

ASAP 2012 White Paper Discussion Document Executive Summary

Prof. Anthony C. Masi, Provost, McGill University

I. Introduction and Background

ASAP 2012: Achieving Strategic Academic Priorities is McGill's next academic planning document. ASAP 2012 will build on the successes achieved through the implementation of *Strengths and Aspirations: a White Paper Call to Action*, which was presented to Senate in May 2006. It will also be informed by an analysis of those goals that were not achieved.

In preparing *ASAP 2012*, the Office of the Provost will reevaluate the current slate of strategic academic priorities, removing those that no longer apply, and adding new priorities that achieve a broad consensus across the University's stakeholders and constituencies. ASAP 2012 will be finalized as a roadmap for the next five years.¹ During the coming year, as we commemorate the 190th anniversary of McGill's founding, we want to take the time to ensure ample opportunity for broad consultation and feedback from the community. The final version of ASAP 2012 will reflect McGill's values and mission, and will allow us not only to respond to present circumstances, but to chart our course for the future.

This Executive Summary provides a synopsis of a discussion document being prepared in order to provide a framework for the strategic planning process by:

- identifying the guiding principles for this iteration of McGill's strategic planning exercise;
- articulating the continued commitment to aligning strategic academic priorities with existing and new resources; and
- proposing the structure and action time line for campus-wide consultation.

¹ I have already provided presentations and updates regarding *ASAP 2012* to Senate (March 24, 2010; October 20, 2010, November 17, 2010, and February 16, 2011), to Faculty Councils, the SSMU Student Council, the executives of PGSS, the Managers' Forum and in other venues to Chairs and Directors from across the campus. For a selection of these presentations see the ASAP 2012 website at <http://www.mcgill.ca/provost/asap2012>.

This discussion document will be distributed shortly, and as we move forward with the proposed timeline for development, new versions will be produced that incorporate feedback from Senate, Deans, Chairs, Directors, professors, students, and other stakeholders from the McGill community.

II. Preamble to the Discussion Document

ASAP 2012 is a necessary iteration designed to:

- a) build on the achievements of *Strengths and Aspirations* (2006)
- b) outline a strategy for sustaining and furthering McGill's academic leadership among the world's premier universities; and,
- c) establish a roadmap for the next five years.

The draft document includes many suggestions emanating from the consultations already undertaken, but its distribution is meant to allow the McGill community a more formal and structured opportunity to comment on, and to participate actively in, determining, refining, expressing, and implementing McGill's major strategic objectives for the period 2012 to 2016.

The strategic planning for the next white paper must certainly continue to uphold and advance the University's mission,

"the advancement of learning through teaching, scholarship and service to society: by offering to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students the best education available; by carrying out scholarly activities judged to be excellent when measured against the highest international standards; and by providing service to society in those ways for which we are well-suited by virtue of our academic strengths."

Planning for this iteration of our strategic academic priorities must also acknowledge and further the overarching goals established five years ago:

"McGill will consistently rank among the top publicly funded, research-intensive and student-centered universities world-wide, and in selected areas, our performance will unambiguously position the University among world leaders."

"McGill will achieve these goals guided by our plans and their implementation, measuring our progress and readjusting our roadmap against our successes, our progress, and the challenges and opportunities we encounter."

ASAP 2012 will be developed by respecting the following guiding principles:

- a) broad consultation and feedback that results in a clearly communicated and shared vision
- b) integration of strategic priorities within multi-year and sustainable financial plans and budget compact processes

- c) unbiased analysis and measurement that will reinforce recognition of contradictions and tradeoffs
- d) coordination with recommendations and findings from other University plans including the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning, McGill's Strategic Research Plan, Campaign McGill, the University Physical Master Plan, the Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence, and Community Engagement, the Strategic Enrolment Management plan and Faculty compacts and plans.²
- e) re-designed processes and initiatives to leverage McGill's existing resources and add to them.

ASAP 2012 will also benefit from the administrative undertakings that are part of the Strategic Reframing Initiative's (SRI) recommendations regarding the acceleration of progress in two areas: closing the funding gap between McGill and peer universities, and boosting levels of quality, performance and overall efficiency in operations. The SRI, then, is a tool designed to transform the way we work, not to redefine who we are and what we do at McGill, in 5 areas³:

- 1) Cost Efficiencies in McGill's operations by finding ways to save costs or generate new revenues
- 2) Enrolment Mix as a toolkit to optimise enrolment decisions, timeframes, and targets
- 3) Philanthropy, especially the building of a new culture to ensure sustainable and successful fundraising beyond Campaign McGill
- 4) Transformative Research and Innovation focused on ways to attract more research funding, including non-government funding (e.g., foundations, not-for-profits and industry support)
- 5) Performance Enhancement to ensure proper alignment between individual and University priorities and accountability at the local level.

The use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is an important expression of McGill's commitment to accountability. We have been identifying key indicators that will measure our institutional performance in many areas against our Quebec, Canadian, and international peers. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other analytics and processes, including cyclical unit reviews for every academic unit beginning in Fall 2011, will institute benchmarks with which to measure our continuous progress.

² *Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning* (December 2006); McGill University Physical Master Plan (April 7, 2008); *McGill University Strategic Research Plan; Campaign McGill: History in the Making; Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence, and Community Engagement* (Draft Final Report February 11, 2011); *Strategic Enrolment Management Plan 2011-2016* (March 13, 2011).

³ For further information about the SRI, see <http://www.mcgill.ca/sri/why-sri-matters>. For discussion of the five working group themes, see <http://www.mcgill.ca/sri/srithemes>

III. White Paper Action Planning Structure and Timeline

At the center of the white paper planning structure will be an ASAP 2012 Steering Committee chaired by the Provost and charged with overseeing content and the incorporation of feedback. Each steering committee member will co-chair one of the working groups (number to be determined)—consisting of 8-10 McGill faculty, students and staff—that will focus on one or more of the major strategic objectives.

The following action planning time line and activities are designed to to ensure consultation and traction throughout the McGill community:

April 2011

- Establish timeline and strategy for ASAP 2012 process; receive and incorporate feedback
- Establish email address: whitepaper@mcgill.ca
- Take white paper website live: <http://www.mcgill.ca/provost/asap2012/>
- Prepare framing discussion paper to introduce the timeline and process for the development of the white paper, and define concepts and elements for discussion of the major objectives

May 2011

- May 18—Provost progress report to Senate for information; Distribute Executive Summary of ASAP 2012 discussion document and action time line and invite feedback
- Circulate discussion paper for comment and feedback and incorporate contributions from Senate and other stakeholders

June 2011

- Provost establishes and heads steering committee (comprised of heads of working groups)
- Provost establishes working groups (includes appointees and volunteers) along the lines of the SRI model to investigate and develop options for achieving the strategic objectives identified

Summer 2011

- Working groups meet and collect information
- Each working group produces a paper and submits it to the steering committee by September 15

Fall 2011

- September: Provost's office incorporates SRI recommendations, Task Force findings, Faculty Plans, and working group recommendations into *ASAP 2012: Achieving Strategic Academic Priorities*
- October: Provost's office offers presentations and circulates document for feedback, consultation and traction
- November: Provost's office incorporates feedback and prepares final version
- December: Presentation to Senate for endorsement and approval

Spring 2012

- Plan for and begin implementation of strategic academic plan

IV. **ASAP 2012 Major Strategic Objectives**

In the list below, the seven broad objectives identified in the 2006 white paper are presented in *italics*, while the **bold type reflects major strategic objectives going forward**. These objectives may be considered as starting points for the next white paper.

1. *Academic renewal plan* → **Achieve new directions in Faculty hiring, development, and retention, including cluster hires**
2. *UG composition and experience* → **Emphasize innovative delivery of educational programs and appropriate levels of student aid**
3. *Improved Grad Studies experience* → **Ensure innovation in graduate studies based on research strengths and competitive funding**
4. *Disciplines and inter-disciplinarity* → **Develop and implement transformative research initiatives based on competitive advantage**
5. *Quality support services* → **Develop a culture of “best practices” in academic endeavours**
6. *Professional development, productivity and satisfaction* → **Enhance career development opportunities for administrative and support staff**
7. *Performance management indicators* → **Implement academic analytics, processes, tools, and feedback loops**
8. **Provide service to Quebec, Canada and the global community by means of activities and international collaborations with measurable impact**
9. **Encourage diversity in origin and opinion among students, faculty, and staff.**
10. **Attain national leadership in professional education programs**

V. **Next Steps**

As an initial exercise for engaging in the white paper discussion, please consider and provide feedback to the following questions:

1. What can we do individually and collectively to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching programs and research agendas?
2. What measures would you suggest that we undertake to ensure that McGill's commitment to diversity is respected and encouraged in recruitment of students, faculty, and staff?
3. How can we encourage our faculty, staff and students to engage in greater outreach in Quebec, Canada, and the global community?
4. What can we do to ensure that administrative and support staff at McGill can contribute in the ways they are best suited to the University's academic mission and priorities?

Our goal is to develop a shared vision of McGill's strategic academic plan that is consistent with our mission and our academic values and aspirations, which is financially sustainable, and will be adaptable within inevitably changing circumstances.

Following incorporation of feedback and reaction to the discussion paper, we will embark on the next steps to develop the next white paper.

All members of the McGill community are encouraged to provide comments, suggestions, or questions by using the ASAP 2012 webpage feedback form at <http://www.mcgill.ca/provost/asap2012/feedback> or by sending an email to whitepaper@mcgill.ca.

I appreciate your contributions and look forward to a vigorous and productive planning process.