

Question

TO: Senate

FROM: Dan Snyder, SSMU Senator
Claire Stewart-Kanigan, SSMU Senator

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Promoting a Safer Campus

MEETING DATE: October 22, 2014

PREAMBLE: Whereas, in the “Message to the McGill community: recent allegations concerning a member of the football team” sent by the Deputy Provost (Student Life & Learning) on September 26th (see Appendix A), it was stated that:

“There have been a few incidents in recent years where relevant information concerning football players was not dealt with appropriately at McGill. We take responsibility for those errors and are committed to preventing them in the future ... We neither tolerate violence on campus nor behaviours that are contrary to the values and principles of our community. As a community, we will work together to better educate ourselves on issues of safety and mutual respect.”

Whereas, highly-publicized incidents related to student-athletes and sexual assault, domestic violence, and hazing are an ongoing phenomenon not just at McGill, but at campuses across the country,

Whereas, incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sexually violent hazing are widely documented to be under-reported,

Whereas, in response to the football team hazing and sexual assault incident in 2005, then-interim Provost Anthony Masi stated:

"Greater vigilance, a stronger emphasis and investment in positive team-building programs and activities, a greater awareness and responsibility on the part of our coaches, staff and the players themselves are critical to ensure that this never happens again. That is our clear goal."

Whereas, in response to the *Question Regarding the Promotion of Consent and Safer Spaces on Campus* submitted at the September 2014 session of Senate, it was stated that Athletics has responded to the 2013 sexual assault case by adding “two new sections ... to the Recreation Guide,” but workshops or trainings for student-athletes were not entertained due to concern with targeting specific groups of students,

Whereas, McGill already supports the training of specific groups of students with relation to consent and preventing sexual violence,

including Frosh leaders, students living in Residence, and floor fellows,

Whereas, a safe campus is essential to creating a positive learning environment,

Whereas, student leaders across the McGill community are in key positions to promote and uphold McGill values including safety and mutual respect,

Whereas, in her statement to the McGill community highlighting remarks made to the Board of Governors, the Principal stated: “Student athletes are ambassadors and role models, and as such they are expected to meet high standards of conduct,”

QUESTION:

How will McGill help student athletes, specifically, meet their obligations to uphold the high standard of conduct that comes with their position as student ambassadors and role models?

Will McGill take action to expand the resources dedicated to proactively “educate ourselves” regarding awareness and prevention of sexual violence and assault across campus, specifically increasing funding and/or hiring more personnel for the offices of SEDE and the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator?

Will the review of “[McGill’s] rules and regulations governing participation in varsity sports” explicitly address creating a culture of consent and gender equity within Athletics and across campus?

Response from the Deputy Provost (SLL):

Thank you Senators Steward-Kanigan and Snyder for your questions

We will work with student-athletes as we did with Frosh leaders in a collaborative manner to pursue our goal of creating the safest and most respectful campus possible. Our recent experience with Frosh made it clear that collaboration, partnership and teamwork are the best ways to address issues of concerns for the whole campus.

For example, working with us, Varsity Council has tightened and strengthened the *Guide for Varsity Sports for Student-Athletes* by adding three new sections: *Responsibilities and Commitments of the Varsity Sport Program*, *The Varsity Student-Athlete Context*, and *Varsity Sport Guiding Principles and Policies* which increase and define more clearly student-athletes’ responsibilities in terms of behaviour and conduct.

http://www.mcgillathletics.ca/documents/2014/7/16/McGill_Varsity_Guide_2014_V6_July17.pdf?id=246

As far as education is concerned, we have already hired a Harm Reduction coordinator, Mrs. Bianca Tétrault, and given her the mandate to develop an educational program. I am happy to report the Consent Campaign will be launched on October 20th. The goal will be to increase both campuses’ knowledge and awareness of consent, as it applies to sexual activity and our day to day lives. The

target audience will include students, staff and faculty. This campaign will also serve as a platform to promote other events and workshops happening later on in the year, such as the Bystander Intervention, Sexual Assault Awareness Week, SEDE workshops etc. Please note that Bianca is also working closely with Athletics and the Varsity Council. A video on consent was actually produced by Varsity Council with help from Mrs Tétrault.

As far as the SEDE office is concerned, despite budgetary constraints, SEDE was allocated permanent funding for two Equity Educational Positions (Race and Cultural Diversity and LGBTTQ) this past June.

As I have repeatedly said, I will not target one group of students and divert resources. Our consent and respect campaign is directed at ALL students and ALL members of the McGill Community.

Thank you.

Ollivier Dyens
Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)

Appendix A

Friday, September 26

Message to the McGill community: recent allegations concerning a member of the football team

A member of the McGill Redmen football team was in Court on Thursday to face criminal charges. This individual had previously pleaded guilty to an assault charge arising from a 2010 incident in Quebec City. This individual should not have been invited to join our team. That was not in accordance with the values of our community.

There have been a few incidents in recent years where relevant information concerning football players was not dealt with appropriately at McGill. We take responsibility for those errors and are committed to preventing them in the future.

The recurrence of these incidents demands an in-depth review of our rules and regulations governing participation in varsity sports. The objectives of this review, undertaken by the Office of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), will be to ensure that all rules and regulations are aligned with and reinforce transparent decision-making, accountability and commitment to the values that define the McGill learning environment.

We believe that Varsity sports, recreational athletics and our student athletes make a very valuable contribution to our University. They compete at a high level and enrich their own lives as well as the life of the University.

We neither tolerate violence on campus nor behaviours that are contrary to the values and principles of our community. As a community, we will work together to better educate ourselves on issues of safety and mutual respect.

Ollivier Dyens
Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)