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Dalhousie Student Union Statement on Incidents of Sexism and Misogyny in the Faculty of Dentistry

HALIFAX—The Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) is deeply concerned about the incidents of misogyny and sexism within the Faculty of Dentistry made public this week. The DSU is committed to fighting for a university campus that is free from sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence and recognizes that these forms of oppression impact the day-to-day lives of our members. The DSU also acknowledges that these particular events are part of a broader culture of sexism and misogyny that continues to be present on campus and in our society at large.

This summer, the Dalhousie Student Union was made aware of repeated incidents of sexism within the Faculty of Dentistry, including sexual harassment, sexist comments and preferential treatment of male students in clinical settings. The students who brought forward these concerns wanted to remain anonymous due to a fear of retribution within the Faculty. The processes available to these students at Dalhousie would not guarantee anonymity if any real action was to be taken and as a result, these students requested that the complaints not be pursued further.

Dalhousie University has a duty to ensure a safe learning and working environment for all students and should be actively working towards challenging sexism and misogyny within this Faculty and across the university. It is, therefore, troubling that those students who brought forward concerns had no avenue to pursue these complaints in a safe and supportive way.

The Dalhousie Student Union is calling on the university to commit to examining and addressing the root causes that allow cultures of misogyny and sexism to continue to exist at our university, especially in areas of study that have traditionally been male-dominated. Meaningful actions must be taken to provide redress and support to the affected students, students at-large, and to address long-standing concerns about a dangerous oppressive culture, which has manifested in such an appalling and violent manner.

To begin this process, Dalhousie University should immediately:

- Implement a system for the anonymous reporting of discrimination and harassment at the university. Such a system should be created in consultation with the Dalhousie Student Union, and other Dalhousie student groups. Work to provide accommodations for students in the Faculty of Dentistry and other students who have experienced harm as a result of incidences of sexism, misogyny and sexual harassment.
- In partnership with the Dalhousie Student Union and other Dalhousie student groups, develop a process for students to share their experiences of discrimination and harassment and provide input into addressing these forms of oppression on campus.
- Create a mandatory equity course requirement for all students at Dalhousie that discusses the root causes of gender-based violence and oppression.
- Create a student advocate office that can assist students in navigating current university services and identify where services are inadequate or non-existent
- Require that all faculty and staff in the Faculty of Dentistry attend a mandatory training on sexism and misogyny in working and learning environments. Dalhousie should also work with student, staff and faculty unions to extend similar training to all faculties and departments.

The Dalhousie Student Union looks forward to working with students, staff, faculty and the university administration to fight sexism, rape culture and all forms misogyny on campus.

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For more information or to set up an interview with a spokesperson please contact:
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