



Memorandum

Office of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor
James Administration Building
845 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 506
Tel: 514-398-4180 | Fax: 514-398-4768

TO: Senate
FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General
SUBJECT: Report on the 2023 Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate
DATE: December 6, 2023
DOCUMENT #: GD23-27
ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE A report on the 2023 Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate is presented for information.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Article 6.3.9.1 of the Statutes of McGill University states:

“The Senate and Board of Governors shall hold an annual joint meeting in the fall term. At this meeting, the Principal, the Provost, the Deputy Provost, and the vice-principals, as appropriate, shall present for discussion matters they consider relevant to the University’s mission for the ensuing year.”

On November 14, 2023, members of the Board of Governors and members of Senate met to discuss following topic: *Building on McGill’s Record of Excellence for the Third Century: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead.*

PRIOR CONSULTATION

N/A

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate is upheld by a sustainable framework for both University governing bodies to discuss topics relevant to the University’s mission on an annual basis.

IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS

The report will be presented to the Board of Governors on December 14, 2023.

MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL

This item is presented for information.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Report on the 2023 Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate

**Report on the 2023 Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate
(November 14, 2023)**

The Chair welcomed members of the Board of Governors, members of Senate, and all guests to the 2023 iteration of the Joint Meeting. She explained that the Joint Meeting provides both University governing bodies with an opportunity to discuss important issues and topics of central importance to the University's mission. She reminded attendees that the topic of this year's meeting is *Building on McGill's Record of Excellence for the Third Century: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead*.

The Chair reminded attendees that the theme of the 2022 Joint Meeting of the Board of Governors and Senate was *Experiential Learning at the Local, National, and International Levels*, and mentioned that a report on that Joint Meeting had been included in this year's documents. She noted that the 2022 report also provided updates relating to previous Joint Meeting topics, dating as far back as 2016, and that a report on the outcomes of this Joint Meeting would be presented to the Board of Governors on December 14, 2023, and to Senate on December 6, 2023.

Following the Chair's introductory remarks, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor introduced the topic of the 2023 Joint Board-Senate meeting: *Building on McGill's Record of Excellence for the Third Century: Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities*, and shared his reflections on *The role of Canada's Universities in Today's (and Tomorrow's) Complex Society*. He asked attendees to consider the role of universities in society as engines of progress, generators of talent and revenue, and figureheads in the fields of research and development. He went on to highlight the challenges facing post-secondary institutions in pursuit of their respective missions (environmental, technological, political, social, and economic), and noted that these challenges were compounded by access to education, considering costs and equality of opportunity, as well as the changing public perception of the value of a university education, and difficulties in maintaining quality in the provision of education and training. He also discussed the trending decrease in public trust in institutions and science, and the increased weaponization of information. He then highlighted the invaluable role of education in forming critical thinkers, and the value in maintaining a robust university network.

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor's remarks were followed by a brief warm-up discussion period, led by the Chair, on the following question: *Considering the opportunities and challenges facing the university sector, how do we best prepare for the future of higher education at McGill?*

- Participants highlighted the importance of listening, engaging, and mobilizing both institutions and communities to promote innovation, as well as orienting the education and training of students to address contemporary issues and concerns (particularly in social, economic, and scientific fields).
- Participants indicated that universities need to clarify their roles and purposes for students, and that teaching and learning should encompass experiential, global, and interdisciplinary elements. A need for informed teaching and industry/research engagement was also noted.
- Participants acknowledged the changing demographics of students and recognized that learning is becoming a life-long endeavor. Recommendations for incorporating mandatory community service into educational programs and investing in the University brand were also presented as pathways for building trust and value both in communities and across society.

The warm-up discussion was followed by roundtable discussions on the topics indicated below, which were circulated to attendees prior to the meeting:

- *THEME A: Changing Perceptions of Higher Education / “Value” of a University Degree / Accessibility (Tables 1, 2, 3)*
- *THEME B: Universities’ challenging roles in helping to curb the spread of misinformation / public distrust in institutions and science (Tables 4, 5, 6)*
- *THEME C: Educating a Future-Ready Generation with the knowledge, skills, and drive to navigate their careers and their lives. (Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10)*

Each table was assigned a specific theme (A, B, or C) to consider during the roundtable discussions. Tables 1, 2, and 3 discussed Theme A, tables 4, 5, and 6 discussed Theme B, and tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 discussed Theme C. The roundtable discussions were followed by a report from table rapporteurs, who provided an overview of comments and ideas generated at their table with respect to their assigned themes.

- Rapporteurs from tables assigned to Theme A each highlighted the need to consider the value of education in relation to the core purpose of the university, which involves fostering critical thinking and discovery. Attendees noted the link between a university education and the job market, highlighting that having a bachelor’s degree, while helpful, may be insufficient or inadequate to address the needs of the market. Rapporteurs noted the high cost of education and spoke to the need to address perceptions of inaccessibility. The importance of interdisciplinary studies and community engagement to connect education and training with real world issues and needs was also addressed.
- Rapporteurs from tables assigned to Theme B recommended that institutions rethink the ways in which science is communicated, noting that misinformation and disinformation are not novel concepts within society. Attendees were encouraged to consider the role of technology and how it is used to collect, compile, and share information. The need for educational institutions to teach critical thinking as well as the importance of engaging communities to foster trust, transparency, and accountability was highlighted.
- Rapporteurs from tables assigned to Theme C continued with recommendations concerning the teaching of critical and analytical thinking, the need for transparency and accountability in higher education, and the value outreach and engagement with students and communities. Providing clarity on the purpose and value of students’ education was suggested, as well as equipping them to be problem solvers who are emotionally intelligent, resilient, and adaptable. It was noted that education and training should embrace both learning and unlearning world views, and understanding various value systems. Multidisciplinary studies and transferable skills were applauded, in addition to exposing students to expertise through expert training.

Feedback provided by attendees following the meeting was generally positive. Comments will be reviewed and considered when planning future Joint Meetings of the Board of Governors and Senate.