTH PLAN WITH ITS INSURER TO DETERMINE IF FEE INCREASES NEED TO BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. (PHOTO BY LANE HARRISON)

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) has voted to slightly raise the cost of the DSU health and dental plan in an attempt to ensure students don't receive an unmanageable fee increase in the near future, according to union President Maddie Stinson.

The single student and family plan fee for domestic students will increase by \$4.64 to \$468.64. The single student fee for international students will increase by \$12.74 to \$740.74 and the family fee by \$19.32 to \$1,123.32. The fee increases will take effect in September 2021 for the next academic year.

According to Stinson, the increases are being made because students are making more claims than the insurance provider allows. By adapting the health plan with small increases such as the ones recently voted through, the DSU hopes to avoid making the large increases necessary in the past. For example, in 2018 the DSU increased the cost of the domestic plan by \$180.

"We no longer want to be in a situation where we have to make \$100 or \$200 increases to this fee because that's something that can't be very easily absorbed by a student's finances," Stinson said in an interview with the *Dalhousie Gazette*. "But an increase of a few dollars every year, or every other year, offsets the increasing expenses of the plan."

Why the increases are necessary

The increases will allow the DSU to continue providing subsidized healthcare to students who need it the most. But it will also ensure other union services aren't at risk of having their funding affected at expense of the health plan, according to Isa Wright, DSU vice-president (operations).

Without increases to the plan, any claims made that exceed what's currently allowed by the insurance company must be covered by the DSU, Wright said.

Any of these claims the DSU becomes responsible for are covered by the health plan reserves, Wright said. These reserves are a collection of funds created more than a decade ago when the DSU profited from the health plan.

According to Wright, if the claims were to exceed the reserves or completely deplete them, the money would have to come out of the DSU's operating budget.

Due to the pandemic, and its effect on the physical and mental health of Dalhousie students, Wright is concerned the number of claims will only rise, therefore putting more stress on the reserve funds and more risk on the operating budget.

"We're preventing claims for individual students from being taken out of our operating budget, which is really paid into by all students and meant to serve a very different purpose from the health plan," Wright said.

As this is only a small increase to adjust for claims made over the past year of coverage, Wright said it is impossible to say whether a similar increase will be needed next year.

Wright said the DSU will review the plan with its provider, the insurer StudentVIP, at the end of next year. This will provide the DSU with insight into how fees need to be changed and how the health plan can be adapted to better suit the claims being made

within it.

"Prompting that review each year is really the most responsible thing that we can be doing to

"An increase of a few dollars every year, or every other year, offsets the increasing expenses of the plan."

ensure that not only is the plan fiscally sustainable, but also ensuring that it's still relevant and helpful to students," Wright said.

Confusion at council surrounding motion

When the motion to increase the cost of the student health plan was originally tabled at a DSU council meeting on Feb. 25, 2021, the motion failed to be voted through. It later succeeded on March 10 as an e-motion, a motion distributed via email that allowed councillors 48 hours to vote.

Initially the motion failed due to a lack of context after Aparna Mohan, one of the union's board of governors representatives, asked to see some information supporting the motion prior to making a vote, especially before increasing a fee for international students, she said at the meeting.

This information was not immediately available as Wright, the executive member who could have provided the most context, was absent due to illness.

The contextualizing information was provided to councillors through email after the meeting, said Stinson. The motion then passed unanimously, she said.

After learning the increase was to prevent larger increases in the future, Mohan voted for the motion.

"Ensuring that there aren't any interruptions to international students and any students' coverages is very important," Mohan said in an interview with the *Gazette*, though she said she would have liked to see some discussion around who else could have covered the cost other than students.

There was also confusion at the meeting as to why the increases had to be voted on now if they won't be affecting students until September, a question raised at the meeting by Fatima Beydoun, the DSU's other board of governors representative.

According to Wright, the DSU council had to approve the increases this month because they are only one step in a series of approvals before the increases actually take effect.

The increases will now be approved internally by Dal before being presented to the university's board of governors for final approval, Wright said.

Though more approval is necessary, Wright said the increase in price won't change at all. The university simply needs to verify the DSU followed the proper procedure in determining the increases.

The problem with DSU elections

Student apathy and strict campaign rules equals low voter turnout

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



FROM THE NEARLY 20,000 STUDENTS AT DAL, ONLY SEVEN CANDIDATES RAN FOR SIX POSITIONS IN THIS YEAR'S DSU ELECTION. (PHOTO BY LANE HARRISON)

The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) held their general elections for the 2021-2022 academic year from March 8 to 9, 2021. But of the nearly 20,000 students the DSU represents, only seven candidates ran for the six available positions — only vice-president (student life) was contested with two candidates — and only 2,165 students voted.

Included in the uncontested races was the election for DSU president, where incumbent Maddie Stinson was re-elected.

The only voting option being an unopposed incumbent bothered some students, like Yousef AlSayed Ahmad, a second-year international student at Dalhousie University. The night before the DSU election, AlSayed Ahmad posted on the Dalhousie Reddit page, r/Dalhousie, calling for students to vote no confidence for Stinson.

In his post, AlSayed Ahmad wrote Stinson spent more in expenses during the 2020-2021 year than the previous president did in 2019-2020, while other executive expenses went down.

Executive salaries, which make up the bulk of expenses, have not increased in recent history and the president's departmental increase is a result of changes in accounting practice, said Holly Edmonds, the DSU's communications and outreach coordinator, in an email to the *Dalhousie Gazette*.

"It would give time for a real presidential election to happen, where we can actually choose from candidates rather than be stuck with the hand we are dealt," AlSayed Ahmad wrote on Reddit.

In an interview with the *Gazette*, AlSayed Ahmad said there's a disconnect between Dalhousie students and the DSU. One way to fix the issue is to provide students with more candidates to choose from and therefore more platforms aligning with different students' beliefs, he said.

But becoming a DSU candidate can be an antagonizing experience that's difficult for many students, according to Aparna Mohan. Mohan be-

came one of the DSU's board of governor's representatives in the fall 2020 byelection and dropped out of the race for vice-president (academic and external) in the 2021 general elections.

As an international student, Mohan ran in the byelections after not seeing her family since December 2019. She hoped it would restore a sense of purpose and community in her life.

"I was quite miserable and really distressed by the end of [the election]," Mohan said.

Election process rules

According to AlSayed Ahmad, the DSU elections don't seem real to students. He said the debates and campaign materials were inaccessible for students, which likely contributed to a lower voter turnout.

Due to COVID-19, the candidates' primary way of reaching students with their platforms was through social media. But according to Mohan, the DSU's election process creates additional barriers for fostering this type of online engagement.

"I know that the virtual election process doesn't necessarily bring out the best in people who are still really capable leaders," said Mohan. "But for those who really do want to use the virtual election process and make the most of it, I don't believe that the current process rewards that meaningfully."

The largest barrier preventing engagement is the requirement that all social media posts made by DSU candidates must be looked over and approved by the chief returning officer (CRO), Mohan said.

The CRO is the DSU's primary elections official. They are a part of the elections committee, which oversees all DSU elections.

This makes it difficult for candidates to adapt to what methods of social media campaigning work best, Mohan said. Because candidates need to plan their posts, sometimes a day in advance, they can't spontaneously interact with students based on their immediate feedback to a certain type of post.

Within the elections process, the application of these rules is done with the wrong philosophy, Mohan said.

"The emphasis is on avoidance of punishment, rather than how can you increase engagement with the student body," she said.

As long as candidates follow the rules, they can engage with students in any way they'd like, the DSU said in a statement emailed to the *Gazette*.

"Before the campaigning period begins, all candidates are directed to the governing documents of the DSU and the Elections Policy, which outlines how a candidate can engage in various methods of campaigning," the statement said.

DSU relationship with candidates

The issue surrounding the strict enforcement of these rules is made worse because the DSU does not foster an environment that's welcoming for political newcomers, Mohan said.

"There aren't really any campaign best practices or campaigning 101. Nothing like that. A lot of time is just spent talking about the various ways in which you can be penalized," she said. "I would be spending a lot of time just figuring out what I'm allowed to do rather than getting to actually engage with the student body."

This lack of education is indicative of a larger issue in DSU elections, said Mohan. For students, the idea of approaching a DSU election without prior experience with the union's system can be daunting, leading to fewer candidates for students to choose from.

"I think the idea of navigating all these policies and not understanding the way things are done can be a huge disincen-tive," Mohan said.

According to the DSU's statement to the *Gazette*, candidates are provided with some support around campaigning, such as reference documents and workshops hosted prior to the campaigning period. But the union can't explicitly teach candidates

how to campaign, the statement said.

"To take on that role would be to breach the impartiality of the elections committee and CRO," the statement said.

Mohan said there is also an issue with the relationship between candidates and the DSU as can-

didates are provided little support or flexibility when it comes to the rules.

An example of this, Mohan said, was during the fall byelections when she asked the CRO if they could develop an arrangement for social media approval that was more accommodating to Mohan's schedule. Mohan was working a co-op job at the time, which meant she could only develop content for her campaign at night.

Mohan was told modifying the approval process would not be possible. The CRO suggested she schedule posts going forward or have campaign workers assist her, according to emails reviewed by the *Gazette*.

Mohan decided to end her candidacy in the general elections because she knew she wouldn't be able to manage a campaign during a busy academic time after her experience during the byelections.

By not being more accommodating to student's schedules, the DSU is negatively affecting the mental health of its candidates, Mohan said.

"In the DSU, we talk a lot about how prone being in these positions can be to burnout," she said. "It seems antithetical to then contribute to that by having a very rigid constraint around how you can campaign."

The DSU said the elections policy was developed with ethical action and fairness in mind. But, "In the future, the DSU hopes to improve communications around elections and is dedicated to continuously improving our policies, guidelines and processes for the better of students," the statement said.

The student disconnect

According to AlSayed Ahmad, a lot of students at Dal simply don't care about the DSU anymore.

AlSayed Ahmad does. He went around telling friends to vote, posted on his own social media profiles such as Instagram and published his post on Reddit.

"The people I told to vote, I swear to you, they were making fun of me," he said.

AlSayed Ahmad believes in the power of the DSU, and that power is in the hands of the students.

"[Students] don't know what the DSU is actually capable of. It's capable of a lot, but we're just not seeing it," he said.

Repairing some of this disconnect between students and the DSU can start with having more engaging elections, meaning more candidates, he said.

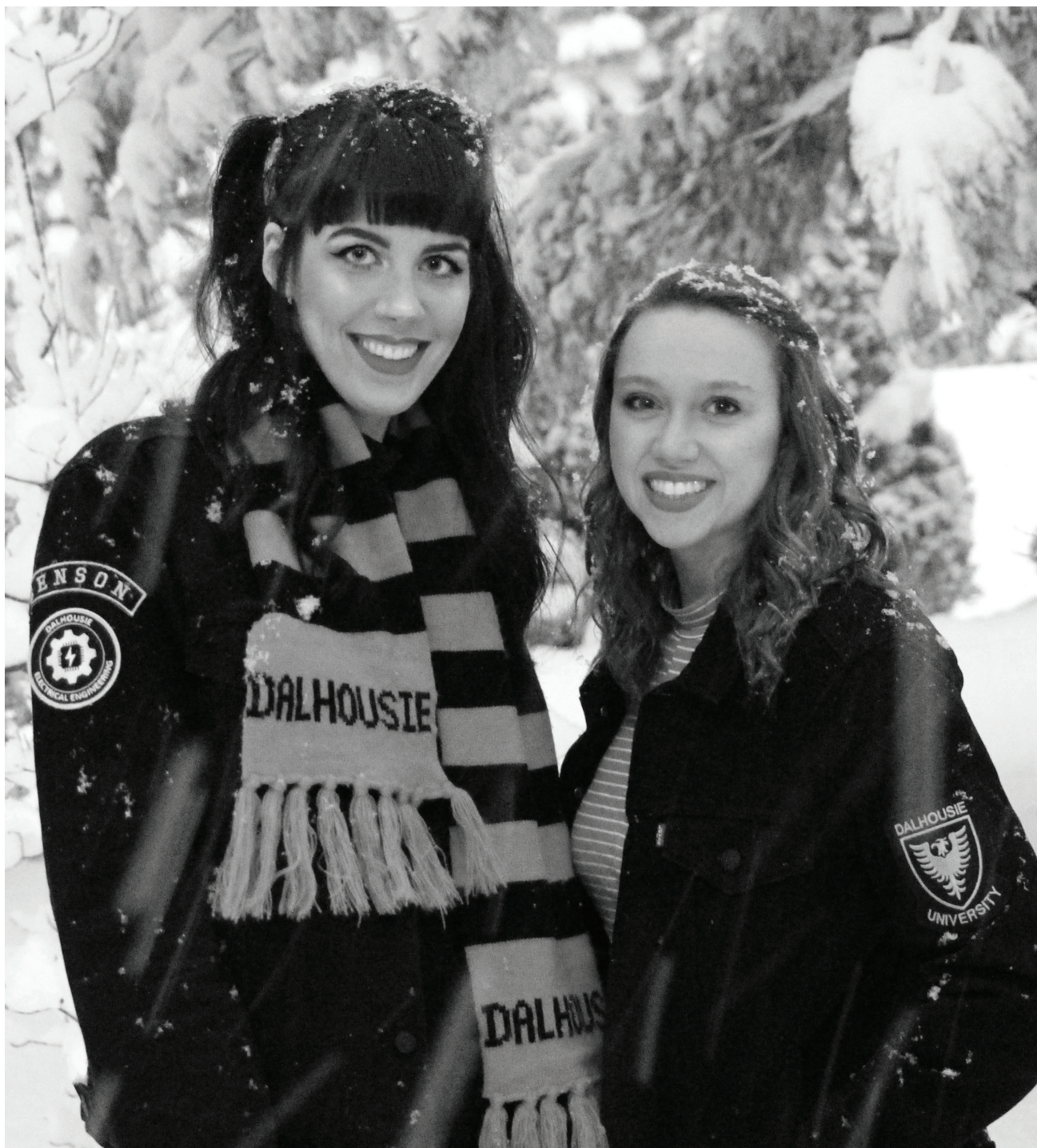
"Give the people a real political debate," AlSayed Ahmad said.

In an email to the *Gazette*, Edmonds said Dal students who "wish to raise concerns about the elections process or anyone involved in facilitating the elections" can email the union's policy and governance coordinator at dsu.policy@dal.ca.

Dal engineering students win national competition

Annika Benson and Kayleigh Landers shine spotlight on women in engineering

BY LANE HARRISON, NEWS EDITOR



ANNIKA BENSON (LEFT) AND KAYLEIGH LANDERS WANT TO SEE DAL DO MORE FOR THE WOMEN IN ITS ENGINEERING PROGRAM WHO CONTINUE TO SUCCEED IN THE DEPARTMENT'S NAME. (PHOTO PROVIDED BY ANNIKA BENSON)

Two Dalhousie University students took home the top prize at a national engineering competition earlier this month. Though they sometimes feel like they don't belong at Dal, to them the win is a reminder: women belong in engineering.

Annika Benson and Kayleigh Landers, who are both preparing to graduate from engineering at Dal this spring, won first place in the re-engineering category at the 2021 Canadian Engineering Competition hosted by the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students. The competition took place during the last weekend of February 2021.

For the competition, Benson and Landers were given a week to redesign a university campus to be more accessible and eight hours to repurpose salmon cages so they could be used for a more sustainable method of aquafarming called multi-trophic aquaculture.

After experiencing anxiety about her place in engineering during previous competitions, Benson said this win is the ultimate validation.

"Something that I think has actually made this win even more meaningful is I'd gone from those moments where I genuinely questioned if I belonged in this field, to being like, 'I won one of these competitions. I absolutely do,'" Benson said.

Is Dal supportive of women?

Nearly 50 years after the department of engineering first opened, Norma Eddy became the first woman to receive an engineering degree from Dalhousie in 1956.

Sixty-five years later, "there are so many females and non-binary individuals in engineering at Dalhousie who just inspired me so much," said Benson. "Every single one of those people that I know, they're all doing such incredible things."

Aside from Benson and Landers' success at the national competition, engineering student Sierra Sparks was also chosen as Dal's 92nd Rhodes Scholar in 2020.

But there's still a lot of work that needs to be done to ensure women feel welcome in the engineering department, Benson and Landers said.

Some of that work is being done, but only thanks to the advocacy of students who still feel unwelcome on Sexton campus, Landers said.

The most pervasive issue affecting women on Sexton campus is a lack of bathrooms for women on every floor of campus buildings, said Landers.

"You can't find a female washroom. It is impossible. But there are male washrooms beside the stairs on every floor in every single building," Landers said. "It's because [the buildings] are old and were designed when females weren't students or they weren't supposed to be students."

Sexton campus has 22 female washrooms, 27 male washrooms and 44 gender neutral washrooms according to Janet Bryson, Dalhousie's associate director of media relations and issues management.

"We had heard from students in 2019 that there weren't enough female washrooms centrally located in main areas," Bryson said in an email to the *Dalhousie Gazette*. "There were a number of washrooms that were changed to reflect enrolment trends in our STEM programs."

In 2019, the *Gazette* reported the added washrooms were in converted rooms, which students still considered inconveniently located.

"Any of the newly constructed buildings on Sexton campus are 50/50 washroom designations or gender-neutral single use washrooms," Bryson said.

Because the engineering faculty is male-dominated — Benson and Landers have had three female engineering professors between them in their entire academic careers — it's difficult for women in engineering to see themselves succeeding beyond Dalhousie, Benson said.

"Hopefully, as females start entering this field, we'll have more female professors who will be good role models for future students," Landers said.

Landers said she's often reminded of the lack of women in her field by some of her male professors who will acknowledge her presence in their class by addressing the class as "lady and gentlemen."

Competition highlighted gaps in curriculum

Taking part in competitions like these is valuable because they provide students with knowledge that is often left out of coursework, Landers said. Specifically, accessibility and sustainability minded design.

"The way that we tackled it, because it hasn't been covered in courses, was I just tried to go to the contacts that I had who I knew would know about [accessibility issues]," Benson said. "We reached out to a bunch of different people in the university and broader community, who kindly opened up to us about their experiences with the built environment," she said.

This provided insights into multiple things the pair had never considered. For Benson, one of these things was the way quadriplegic people interact with doors.

"Yes, you have that button. But if you can't reach out and push it, what does that look like?" she said.

What they discovered was the best design is a physical post that acts as a large button people can push their wheelchairs into.

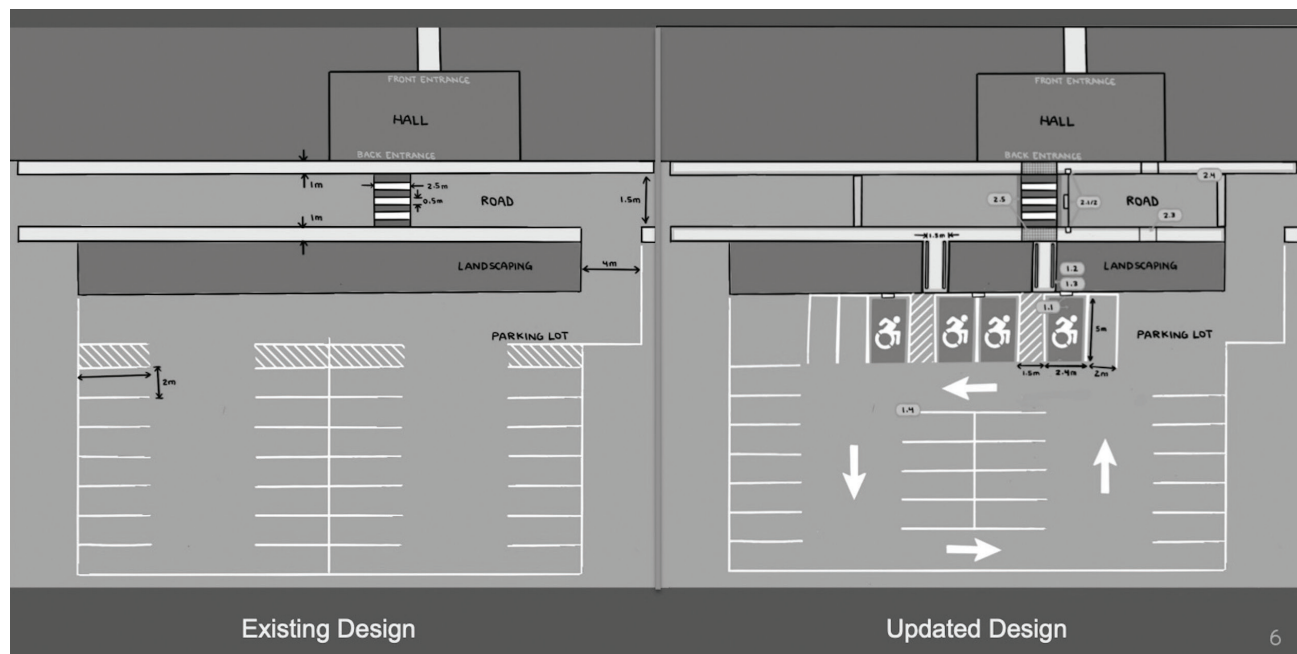
For Landers, another important lesson was that hallways need to be wide enough for a wheelchair to complete a 360-degree turn. A six-meter-wide hallway became a central part of their design.

Benson was also able to bring some of her own experience to the competition. She is neurodivergent — a term that indicates variation in the brain affecting learning, sociability and other mental functions — something she said usually isn't considered when discussing accessible design.

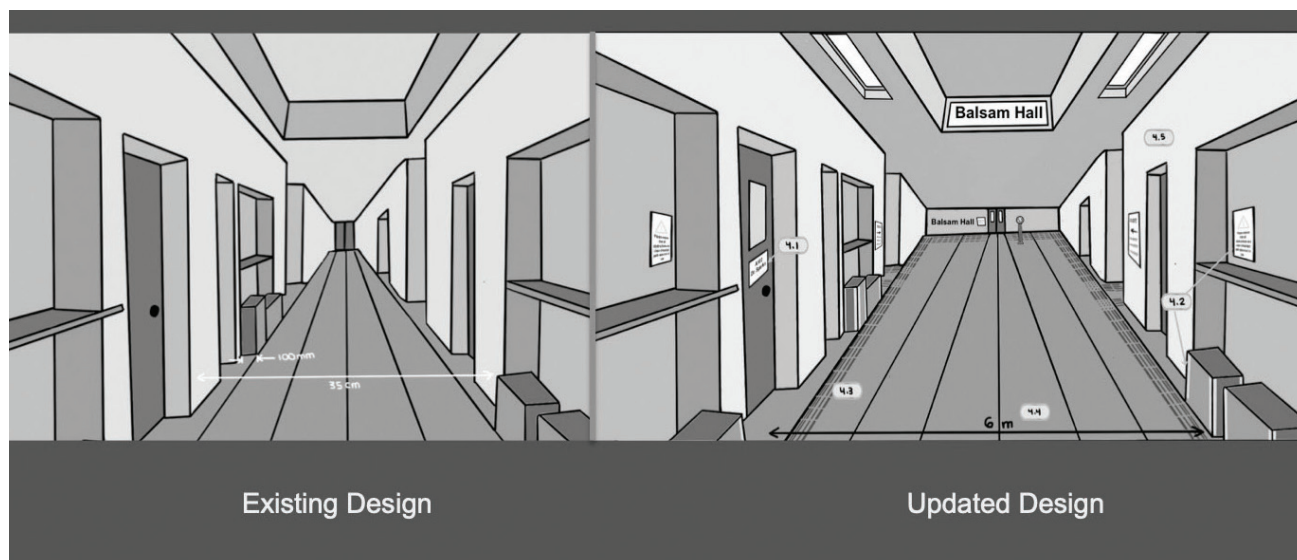
"For me, as someone with a learning disability, I really enjoyed having the opportunity to go: 'How could you make a classroom better for someone who doesn't necessarily have a conventional learning style?'" Benson said.

Some of their ideas included an electronic whiteboard attachment that automatically takes notes for students, Benson said.

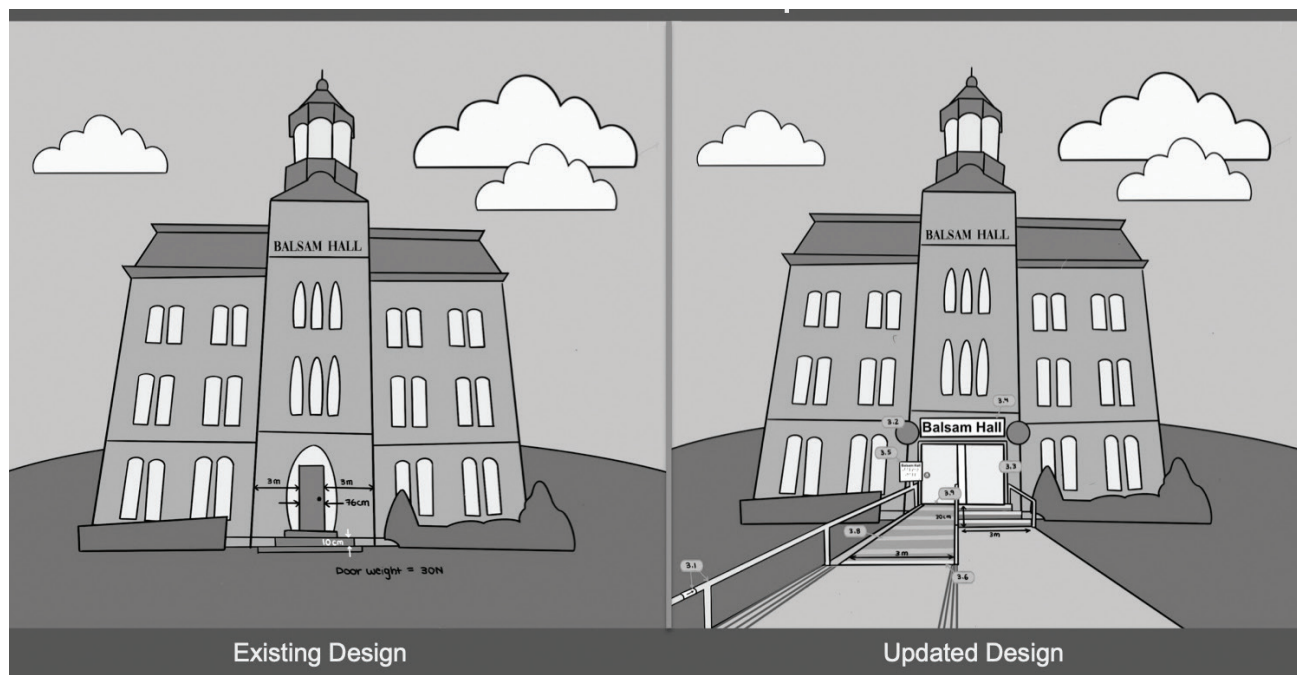
As the pair prepare to graduate, they're glad to have spent so much of their time competing in these competitions. Through these contests, Benson said her friendship with Landers has grown far beyond the lab partners they started out as.



BENSON AND LANDERS REACHED OUT TO PEOPLE IN THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY, AS WELL STAFF FROM DAL AND SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY WHO ORGANIZE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES PRIOR TO THE COMPETITION. (ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY ANNIKA BENSON)



AFTER CONSULTING WITH PEOPLE WHO USE MOBILITY EQUIPMENT, LANDERS LEARNED HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR HALLWAYS BE WIDE ENOUGH FOR A WHEELCHAIR TO COMPLETE A 360-DEGREE TURN. (ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY ANNIKA BENSON)



FOR THE COMPETITION, BENSON AND LANDERS WERE GIVEN A WEEK TO REDESIGN A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS FOR BETTER ACCESSIBILITY. (ILLUSTRATION PROVIDED BY ANNIKA BENSON)

Has lockdown clouded our vision?

Social media influencers who travel during the pandemic don't deserve your engagement

BY SONDOS ELSHAFEI

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media influencers who continue to travel the globe have received great criticism — not only for breaking pandemic guidelines, but for putting the lives of others at risk.

The importance of accountability

Influencers who show they do not follow safety protocols and are putting others in danger should be called out and maybe even cancelled. Every influencer knows they have an audience who follows their lead. If an influencer continues to travel even during a pandemic, showing their followers everything is safe, then their followers may start travelling as well.

Some might argue the only job for travel influencers is travelling, and now with the pandemic they are just trying to pay their bills by continuing to travel for money. But they aren't the only workers who are in a difficult situation. According to a recent study by the United Nations International Labour Organization, 225 million jobs were lost worldwide in 2020. Everyone is sacrificing in their own way because of the pandemic. So, why should travel influencers be treated any different? These influencers aren't just spreading the virus within their own city. They are spreading it around the world in different countries.

Travel shaming and cancelling influencers for travelling isn't necessarily stopping influencers from travelling. We still see many influencers posting pictures on social media about their trips and their travel experiences. Others continue to travel, but focus on domestic trips.

Travelling internationally is the real problem. If an influencer gets the virus and travels from one country to another, then they are putting all the airport workers, flight attendants, hotel staff and every

other person they come in contact with during the trip at risk.

Travelling to the global south

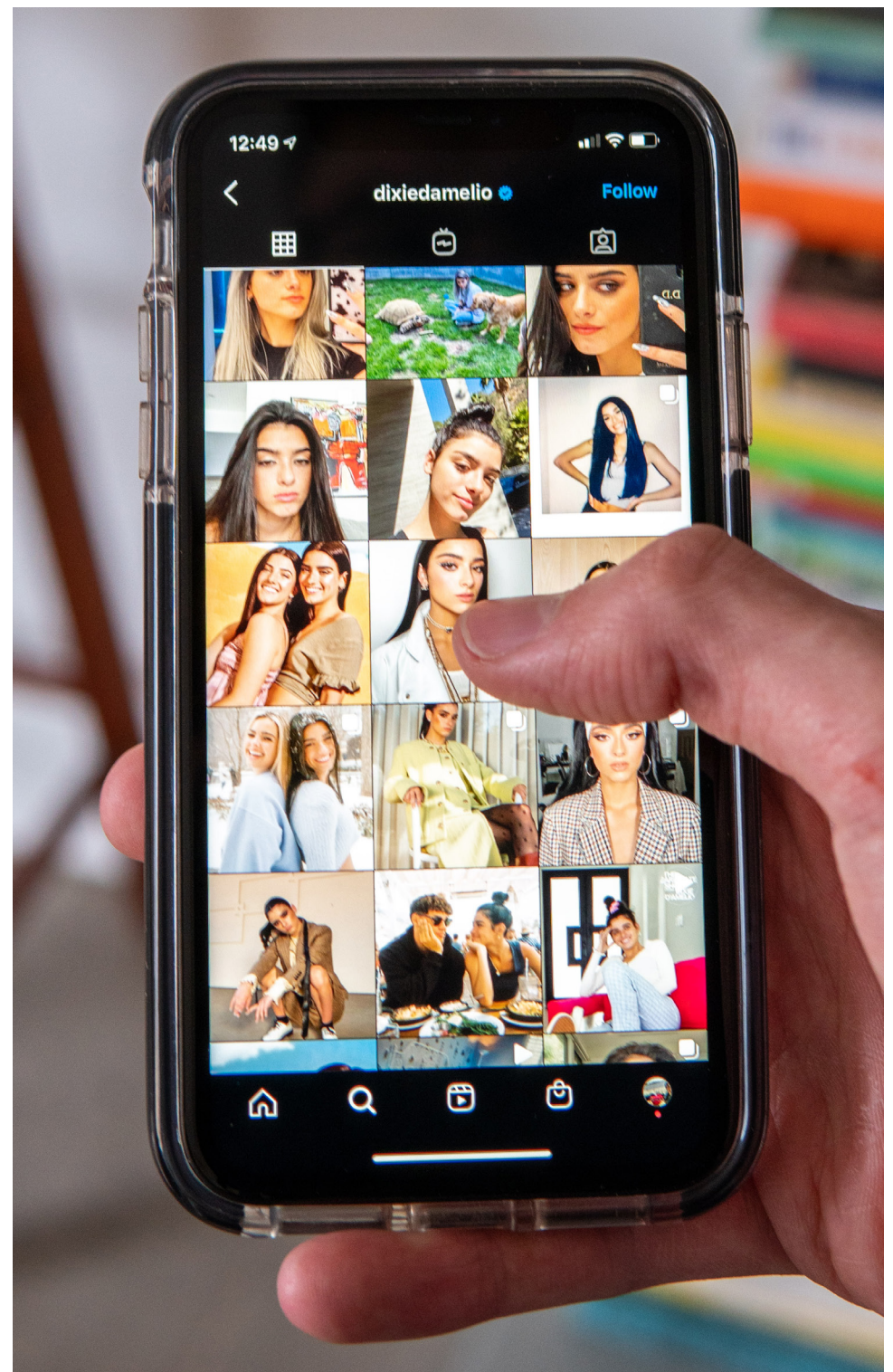
Some argue vaccinated influencers can travel without causing harm. However, this may not be accurate. Countries influencers travel to for vacation are mostly located in the global south, which include nations such as Bora Bora, the Maldives, Bahamas, Barbados and many more. In an *Al Jazeera* article political ecology researcher Vijay Kolinjivadi said, these countries face what he calls the “vaccine apartheid.” This means countries in the global south will not be receiving the vaccine as early as developed countries, resulting in their citizens being vaccinated later than others.

In his article, Kolinjivadi also explains being vaccinated does not mean the virus will not be spread anymore. A vaccinated individual can carry the virus and transmit it to individuals who have not been vaccinated. So, even if influencers and travel

bloggers are vaccinated before travelling to prevent getting sick, they are still putting others at risk. The people encountering influencers can get sick and then transmit the virus to their communities.

Governments sometimes pay influencers and bloggers to travel to their countries to encourage tourism. However, during the pandemic there are millions of people struggling after losing their jobs. There should be more funds to help people who lost their jobs instead of promoting travel despite all the health risks. It's just not fair for influencers and bloggers to get paid to travel on vacation during the pandemic, disrupting efforts made by essential workers to curb the virus and distribute vaccines safely. The rest of the world should not be put in danger while influencers risk public health.

“Even if influencers and travel bloggers are vaccinated before travelling to prevent getting sick, they are still putting others at risk.”

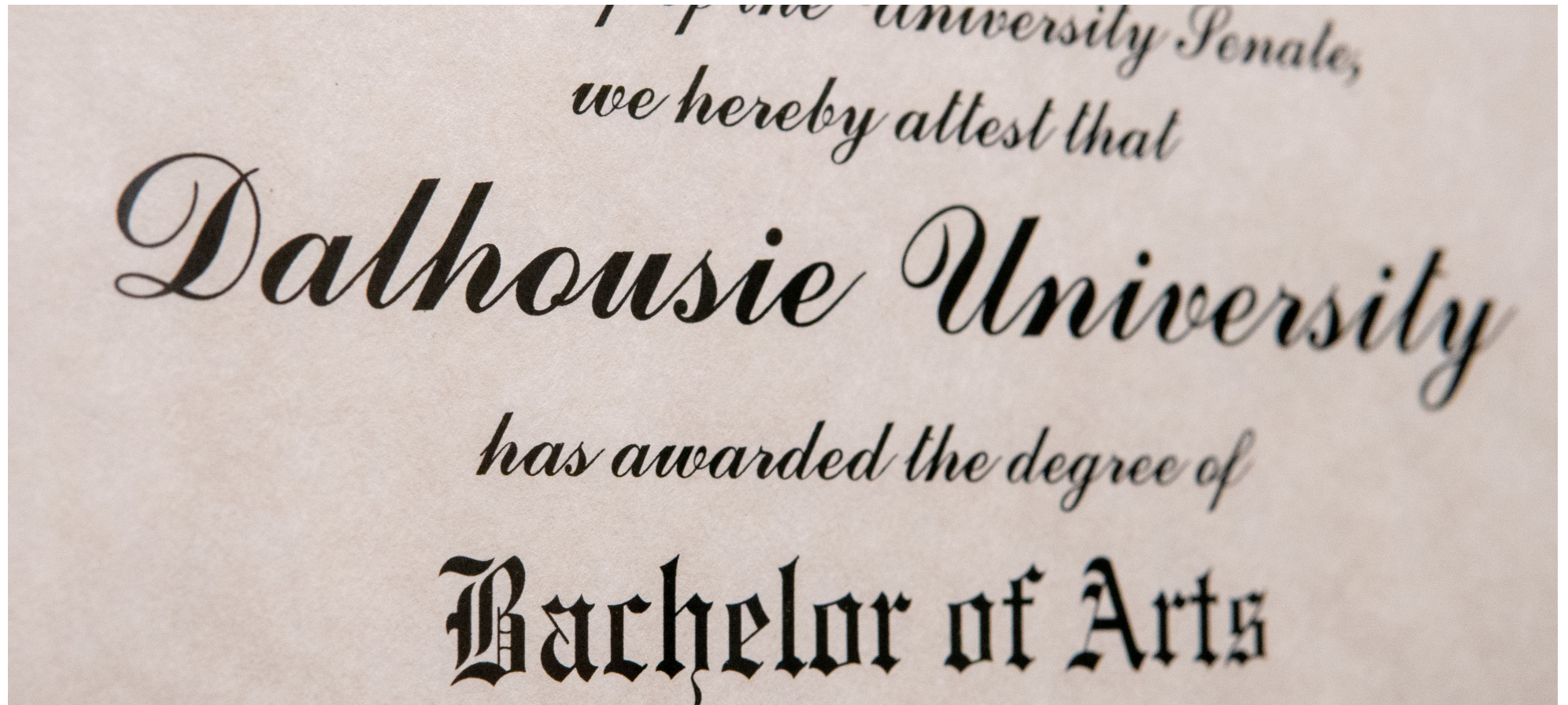


FAN BACKLASH: INFLUENCERS DIXIE AND CHARLI D'AMELIO FACED HEAT IN DECEMBER 2020 FOR TAKING A TRIP TO THE BAHAMAS IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Job life after graduation

Expectations, reality and the ROI on university degrees

BY SONDOS ELSHAFEI



A 2020 SURVEY BY BESTCOLLEGES FOUND ABOUT 30 PER CENT OF AMERICAN MILLENNIAL COLLEGE GRADUATES WOULD GO BACK TO UNIVERSITY AND CHANGE THEIR MAJOR FOR BETTER JOBS. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Choosing a major is an important and challenging aspect of university life. It isn't easy to choose a field that will determine not only what you'll study during your university years, but also what your future job might be.

Graduate satisfaction

While many students make the difficult decision to switch majors during their degree, it seems even harder to change course after graduation. Student loans can be hard to pay back, and paying a double loan is definitely not something any student wishes for. So, taking time to choose a major and thinking of all the outcomes isn't a simple task, especially during the early years of your degree.

After graduation, when students enter the real world and begin looking for jobs, they may realize things aren't exactly what they expected. In a 2020 survey conducted by the company BestColleges and consisting of 817 American college graduates, about 31 per cent of millennial re-

spondents said they would go back to college just to change their major to find better jobs.

Students might find the job connected to their major to be completely different from what they thought it'd be based on what they learned in university. Additionally, students may find it difficult to find a job in the field they have studied in today's competitive job market. In the same survey by BestColleges, 26 per cent of all respondents said they'd go back to college to pursue a subject they were more passionate about.

Degree versus job

According to a 2020 article by news organization *Inside Higher Ed*, university programs with some of the lowest rates of graduate unemployment

are education, engineering and nursing, and these programs have high tuitions. A 2012 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found only 27 per cent of American college graduates work in a field directly related to their university degrees.

Students shouldn't have to pay high tuition fees and spend years doing a certain major, just to end up working in a completely different field than what they studied for. Similarly, students entering college shouldn't have to choose a program with higher tuition just for the promise of finding a job after graduation.

A 2020 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found 41 per cent of recent American college graduates work in jobs that don't even require a degree. Those college students

spent years studying and incurred debt from student loans, but did not end up benefiting from having a degree. The study also mentions the unemployment rate for college grads aged 22 to 27 is slightly higher than the overall unemployment rate for all workers in America aged 16 to 65.

BestColleges argues it is important for colleges to do a better job at making universities teach students the reality of the job market in their respective fields. While the benefits of earning a degree can range from personal development to professional networking, the time students spend in university should be used primarily for building skills needed for the real world. If students know right off the bat what jobs matching their degree are like and exactly what is expected in those jobs, then they will be better able to choose their majors. By clarifying these things from the first year, students who decide to switch majors will save on both student loans and their own personal time.

“Students might find the job connected to their major to be completely different from what they thought it'd be.”

Pandemic tattoo boom

What better time to get inked than the end of the world?

BY DARSI AVERY-RUSSELL



CONSIDER GETTING A BLACK HOLE TATTOO TO TEMPORARILY ESCAPE THE BLACK HOLE OF THE PANDEMIC. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Tattoos are something people seem to love or hate. Some see them as a beautiful way to express themselves and provide a unique canvas for art to be displayed. Others do not see the appeal of them at all. Whatever side you're on, the work and talent involved in tattooing should be greatly appreciated.

Lockdown tattoo love

The art of tattooing was taken away from artists for a while when COVID-19 first came around. In Nova Scotia, lockdown measures meant tattoo parlours were closed for months on end early last year.

Life in lockdown is repetitive, leaving many craving for a way to escape. I would suggest to anyone who is on the fence about getting a tattoo to take the leap. The number of people posting on social media about the tattoos they want and have gotten recently seems to have skyrocketed compared to pre-COVID-19 times.

Zoe Melanson, a first-year nursing student at St. Francis Xavier University, has gotten tattoos before and during the pandemic.

"They do not hurt in my opinion and I think that tattoos are ways of showing important or fun things for yourself or others," Melanson says.

Courtney Phinney, a first-year medical sciences major at Dalhousie University, echoes this sentiment. She decided to get a tattoo when the pandemic began and sees them as a great idea for someone to do if they are interested.

"The pain during the tattoo process is worth it because you get to look at a picture on your body every day," Phinney says. "It hopefully means a lot to you and this will make your soul happy."

If not now, then when?

A recent *BuzzFeed* article illustrates the importance of getting a tattoo in these pandemic days:

"Tattoos are a reminder, when nearly everything else is out of your control, that your body is your own to do with what you will," says writer Shannon Keating.

In a time where we do not know what is happening one day to the next, it seems important to ground ourselves and do things we have complete control over. From picking the design to the artist, getting a tattoo can be a method of choice in what seems to be an unstable and powerless world.

A *Refinery29* article from August 2020 covers the recent spike in tattoo appointments. In the article, psychologist Vinita Mehta expresses she is not surprised by the spike: "I think we would expect some kind of spike in tattooing just because so many people are going through something stressful right now." Additionally, Mehta says, "From a therapeutic, psychotherapy perspective, you can see tattooing as a form of processing an event of personal significance."

Considering the times, getting tattoos may function as a sort of release, distraction, self-expression or form of processing. COVID-19 era tattoos may be linked to some sort of resilience and drive for existing during a pandemic.

Tattoos are an avenue for a world of fun. The amount of emotion and creativity in the process of making and getting a tattoo is amazing. The feelings of accomplishment and pure happiness after it is over make it all worth it.

In defence of young adult literature

What the genre means to readers

BY CHASE FITZGERALD

While there's no rule banning adults from reading it, young adult literature (YA lit) is a unique genre for teenagers — young people growing up and discovering the complexities of the world. The genre has often come under criticism for what some claim is poor writing quality and plot structures.

But YA lit should not be measured on the same scale as every other adult genre. We would never compare Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat* with George Martin's *Game of Thrones* just because both contain fantastical elements. There are many great qualities to YA lit.

For young people

Like it or not, millions of teenagers and adults today were and are fostered by YA lit.

In a 2018 *Newsweek* article, a young protest organizer named Anna Tinnen argues part of the reason gen Z has been vital to several mass protest movements (such as March For Our Lives, the movement supporting gun control) is because of the inspiration we received from rebellious protagonists in YA books like *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games*. Our world is burning and these YA books have inadvertently become our guidebooks.

When you are a vulnerable teenager and people are picking apart your insecurities, YA books are there to promise you everything's going to be OK. YA lit taught us no matter how different we feel, there is always a place for us in the world. This genre gives us friends and a sense of belonging when the real world fails us. These books are maps to growing up, shaping who we become. When we're young and looking for magic to save the world, YA lit shows us we had the magic within us all along.

Twilight and self-discovery

Even *Twilight* (the series that has been trashed for its poor writing, twisted romance and unredeemable characters) has value.

When I first read *Twilight*, the fictional town of Forks — filled with rain, fog and the leeching cold — made me appreciate the sunny days, even if they were spread apart and few. Stephenie Meyer writes in the book, “Without the dark, we'd never see the stars.” Through reading *Twilight*, I learned I would never appreciate the good if I did not first endure the bad.

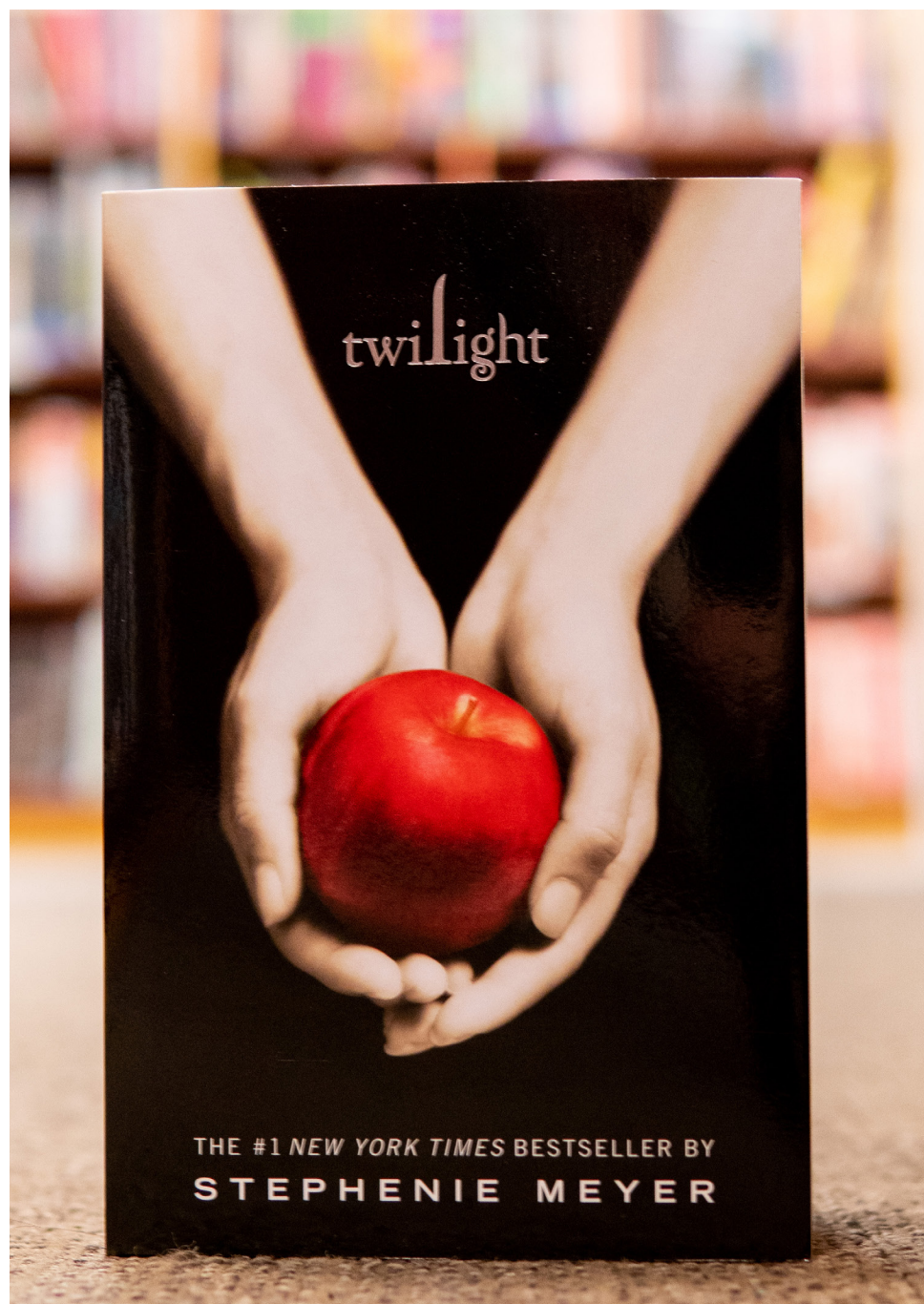
Twilight was also my first introduction to high school and all the messy in-betweens awaiting me. It showed me anyone could stand up and fight for themselves, even the protagonist Bella who did not possess a single lick of magic in her veins. In the cheesiest way possible, *Twilight* taught me what it is to love and be loved. Because if Bella — clumsy, quiet, human Bella — could find love, then I could too.

YA books are meant to be consumed whole like bitter medicine. They are not five-course meals at Michelin-star restaurants in Paris. At the end of the day, these books are going to make you feel better somehow and

that is all that matters. The purpose of YA lit is to make our heads spin. It is not about the magic, the vampires, the werewolves, the pirates or the dystopian. It is about learning how to face the unknown, terrible and evil, and to stand up for ourselves and each other.

There is bound to be something in YA books that will stick with you. For me, it was about realizing the world might end a few thousand times, but if you decide to pick yourself back up again, you might just be stronger for it.

“Twilight taught me what it is to love and be loved.”



DESPITE MANY CRITICAL REVIEWS, BOOKS IN THE *TWILIGHT* SERIES HAVE SOLD MORE THAN 120 MILLION COPIES WORLDWIDE. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

Holding onto the small things

Students share habits they've adopted during the pandemic

BY GOKCE ON



FROM YOGA TO CODING, THERE ARE MANY HABITS AND HOBBIES STUDENTS HAVE PICKED UP DURING THE PANDEMIC. (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

It's strange to think Nova Scotians have already spent a whole year under COVID-19 restrictions. Throughout this past year, we've seen a lot of trends come and go.

From completing jigsaw puzzles to baking bread, there were many new habits people tried out at the beginning of the pandemic. But what habits did people adopt for good?

Working out

Home workouts became increasingly popular as gyms started closing down because of COVID-19 regulations. At first, people seemed motivated to work on their body goals and come out of quarantine as a better version of themselves. However, as the months drag on, it's hard for many to maintain the excitement.

Abigail Disley, a third-year biology student at Dalhousie University, says she still tries to “exercise regularly or at least get outside for a walk every day.” Disley says exercising helps her with motivation, while giving her a break from work.

“[I'm] taking a lot less steps in a day than when on campus, so [exercise] allows to get some more steps in,” she says.

Similarly, Murtaza Lookmanji, a second-year economics major at Dal, says during quarantine he started with home workouts and moved to the gym as places started to open back up. He says exercise has “kept [him] energetic and motivated during these challenging times.”

Quality time with yourself

This past year may have been the first time ever, or at least a long time since, some people have lived by themselves. While being alone and feeling lonely are different things, the line between the two might feel extremely thin.

Denisha Bracey, a second-year Dal student double majoring in cinema and media studies, and theatre, says she “picked up a few new hobbies, such as playing an instrument and cooking, to keep [herself] occupied during periods of isolation.”

Lookmanji says he “learned multiple new skills [such] as coding and designing” to

keep himself busy.

“Listening to music allowed me to have a break from studying and relax a bit,” Disley says. Similarly, Lookmanji mentions reading, specifically self-development books, as a way of creating a better mindset.

“It is hard to go through these times without a positive mindset,” he says, adding he has “worked on having a very strong and positive mindset.”

Lookmanji also points out the importance of meditation in his life. He says meditation has helped him “to focus on the present, reducing the negative emotions, increasing creativity, patience and tolerance.”

Changing scenery

It's difficult to study, sleep, eat and take a break all in the same space. A 2011 study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-

Champaign found brief diversions from a task can increase focus. So, a change of scenery from your cramped bedroom could make a huge difference in increasing productivity. This practice of changing study

spaces seems to be popular among students in online classes.

Bracey says she has “gone out to study at cafes or together with friends to have a change of scenery and get away from [her] desk.”

Disley says she “tries to study somewhere outside of [her] apartment every once in a while.” It seems change from time to time can make your routine more sustainable in the long run.

Maintaining social life

Social interaction has taken many different shapes and forms throughout this past year. Many have dealt with ups and downs in social relationships, from seeing friends move oceans away to falling out of touch with people, but also finding our way to new friends.

Disley says one way she's been making time to maintain social interaction is “having a longer break to eat lunch and supper with her roommates.”

Amidst a global pandemic, keeping friendships might be one of the most important habits to maintain.

“It is hard to go through these times without a positive mindset.”

One year of COVID-19

Dal students on how the pandemic changed their lives

BY MORGANE EVANS, ALEX AFFONSO AND MANDY KING



IT HAS OFFICIALLY BEEN ONE YEAR SINCE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FORCED DALHOUSIE TO STOP MOST IN-PERSON CLASSES. (PHOTO BY LANE HARRISON)

Morgane Evans: The week before

Last March, when my friends and I went to the Risley Gala (the annual end-of-year event for Risley Hall residents), we didn't know Dalhousie University would stop in-person classes days later. We didn't know the next time we'd see each other we'd be smiling in relief that Nova Scotia had so few cases of COVID-19.

A week after getting ready together that night, the world changed. My friend was wearing a short black dress, and I was in a teal floor-length dress I bought on sale at H&M when I was at home during February break. It's strange to think I didn't have to quarantine then.

When we got to the Lord Nelson hotel, and ate and danced, we didn't know we wouldn't be able to go out for the rest of the year. We were so free then as we chatted with people who we barely knew without masks on and without social distancing. Now, the idea of a room full of 100 people makes me anxious.

My friends and I didn't know when we got our photos taken at the photo booth, we wouldn't have any pictures with each other again until mid-September. I wish I could go back to that very moment and take as many pictures as I could to remember everything while I was in lockdown.

If we did know, I think it would have been different. I probably would have worn another dress that fit me exactly right and would've had my makeup done somewhere instead of doing it myself. Maybe my friend and I would have brought our other friends as our dates so we could all be there together. It was truly our last week of freedom, and if we had known, we would have done everything we could to savour every second of it.

I miss that night.

Alex Affonso: Raising my (e)hand

One year ago, I loved participating in class discussions.

I remember how thrilling it was to devour page after page of course readings alone in my dorm room, coming up with thoughts to share in class. The readings themselves could be monotonous and somewhat tedious, but the ideas brewing in my mind lit a fire in my heart. I walked to class holding a Tim's cup in my hand and countless comments in my head. Then, whenever I raised my hand — or simply considered doing it — my heart accelerated with excitement. There's something magical about academic discussions, this coalition of beautiful brains. I was glad to be a part of it.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic started.

In the early days of online classes, it was terrifying to stare at the hand emoji on Zoom, hovering my cursor over it and biting my lip. It's not that I didn't have ideas brewing in my brain. I just lacked the fire in my heart. The comments were in my head, but I was unable to raise my e-hand. Whenever I considered doing it, my heart accelerated with an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. There's something strange about online discussions, this disconnected connection of beautiful brains. I was afraid to be a part of it.

But it's gotten better. I do like participating in online class discussions now, even if they'll never be the same as speaking in-person.

Mandy King: New goals, new beginnings

I cringe as another ad for Dalhousie University appears on my Facebook timeline. A blatant reminder of past failures. I first attended Dal in my early 20s, but left when I became pregnant with

my son. Six years later, I keep telling myself, "I'll finish one day." But one day never comes.

Despite the tinge of shame flushing my cheeks, I click the ad. What harm can it do to look? I attempt to enter my login information and on my second try it works. I'm in! A rush of familiarity fills my screen.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced courses online. This will impact many students negatively, but for me, it means I could potentially attend the university full-time despite having two children at home. Hope fills my chest as I stare at the blinking cursor waiting for me to type my letter for readmission.

Through Zoom meetings, Collaborate Ultra chats, Instagram study groups and more digitized reading than I've ever taken on, I have made it to the end of a school year.

The pandemic has created many obstacles, fueled fear and restructured the world we live in. Despite all the bad, I can't help but focus on this one good point. I am here, and I will reach my goal if I keep trying.



WHILE COVID-19 VACCINES HAVE NOW BEEN MADE, IT WILL STILL BE A WHILE BEFORE LIFE CAN RETURN TO SOME SENSE OF NORMAL. (PHOTO BY HAKANGERMAN ON PIXABAY)

Looking for new heroes

Marvel films slowly embrace racial and gender diversity

BY ALEX AFFONSO



MARVEL CONTINUES TO ADD TO THE THOUSANDS OF COMIC BOOKS PUBLISHED SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1939, BUT WHEN WILL AUDIENCES SEE MORE RACIAL AND GENDER MINORITIES FEATURED IN ITS FILMS AND STORIES? (PHOTO BY GEOFFREY HOWARD)

The Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is arguably one of the most popular franchises in contemporary western popular cinema.

It currently has 23 movies in circulation including *Avengers: Endgame*, “the top global box-office performer not only of 2019, but the 21st century,” according to writer Tom Brueggemann at *IndieWire*. Considering the influence these movies have on countless fans around the world, it is important to remember the famous warning of Spider-Man’s Uncle Ben: “With great powers come great responsibility.”

The power of protagonists

Michael Hauge, in his book *Writing Screenplays That Sell*, defines the hero as the “character . . . who is the central focus of the story, who is on screen most of the time, and with whom the audience most closely identifies.” This last definition becomes an issue when most main characters in the MCU are cisgender, heterosexual, white men.

In an email to the *Dalhousie Gazette*, Shannon Brownlee, associate director of cinema and media studies at Dalhousie University, says “it needs to be normal for sympathetic protagonists not to look like and be perceived as only one kind of person.”

“I feel that it’s important to see diversity on screen for two main reasons,” Brownlee says. “First, so that individuals can see identities they share being celebrated and admired; and second, so that individuals can see identities they don’t share being celebrated and admired.”

Aaron Seutter, a 26-year-old Torontonion who

identifies as a queer man and drag queen, once self-identified as straight, cisgender and Christian. He has been a Marvel fan his whole life. In an email to the *Gazette*, he says, “being able to see somebody like yourself doing amazing things and have something to aspire to as a kid is so extremely important.”

Having more racially and gender diverse protagonists would have clear social and cultural benefits, but also financial ones.

In an email to the *Gazette* Tom Ue, who teaches world literature, intellectual history and cultural studies at Dalhousie, refers to a study by consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Their report looked at the lack of Black representation on-screen and found the film industry faces huge financial losses as a result of this absence of racial and gender diversity.

“Hollywood is missing out on potential annual revenue valued at US\$10 billion because it has inadequately addressed systemic racial inequities,” Ue says. “The broader, cultural implications are that superhero films are failing to provide audiences with identifiable role models and with different kinds of stories.”

MCU phases

According to writers Cameron McEwan and Chris Longridge in their article for *Digital Spy*, the MCU is “divided into distinct sections that have overarching storylines,” known as phases.

In phase one, from 2008 to 2012, Marvel protagonists were incredibly homogeneous. All five films featured a solo white male protagonist/hero. *The Avengers*, a much anticipated and high-

ly popular movie at the time, was the first ambitious crossover, and presented audiences with a group of five white men: Captain America, Thor, Iron Man, Hulk and Hawkeye, and one white woman, Black Widow.

Then phase two came along, from 2013 to 2015, and there was a slight improvement. Zoe Saldana, a biracial Black and Latina actress, was cast as a lead in *Guardians of the Galaxy* — but she plays a green-skinned alien. Along with her, two other white male protagonists were added to the universe: Star-Lord and Ant-Man. Like in the first phase, racial and gender minorities were still largely restricted to secondary roles.

It was only in phase three, from 2016 to 2019, we started seeing women and People of Colour (POC) leading their own solo movies, but there were only two: *Black Panther* and *Captain Marvel*. However, as if to balance it out, two white male protagonists were also added: Doctor Strange and Spider-Man.

Phase four started in 2020 and is off to a good start with two highly anticipated TV shows: *WandaVision* (starring Elizabeth Olsen) and *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* (starring Anthony Mackie). There’s also *Black Widow* coming out in May 2021, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* in July 2021, *Captain Marvel 2* in November 2022, plus *Thor: Love and Thunder* and *Black Panther II* next year — all of which feature a non-white or female protagonist.

Is it enough?

Casting more women and POC as protagonists is an important step towards a more diverse

MCU and popular cinema in general. But as Seutter says, they’re baby steps.

“I think that they are doing it from a marketing and popularity perspective,” Seutter argues. “However, that’s not a bad thing. If it’s popular to show diversity and then they show diversity, I still call it a win.”

But Ue says, “Inclusiveness isn’t just about including diverse characters. It’s about promoting cultures of empathy and equity. Recognizing the inadequacies of pop culture is an important first step, but there’s so much more work to be done.”

Even though there are more women and POC in primary roles, there is still a lack of LGBTQ+ protagonists in the MCU. As Seutter points out, “In the lore, these characters exist. They don’t even need to change much or sometimes even anything to make it a part of them.”

So why is there still no LGBTQ+ superhero in a major role?

“Systems reproduce themselves,” Brownlee says, “unless we actively and consciously intervene in them.”

Next steps

Commenting on the importance of having a variety of people in positions of power, Brownlee offers a few examples of groups trying to find ways to do this.

“The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will require best picture nominees to have some diversity in front of and/or behind the camera starting in 2024; in Canada, Telefilm Canada and the National Film Board have already put in place requirements for gender parity in key roles,” Brownlee says.

Measures are being taken, but they need to be done respectfully. As Seutter says, race, gender and sexual identities need to be “worked into and treated as part of the character just being who they are. If they put it front and centre, it will come across as pandering.”

One can only hope the MCU will continue to improve its representation of minorities, and that they’ll do it in respectful ways. But will it be enough?

“The MCU is a large, commercial, culturally imperialist machine that won’t start a revolution,” Brownlee says, “but it might make people just a little more receptive to truly diverse ways of thinking, being in, and seeing the world.”

“There has been considerable discussion about how we can build the post-COVID-19 world,” Ue says. “Rather than rebuild the one that we had, with all of its racial and economic inequalities, why not imagine and create better ones?”

Dalhousie poets: identity and location

Poems on our surroundings and who we are

BY TRISHA MALIK

Hotel golden

We drive
through this new world
with skies that follow
then spin in circles all around us and
strangers we will only know
through eyes.

How lovely though
to know
we will be here for a while.

Home is prettier from inside the dirty bus,
like a drive through some gallery of art.
I make mental notes of diners I must check out,
parks I must walk through,
write in.

I will forget this tomorrow
But right now, it is important.

It baffles me how easy it is to leave this town
Any town
never here
never here.

*You should go to school here.
They paint like you do!
You'd make easy friends,
people who finally understood you.
It's small, uncomplicated.
It would settle easy in your midnight drink.*

And the bus was dark then,
when it made me think
of the time we travelled and

*the back of your
crystal earring pierced my neck,
as you fell asleep
and I left you lying there,
on my too-small shoulder
for a time
weeping onto my own sleepy cheek
(for just the sheer pain of it),
not saying a word,
because I liked you,
a lot.*

So, when the physical pain of it
would return in a few years
at least I'd be prepared.

And in this sleepy town, it's impossible to get work done.
All we do is think of our next meals
and lie around on our stomachs
in this golden,
badly decorated hotel room.

I think my friends and I are beautiful
in a strange way
I think we could suit a rainy sky,
A train, slipping away
A dirt road, unending.

*And I don't miss you on
this night.
You are dangling from a thread
and to be near you,
I must dangle too.
We are precariously over the edge now,
comfortable always
in the uncertainty of it all.*

And it's pretty,
I think, how
we are home
nowhere.

Canadian winter

The carpet of my one bedroom
Squirms in its pixelated glory.
It is dirty because the vacuum is broken
And I am young.
And the third or fourth best-ranking views in this city
Are from buildings open to the public in the daytime hours.
This is nice to know
But we can't smoke out here,
Which will just have to do.

Today's winter is still and sunny
Like an old painting.
It's worn round the edges.
Later when the fairies break their wings in the sharp breeze
It may snow just a little
Especially around your house.

And I'm beginning to realize
That I don't know how to sit around strangers
Where to stick my fingers or tongue
Whether to make hard or soft or a kind of lingering eye contact.
Do they look at my skin first?
Or the length of my hair?
What do they think of
Without meaning to?

And what do you do
When the rooms you look to escape to
Are also frozen?

*Dalhousie poets is a rotating column in the
Gazette's Art & Lifestyle section featuring
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ART BY SARA PELAEZ ON BLUSH.

Building team culture

Anton Berry jumps at opportunity to coach women's basketball

BY LUKE DYMENT, SPORTS EDITOR



DURING HIS TIME AT DAL, ANTON BERRY HAS HELPED MEN'S BASKETBALL CAPTURE FIVE AUS GOLD MEDALS. HE HOPES TO BRING THIS WINNING PEDIGREE TO THE TIGER'S WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM. (PHOTO BY TREVOR MACMILLAN)

After 11 years as head coach of the women's basketball program at Dalhousie University, Anna Stammberger will retire this spring. Stammberger, who graduated from Dal in 1985 and played at the 1984 Summer Olympics with the Canadian National Women's Basketball Team, will be succeeded on an interim basis by Anton Berry on April 1, 2021.

Currently an assistant coach on Stammberger's staff, and focusing on recruitment and player development, Berry previously spent seven years with the men's program. He joined the women's squad for the 2020-2021 campaign.

With the men's team, the Tigers experienced an extraordinary run of success, winning five Atlantic University Sport (AUS) conference titles and two U Sports medals, including a national silver medal last season. Berry's duties included work as the team's defensive coordinator.

When asked what he hopes to bring to his new position from his time in the men's program, Berry said, "From a competitive standpoint: winning."

Accountability and team relationships

The women's team's last AUS title came in the 2000-2001 season, a statistic Berry hopes to change soon. But beyond the results, Berry hopes to establish a positive team culture, the importance of which he learned as an assistant under men's head coach Rick Plato.

During his time with the men's program, Berry said the most important experiences centred around that culture.

"I think the most important thing is team culture. The foundation of a team's culture needs to be accountability on and off the court," said Berry.

That accountability, he said, begins at the top of the organization with him and is expected throughout the program. This philosophy is nothing new to him, having seen it in play during the men's teams' run to a slew of conference titles and U Sports medals.

"You have to believe in each other, you have to trust, you have to work hard and you have to sacrifice. That starts with me as a coach, and my coaching staff and it has to continue down through my players," Berry said.

In addition to accountability, Berry emphasized the importance of relationships with his athletes as an integral part of a team's success.

"You have to have great relationships with your players. I think building relationships with your players is a very important thing in coaching. I have found that at the end of the season it pays dividends," he said.

Back into game form

This season, of course, presented unique challenges for the program. The lack of certainty was present since September 2020, when it was unclear whether or not there was going to be a season.

"From an Xs and Os standpoint, we had no way to prepare for [what was to come]. The focus . . . was just working on skills, hoping that we'd be able to get some competition," Berry said.

As a current assistant coach focused on development, when asked if he was worried the lack of game experience would be an issue for the development of the team, Berry responded confidently.

"Players are made in the off-season. When it comes to development, the off-season is going to be crucial," said Berry. "I have to give a lot of respect to the players. Shout-out to them, who practiced their butts off for months not knowing if they'd have a season."

Thankfully, in February 2021, the team was able to participate in a number of controlled scrimmages versus Acadia, Saint Mary's, King's College and Mount Saint Vincent universities, the latter of which is Berry's alma mater. These scrimmages have provided a welcome return to a competitive environment the team has spent so long preparing for.

Berry hopes the team will see the return of the regular grind of a full competitive season sooner rather than later. Until then, he is focused on doing whatever he can to prepare the team.

"How can I make the

team better by adding players, or what can we do to make players better?" Berry asked, which he hopes to answer when he officially becomes interim head coach in April. "I'm trying to see how I can establish and build a strong team culture."

"How can I make the team better by adding players, or what can we do to make players better?"

Courting the big leagues

Highly anticipated women's basketball association coming to Maritimes

BY TIGER CUMMING



SIX TEAMS ARE SLATED TO JOIN THE MARITIME WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION: THREE FROM NEW BRUNSWICK, THREE FROM NOVA SCOTIA. (PHOTO BY TREVOR MACMILLAN)

The Maritime Women's Basketball Association (MWBA) is set to tip off in April 2022. With national team and professional players expected to join MWBA teams, it could soon become one of Canada's top women's basketball leagues.

The league has drawn interest from Atlantic University Sport (AUS) and Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association (ACAA) players too. Potentially players from the Dalhousie University Tigers women's basketball team and other AUS stars could soon play alongside some of the world's best.

The Tigers' Morgan Mudge is thrilled at the prospect of taking part, although she isn't sure of her plans yet. The Edmonton native would consider hanging around Halifax in the off-season for this opportunity.

"Any chance I have to play basketball and to grow the game a bit more, I definitely want to be a part of it," she said. "Playing against older players is a really good learning opportunity. Sometimes, they understand the game a little bit more than you do. It's a

great way to improve, especially in terms of the thinking side and more than just the physical side."

Dal teammate Chloe Wilson said university players could have a lot to gain from playing with and against older and stronger competition in the league.

"A big part [of playing in the off-season] would be maintaining that gamelike play. The league would help keep us ready for the next AUS season," Wilson said. "Getting that experience playing against older and pro players would definitely help."

How the MWBA will work

The MWBA has six teams slated to take part in the league's inaugural season: two Halifax teams (the Sirens and Thunder), Windsor Edge, Fredericton Freeze, Saint John's Port City Fog and Moncton's 506 Elite. It's possible other teams could join later.

The season will last from April until rough-

ly late June. With three teams each in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the schedule only requires two or fewer trips to the opposite province per season. This will keep costs down, and accommodate players' lifestyles and other commitments.

Regular season games will be mostly on weekends, while teams closer together will play some weeknight games. For playoffs, the plan is to host a championship weekend at a single location.

Tasia McKenna, commissioner of the MWBA, said there has already been a ton of interest from AUS and ACAA players. It's an opportunity she wishes existed when she finished university.

"These players are looking for more competition in between their seasons. For those graduated, some of them aren't ready to stop playing basketball. There weren't many options for me when I graduated unless I wanted to head over to Europe," McKenna said, who mentioned that several professional and national players, plus university all-stars, have already registered. "There's potential for very high-calibre games each and every night. It's unbelievable and something I'm quite proud of."

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, Brad Janes, Basketball New Brunswick's former president and one of the league's founders, spoke with Canadian national women's basketball team coach Lisa Thomaidis and other Canadian basketball personalities about possibly creating a pro women's league in Canada. He pitched the idea of having it in the Maritimes because of shorter distances to travel and the potential for rivalries between teams, which could in turn spark fan interest.

The league, although fully amateur instead of pro for the time being, has created excitement because of the talent it's expected to attract. This makes for an excellent opportunity for Canadian university basketball players, Dal coach Anna Stammberger said.

"Players will be able to play two and a half months in the spring after their U Sports season," Stammberger said. "These players are young. They need to play more games and practice with different players under different coaches. Those are all ways they're going to learn more and get more playing experience. By taking on different roles and concepts with different teams, you're going to broaden your horizons as a player."

Growing the women's game, especially in the Maritimes

Stammberger said the league would fit well into a university player's schedule. With the U Sports season finished by mid-March, players would have at least a month of rest before the MWBA starts in April. Players then have all of July and August to train and rest before school seasons resume in September.

"Anybody interested in competing the next season at any level, whether it's in university or elsewhere, are always looking for good training or competition situations," Stammberger said. "Four to five months [in an off-season] is a long time to maintain your edge and game without competitive situations. To have a couple of months in there with some sort of organized competitive structure, everyone will jump at that."

Wilson said the timing of the league's schedule would be convenient, given her regular training schedule.

"When our season ends in mid-March, we have a few weeks off then we get right back into training anyway. I don't think it would affect our rest because we still have lots of time through the summer," she said.

With the excitement following the league's announcement, it's the long-term influence of the league that has players and league members pumped. In women's sport, few leagues like this have existed before in Canada, let alone in the Maritimes. In witnessing basketball's growth in popularity in the Maritimes, as seen by the men's National Basketball League of Canada (NBL), McKenna said the MWBA has a great chance to thrive.

"Not only will we see women as the athletes on the court, but in the coaching seats, officiating or doing play-by-play," she said. "I'm really optimistic about the positive impact this can have. A lot of youth here in Nova Scotia watch the Halifax Hurricanes [from the NBL] and AUS games. The desire to watch women's basketball is there, and we want to create a sense of community and have those fan interactions with athletes."

Mudge said reaching this fanbase would be huge for women's basketball, even beyond the Maritimes.

"It will be a really good opportunity to not only bring attention to Maritime basketball, but to women's basketball," she said. "In a year's time, I'd love to learn more about it and potentially be a part of the league."

Playing a new game

Coaching challenges during COVID-19

BY THOMAS SCOTT



LANCE CANSDALE, TIGER'S MEN'S SWIMMING COACH, SAID TRAINING ATHLETES HAS NEVER BEEN EASY, BUT NOT HAVING COMPETITIONS TO SHOW IMPROVEMENT HAS MADE IT EVEN HARDER. (PHOTO BY TREVOR MACMILLAN)

Every year, coaches are tasked with finding ways to get the best out of their athletes. Coaching through the COVID-19 pandemic at Dalhousie University has presented several challenges to that mission.

Many coaches felt coaching this year was tougher without many games being played. Some Nova Scotia universities, including Dal, began playing some exhibition games in early February 2021. But then new provincial COVID-19 restrictions, announced on Feb. 26, shut down games again.

Anna Stammberger, coach of the Dal women's basketball team, said it was harder

as a coach to see fewer games being played.

"For both coaches and players, the games are the really fun part. They also serve to measure where you are," said Stammberger.

With the lack of games to assess his team Rick Scott, Dalhousie's women's volleyball coach, echoed these observations:

"That was more of a challenge than previous years for the athletes to stay engaged and also for the coaches. The coaches and I had to be creative to keep them interested and engaged," Scott said.



LIKE HER PLAYERS, BASKETBALL COACH ANNA STAMMBERGER KNOWS GAMES ARE THE FUN PART OF THE SEASON. (PHOTO BY NICK PEARCE)

Finding motivation

Getting ready for the next game is normally a team's main source of motivation and providing alternatives became one of the greater challenges of coaching during the pandemic. Cindy Tye, Dalhousie women's soccer head coach, said motivation was harder to find.

"There are no games and you had to find different sources of motivation for [the players]. The biggest thing for us was working to get a little bit better every day no matter what and being consistent in the approach to training," said

Tye. "They've gone through depths of wanting that competition piece and we've tried to build it in in other ways, but that's very difficult to replicate."

Like soccer, swimmers have found motivation hard to come by without any in-person swim meets.

"There are some athletes that do this because they love racing. Swim training is hard. It's tedious and it's repetitive. It's staring at the bottom of the pool for two to four hours a day," Tigers swimming coach Lance Cansdale said. "If you're not getting your reward [swim meet] every once a month and seeing your competition, it's a tough slog."

One problem Cansdale faced was with recruiting. He had to adjust his scouting methods since he couldn't watch any high school swimmers in action.

"When they don't have opportunities to train consistently and to race consistently, you're having to go back to Grade 11 and try to predict [potential recruits] a little bit more," said Cansdale.

Without games, keeping players intrigued and engaged had to be done in different ways, sometimes outside the box.

"You always need to be able to adapt to your circumstances," Scott said. "There were a lot of things that I do the same. But there were some adaptations in terms of maybe training once less a week or doing some funner activities. We had games like a badminton tournament in practice to keep their spirits up and to keep them having fun. It's about preventing burn-out, and helping them keep mentally healthy and emotionally healthy."

**"There are no games
and you had to find
different sources of
motivation."**

Making the most of time together

Team bonding suffered during COVID-19, with gathering limits in the way of larger and more frequent team events.

"They can't meet as a group over generally 10 people. Those were the restrictions for a lot of the year. So that makes it more of a challenge," Scott said. "At the same time, I think they did a good job doing what they could and to have some of that bonding take place where we can or in small groups as well."

Stammberger said her team also had to find other ways to bond.

"I think they bonded more. And maybe that's why they were so happy to be at practice, as the only place that we could be together as a team," she said. "Maybe they were enjoying practices and working hard at practice."

Even with restrictions, coaches felt their teams were able to build a bond. For some teams, the bond is even stronger compared to other years. Tye said the team was fortunate for the bonding opportunities they got.

"We probably were more connected than we've ever been because we started in the summer on Zoom. Then we had 100 per cent of our kids here in Halifax and a lot of them isolated for two weeks twice, in the fall and in the winter," said Tye. "But within all the restrictions, we've been training five or six days a week since September, so we may be even more connected than we were before."



RICK SCOTT HAS USED THE EXTRA PRACTICE TIME THIS SEASON TO ORGANIZE FUN ACTIVITIES LIKE BADMINTON TOURNAMENTS FOR THE WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL TEAM. (PHOTO BY TREVOR MACMILLAN)



CINDY TYE SAID HER WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM MAY BE THE MOST CONNECTED IT'S EVER BEEN SINCE ALL PLAYERS HAVE BEEN IN HALIFAX TO TRAIN THIS YEAR. (PHOTO BY TREVOR MACMILLAN)



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