

Minutes of the meeting of the **Academic Policy Committee** held on Thursday 25th October 2012, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Room 302, James Building

Present: A.C. Masi (*Chair*), W. Adams, E. Chiang, J. Galbraith, A. Ghoshdastidar, H. Hatch-Dinel, W. Hendershot, I. Henderson, M. Kreiswirth, E. Laverdière, S. McDougall, M.J. Mendelson, A. Misra, P. Smith, S. Stroud, P. Tikasz, C. Urbain (for C.C. Cook), C. Weston, M. Ziedel, H.M.C. Richard (*Secretary to the Committee*)

Regrets: C.C. Cook, K. Dalkir, L. Hendren, S. Huebner, C. Mandato, P. Perez-Aleman, J. Potter, L. Stone

Guests: N. Diamond (*item 5*)

Document circulated at the meeting: *none*

02.01 Proposed agenda

The proposed agenda was adopted.

02.02 Minutes of previous APC meeting held on 4th October 2012

The minutes were approved as circulated.

Clarifications were provided regarding the process that led to the retirement of zero-enrolment courses. It was explained that the major reason for the departments' reluctance to retire courses was that the process for reinstating courses was too cumbersome. That main objection having been removed, central administration went ahead to retire those courses that have not been offered for the past five years, thus sparing students the frustration of seeing courses on the calendar that are not being offered. It was added that every new course approval would have a sunset clause and justification would be required for every course reinstatement request to Enrolment Services. In the discussion, the process that led to the retirement *en bloc* of courses was nevertheless questioned. In response to an initial memorandum, departments spent time to identify which courses with zero enrolment should not be retired, only to be told later that all zero-enrolment courses would be retired. The departure from normal procedures and the additional work were criticized by some academic units.

02.03 Business arising

It was reported that a letter from the Office of the Vice-Principal (RIR), justifying the proposed terminology in the Revised Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research involving Human Subjects, would be presented at the next meeting.

02.04 APC Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs

a. SCTP 2012 Annual Report to APC (12-APC-10-10)

APC received SCTP's annual report. It noted that the Report on the review of the streamlined course and program approval procedure, approved by Senate in March 2008, would be presented to APC in December.

b. SCTP Report 3 on meeting held on 20th September 2012 (*for information*)(12-APC-10-11)

The SCTP report did not include any items for information. The eight pages of course retirements were said to include mainly zero-enrolment courses.

02.05 ASAP 2012-2017 – Achieving Strategic Academic Priorities

- **A proposed strategic plan for McGill**, 1st October 2012 (12-APC-10-08)

- **Revised version (D12-09, Senate 17th October 2012) (12-APC-10-12)**

http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d12-09_asap_2012_web.pdf

Dr. Nancy Diamond, Policy Advisor to the Provost, joined the meeting. It was reported that Senate, on 17th October, had endorsed "the basic principles and broad outline of ASAP 2012 as McGill's strategic academic plan with the understanding that all items emanating from this plan that require academic governance oversight be returned to this body (Senate) for appropriate deliberation and action." The need for ASAP principles to provide the framework for the budget discussions being held with deans and administrators in the following week explained the urgency of having those principles approved. Continued discussion will involve APC as the ASAP principles are expected to find expression in governance issues and in initiatives that are presented to APC for

review and approval. It was reported that the Principal suggested that any initiative coming forward through APC should be seen to fit in the strategic plan and that APC may therefore consider whether an evaluation template or checklist might be helpful for reviewing new initiatives coming forward for approval. The University's strategic priorities on that list would be used for assessing new initiatives on the basis of their alignment with the University's strategic plan. It was noted that applying such a checklist to academic unit reviews should not be in the form of another template for academic units to use.

Comments submitted by a member of APC in writing, regarding the revised version of ASAP 2012 (12-APC-10-12), were shared with the Committee. The comments advised a softening of the prescriptive tone in the document and dealt with the idea of McGill being a nurturing, equitable, respectful environment (p. 3), with the emphasis put on the harnessing of IT, mentoring programs, student retention, undergraduate research, and on-line delivery options. A number of suggestions were made: 1) units can find their own ways of expressing strategic objectives; 2) good teaching and innovations in teaching come in many forms and do not necessarily involve IT, and using IT to implement an administrative process makes sense only if it improves the process; 3) programs that are perceived as special treatment (i.e., special mentoring programs for members of under-represented groups, Action 1.5.2, p. 30) are often not appreciated by either the special group or people outside that group; 4) increasing student retention may not be a goal in itself; 5) more support for undergraduate research should be provided, as available funding limits summer research opportunities; 6) the issue of increasing national and international university involvement with on-line educational delivery options needs some thought.

The Chair spoke on the need for McGill to be present in on-line teaching initiatives and about the implications of such involvement in terms of resources and training. The relevant section in the document is about McGill educating itself, rather than about prescribing the use of technology and on-line teaching delivery. It was noted that IT may not be able to solve all problems or be appropriate in all circumstances, but it has to be available, even if people do not make use of it.

Various initiatives that resulted from earlier stated strategic priorities were mentioned. It was also suggested that the language on pages 18 and 19 of the document could be organized differently or with different phraseology.

02.06 Other business

None.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Helen M.C. Richard - HMCR/APPCdocs/minutes/2012-10-25