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Subject: Senate Meeting Report, 2014-03-19
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Senate Meeting Report, 2014-03-19

Colleagues,

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

The meeting began with memorial tributes to Professors Emeriti John E. Moxley and John Osler and Mr. Hervé de Fontenay, presented by Deans Madramootoo, Nicell and Potter respectively.

Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/final_senate_minutes_february_19_2014_0.pdf), the report of the Steering Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_14.pdf) and the agenda (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/agenda_senate_-_march_19_2014.pdf).

In her remarks from the Chair, Principal Fortier indicated that the start of the provincial election campaign which is now underway has created uncertainty in a number of areas. McGill had been scheduled to present a brief to the Commission which is holding hearings on Bill 60, the Quebec Values Charter, but the Commission is now inactive due to the election campaign and it appears unlikely to be reactivated. The Principal recently met for a second time with the co-chairs of the *Chantier sur le financement universitaire*; its report was scheduled to be delivered in June 2014, but its work has now similarly been left up in the air by the election call. Principal Fortier also announced that, as a way of enhancing transparency, her office will be putting her travel and hospitality expenses on the Principal's website and updating this information on a quarterly basis. Following the Principal's remarks, Senator Richard asked her if she could provide some background information on the recent full-page newspaper advertisement in which she and several other principals and rectors described the serious underfunding of Quebec universities. Principal Fortier responded that the purpose of this initiative was to bring to the political agenda an issue which had hitherto been absent from the election campaign.

There being no items in the period reserved for formal written questions, Principal Fortier turned the Chair over to Dean Aitken and provided some introductory remarks for the open discussion of her Vision and Priorities document (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-49_proposed_vision_and_priorities__senate_with_appendix.pdf). The Principal has spent her first few months at McGill meeting and listening to members of the University community; she has started to crystalize some priorities from what she has been hearing and is eager to move to concrete actions. She wishes to know if Senate feels that the priorities outlined in her document are right; if so, these general priorities will be worked out in greater detail.

In the period for discussion, Senator Harpp stressed the importance of making sure that every student who wishes to have a mentor gets one. Senator Zorychta referred to problems which had been encountered with the deployment of software packages such as myCourses and uApply, and asked whether there are plans to address this quagmire. Provost Masi responded that some things need to be centralized and some need to be decentralized. He added that the processes need to be looked at and fixed before going to the step of finding software solutions. This will require consulting people and working with them. Senators Sheridan and Kuzaitis drew attention to the need of students for advisors; Principal Fortier indicated that she had received a report on this subject last week and that she expects to be able to start taking concrete actions by June.

Senator Ferrie commented that McGill is good at generating new work but not at pruning tasks; when we are given something new to do, we don't always respond by asking what we will no longer do.

Senator Lu requested greater institutional support -- possibly from Research and International Relations -- for individuals who are organizing international conferences, so that they are not left to handle the required planning and processing activities on their own. Senator Ngadi noted that most of our classrooms are behind in terms of their technological infrastructure, and that professors are being overwhelmed by the tasks which are being downloaded onto them as resources are withdrawn.

Senator Lach asked whether there is any link between the Principal's document and the allocation of future funds. Principal Fortier responded that if something is deemed to be a priority, a commitment will be made to invest in it at a pace which is possible. Senator Shea remarked that we should only commit ourselves to priorities which are achievable in the current economic context. Senator Stewart-Kanigan suggested making structural changes to encourage professors to take on more independent students, and asked the Principal for her thoughts on paid internships. Principal Fortier expressed the view that, when students engage in internships which have a substantial learning component, they should be paid either in money or in credit (and preferably both). She added, however, that she wants to avoid an inflexible mold which does not take into account differences between faculties.

In closing the discussion, Principal Fortier thanked Senators for their input and said that she will be returning to Senate with specific actions and measurements once these have been defined more clearly.

The Principal resumed the Chair, and Dean Madramootoo presented for adoption the recommendations contained in the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Livestreaming of Senate Meetings (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-50_report_of_the_ad_hoc_committee_to_review_the_livestreaming_of_senate_meetings.pdf). Senator Stewart-Kanigan asked for information about the costs that might be involved if the recordings were archived long-term rather than for the short period of time which is being recommended. Dean Madramootoo responded that the concept of long-term archiving is problematic not so much in terms of its cost but because the potential that the recordings might be misused increases with the length of time during which they are archived. Senate voted on the proposed recommendations and adopted them.

Senate received for information the 454th report of the Academic Policy Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-51_apc_454th_report_with_appendices.pdf) and approved the report of the Senate Nominating Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-52_nominating_report_0.pdf). Senate also received for information the Annual Report on Strategic Enrolment Management (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-53_strategic_enrolment_management_0.pdf), the Annual Report of the Advisory Council on the Charter of Students' Rights (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-54_report_of_the_senate_advisory_council_on_the_charter_of_students1_rights_2014_revised.pdf) and a follow-up report from the Joint Board-Senate Meeting (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d13-55_joint_board-senate_with_appendix.pdf).

The final agenda item was a verbal progress report by Senator Wolfson on the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of Senate Meetings. The Committee, which has met once, is conducting a survey of all Senators; to date, 107 survey emails have been sent out and 29 responses have been received. These responses will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee, which will report back to Senate at the end of the academic year.

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 23, 2014. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

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

