

Senate Meeting Report, 2016-01-13

Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, January 13, 2016.

The meeting began with Principal Fortier presenting a memorial tribute for Chancellor Emeritus H. Arnold Steinberg. Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_minutes_dec.2_2015.pdf), the report of the Steering Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/2_report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_8.pdf) and the agenda (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/1_agenda_-_senate_jan.13_2016.pdf).

As a point of business arising from the minutes of the December meeting of Senate, Dean Nalbantoglu provided follow-up information regarding conflicts of interest between a professor's supervisory obligations to a student and the private commercial interests which the professor might have. Dean Nalbantoglu reported that, according to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS), problems of this nature are quite rare; they amount to only about one out of every 600 cases handled by GPS. To draw better attention to the regulations and policies which already exist in relation to conflicts of interest, the annual tracking forms which are signed by the student, the supervisor and the graduate program director will be modified by the addition of a summary of the definition of conflicts of interest, a link to the relevant web pages, and a box that will need to be checked off. The revised form should be ready by the fall.

In her comments from the Chair, Principal Fortier reported that McGill is participating in the consultations which are presently under way for the preparation of the next federal budget; it is doing so both individually and as part of the U15 and of Universities Canada. McGill will likewise be taking part in the consultations for the preparation of the next Quebec budget. The Principal has been invited to participate in the upcoming Davos Economic Forum. Regarding the former Royal Victoria Hospital site, work on the feasibility study has begun and a Principal's Task Force on the Academic Vision and Mission of the RVH Site has invited academic, administrative and student organizations who might wish to move into the site to submit expressions of interest by mid-February. Principal Fortier has received the report of the advisory group on the planning for McGill's bicentennial in 2021, and will now be working on its implementation. The Principal expressed her thanks to the McGill community for its contributions to the most recent Centraide campaign, which surpassed the \$500,000 fundraising mark.

Under the agenda point for formal questions, a question regarding divestment from fossil fuels was posed by Senators Sobat, Noyhouzer and Ritchie, with a written response being provided by Secretary-General Strople and by V.-P. Goldstein (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/question_and_response_regarding_divestment.pdf).

Senate adopted the 469th report of the Academic Policy Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/5_d15-28_apc_with_appendices.pdf). With regard to the revisions to the Regulations Concerning the Investigation of Research Misconduct, Senator Robaire asked whether members of the McGill community can be required to testify when a case is being investigated. Professor Abraham Fuks, Research Integrity Officer, noted that article 4.4 of the Regulations states, "All Members of the University Community, including Complainants and Respondents, shall cooperate with the RIO and, if one is constituted, the Committee on Research Misconduct," but added that the concept of "cooperate" in this context is porous and has never been tested, given that the issue of compelled testimony has never arisen. He noted that, in general, individuals who are called upon to testify in such cases are asked to do so in the capacity of expert witnesses rather than in a character witness role.

With regard to the establishment of the McGill University Research Centre on Complex Traits, Senator Robaire noted that the English name is somewhat opaque, in contrast with the much more descriptive French name "Centre de recherche de l'Université McGill sur les maladies infectieuses et inflammatoires chroniques." V.-P. Goldstein responded that in the English version of the name the descriptive elements were treated as a subtitle ("McGill University Research Centre on Complex Traits: An Initiative to Cure Infectious and Chronic Inflammatory Diseases"), whereas in the French version they were integrated into the name itself. V.-P. Goldstein agreed to look into the idea of similarly integrating these elements into the English name.

Senate approved the report of the Senate Nominating Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6_d15-29_nominating.pdf). Next, it received for information the Annual Report on Research Performance and Innovation, which was presented by V.-P. Goldstein (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/7_d15-30_annual_report_research_and_innovation_2015.pdf). Senator Hastings asked whether the position of Associate Vice-Principal, Innovation and Partnerships which is mentioned in the report is a new position or a replacement for an existing one; he asked about the role of this position and the source of its funding. V.-P. Goldstein described the answer as being somewhat complicated: the position itself is new, but it is also part of a reorganization process in her office that involves amalgamation and streamlining; overall, the number of management positions will decrease. The position itself is operational rather than academic. Senator Saroyan asked why McGill has not been performing as well in CIHR funding as in previous years. V.-P. Goldstein responded that some analysis has been done by her office but that more in-depth analysis is needed; she hopes to bring more information on this subject to the next Senate meeting.

As the final agenda items, Senate received for information the annual report on Student Life and Learning, which was presented by Deputy Provost Dyens (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/8_d15-31_annual_report_student_life_and_learning_2014-15.pdf), and the report from the Board of Governors to Senate, which was presented by Senator Zorychta (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/9_d15-32_report_bog_to_senate.pdf).

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 17, 2016. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Regards,
Your librarian Senate reps,

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