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Senate Meeting Report, 2014-02-19

Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, February 19, 2014.

The meeting began with Dean Eidelman presenting a memorial tribute for Emeritus Professor William H. Feindel. Senate then adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/final_january_22_2014_senate_minutes_1.pdf), the report of the Steering Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_12.pdf) and the agenda (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/agenda_senate_-_february_19_2014_0.pdf).

In her remarks from the Chair, Principal Fortier reported on her attendance at last week's annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She noted highlights of the federal budget which was presented last week, including the creation of a Canada First Research Excellence Fund (\$1.5B over ten years) to help post-secondary institutions compete globally, and the addition of \$46M per year (starting in 2014-15) to the funding of the three federal granting councils. Principal Fortier participated in a meeting called by Minister Duchesne to discuss how moneys would be allocated under the *Politique nationale de la recherche et de l'innovation* (PNRI). The university representatives at this meeting argued that support for the indirect costs of research should take the form of new funding rather than being drawn from the funds which provide direct support to research.

The Principal corrected the information on the recent Centraide campaign which she had provided to Senate in January, prior to Centraide completing its tally of the funds it had collected. McGill did in fact surpass its objective of \$400,000, having collected over \$416,000.

Under the agenda point for formal questions, Senators Kuate Defo, Gholmieh, Stewart-Kanigan, Blais and Hiles posed a question on the University Student Assessment Policy, to which a written response was provided by Deputy Provost Dyens (link provided under the title "Question_re_University_Student_Assessment_Policy_and_Response_from_Senator_Dyens" at this location: <http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/senate-2013-2014/senate-meeting-documents-2013-2014/february-19-2014>).

The next agenda item was an open discussion on the subject of interdisciplinary collaborations (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-45_open_discussion_memo_-_breaking_down_silos.pdf). The discussion was structured around two broad questions: 1) What factors act as obstacles or barriers to: a) interdisciplinary teaching and learning for faculty members and students? b) interdisciplinary research for faculty members and students? 2) In the current context, what are practical next steps (i.e., initiatives) the University could take to better enable and promote interdisciplinary teaching/learning and research collaborations? Senator Roulet remarked that, when units share professors, there is sometimes debate between members of different disciplines regarding what contributions should and should not be counted towards tenure. Win/lose competition for funding in interdisciplinary contexts should be avoided; the funding dynamic should in fact be a win-win situation. Senator Aitken agreed with Senator Roulet that shared intellectual spaces are important, saying that these are the types of environments in which people thrive.

Senators Larson, Butler, Sheridan and Stewart-Kanigan all stressed that it was important for professors and advisors to be supportive of interdisciplinary opportunities for students. Senator Stewart-Kanigan added that consideration should be given to the idea of students having multiple advisors for the

preparation of an interdisciplinary thesis. Senator Lu noted that shortfalls in expertise can cause problems in interdisciplinary work, and that team teaching might help to resolve this difficulty.

Dean Ferguson commented that the biggest incentive for doing interdisciplinary research is its potential for helping one's own research, and that the biggest obstacle to finding a research partner is not knowing what other people are doing. One way to overcome this obstacle is to organize social events at which individuals can discuss their research with each other informally. Senator Ismail suggested that it would be helpful to update the researcher profiles on the McGill website. Senator Sinacore noted that interdisciplinary courses are never the same twice, and must take into account the students who are in them each year; they thus require a great deal of work, since they always need to be redeveloped. Principal Fortier thanked the participants for their input and indicated that proposals for a few initial concrete steps would be brought before Senate at a future meeting.

Provost Masi presented an update on the budget planning process (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-46_budget_planning_-_report_ii_memo.pdf). In the discussion period which followed, Senator Saroyan asked what process is used to select special projects linked to ASAP 2012 priorities. Provost Masi responded that every Dean submits proposals for the priority funding of projects, in which they indicate where the projects fit into the University's strategic priorities. These solicitations for funding are then adjudicated by the Provost's Office and the Office of the V.-P. Administration and Finance. Regarding the government's proposed \$1.4B "*réinvestissement stratégique*" in universities, which will be tied to loosely defined performance contracts, Senator Covo asked whether this loose definition is advantageous. Provost Masi answered that such loose definitions are helpful because they approach the concept of unrestricted funding, but that the tightness of the conditions for the funding which is being offered will vary considerably.

In response to an inquiry from Senator Mooney, Provost Masi indicated that McGill professors are underpaid by any standard that one cares to use. In terms of the national picture, most universities east of McGill pay their academic staff less and most universities west of McGill pay their academic staff more. For these reasons, the budget has allocated money to improve academic compensation and retention; this measure will raise McGill within the U15 from its current position in the lower five academic salary grouping to the middle five grouping, but it will not place us among the top five universities.

Senate approved the 453rd report of the Academic Policy Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-47_453rd_report_-_feb_19_2014_with_appendix.pdf) and received for information the latest report from the Board of Governors to Senate (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-48_report_from_bog_to_senate_feb_2014.pdf). Dean Madramootoo then presented a verbal progress report on the work being done by the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Livestreaming of Senate Meetings. The Committee recently sent out a questionnaire to members of the University community, to which 220 responses were received. Of these responses, 157 favoured the continuation of livestreaming, which is seen as having positive value in terms of increasing community engagement and understanding of the University's governance processes and of improving the transparency of Senate. The Committee aims to complete its report soon and to present it at the next Senate meeting; it expects to recommend the continuation of livestreaming, along with some form of arrangement to archive the broadcast temporarily as a non-downloadable file. The Committee's report will also address how to do more to inform the University community about the dates and agendas of upcoming Senate meetings and to advertise the availability of the livestreaming feed. Finally, the report will look at the desirability of reviewing the concept of livestreaming no later than five years from now.

In the discussion which followed, Senator Stewart-Kanigan asked why only temporary archiving was being contemplated. Dean Madramootoo responded that there were several reasons: 1) the livestreaming is not meant to replace the minutes produced by the Secretariat, which are the official record of the business transacted by Senate; 2) the livestreaming is intended to engage members of the University community who are not able to attend Senate meetings in person, and the temporary archiving arrangements would do likewise for individuals who are not able to watch the live broadcast; 3) the cost

of keeping the material archived long-term is not justifiable. Dean Ferguson asked how many people have tuned into the broadcasts so far and how much these broadcasts cost. Dean Madramootoo answered that the details will be included in the Committee's report, but that approximately 40 people have watched the broadcasts; Secretary-General Strople added that the cost is on the order of \$7,500 per year.

The final item of business was a verbal report from Provost Masi on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Composition of Senate. The Committee has met four times, has reviewed the history of Senate's composition at McGill and has compared McGill's situation with that at other universities. It then elaborated a set of principles, about which it will soon consult the University community through a series of questions which will be discussed at a number of town hall meetings. These town halls will be announced soon. There will also be an opportunity to provide written input.

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 19, 2014. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Regards,
Your librarian Senate reps,
Daniel Boyer
Maya Kucij
Marc Richard