

Senate Meeting Report, 2017-02-15

Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, February 15, 2017.

The meeting began with Principal Fortier welcoming to Senate V.-P. Administration and Finance Yves Beauchamp and V.P. Communications and External Relations Louis Arseneault. Provost Manfredi then presented a memorial tribute for Professor Emerita Blema Steinberg.

Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate\\_minutes\\_jan\\_18\\_2017.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_minutes_jan_18_2017.pdf)), the report of the Steering Committee ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/2\\_report\\_of\\_the\\_senate\\_steering\\_committee\\_17.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/2_report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_17.pdf)) and the agenda ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/1\\_agenda\\_senate\\_feb\\_15\\_2017.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/1_agenda_senate_feb_15_2017.pdf)). Further to item 4 of the Steering report, the Principal indicated that she will ensure that Senate is informed of the outcome of the review currently being undertaken by the Nominating, Governance and Ethics Committee of the Board of Governors. As an item of business arising from the minutes, Dean Nalbantoglu provided follow-up information on the supervisory workshops which are given at McGill.

Senator Saroyan asked a question pertaining to criteria for the evaluation of the members of the Board of Governors. Secretary-General Rogowska responded that the Nominating, Governance and Ethics Committee conducts an annual review, and that a document summarizing the Committee's report is available online. Senator Robaire asked a question regarding when the Administration learned that the tax status of post-doctoral fellows had changed and when the Administration communicated this information to investigators whose grants would be affected. Dean Nalbantoglu responded that post-doctoral fellows were recognized as employees in 2015, and that it was this recognition which changed their taxation status. Senator Robaire asked why investigators were not told of this change in a more timely fashion. Provost Manfredi responded that taxation status and benefits costs are two separate issues, and that the benefits issue is the subject of ongoing negotiations.

In her comments from the Chair, Principal Fortier referred to recent troubling incidents at McGill, in Quebec and worldwide. She drew attention to the fact that McGill's mission statement includes a statement of principles which reads, "In fulfilling its mission, McGill University embraces the principles of academic freedom, integrity, responsibility, equity, and inclusiveness," and added that we need to commit ourselves to these principles every day. On the subject of government relations, Principal Fortier reported on a recent meeting between the heads of all of Quebec's universities with Minister of Finance Carlos J. Leitão and Minister for Higher Education H el ene David, as well as on a subsequent meeting which Minister Leit ao had with the Principal and with Provost Manfredi. The message communicated to the ministers was that it is time for the government to re-invest in universities. Minister Leit ao was receptive to this message, but it remains to be seen what the next Quebec budget will contain in this regard.

The Principal also reported on her participation in the World Economic Forum in Davos and in the Business / Higher Education Roundtable, on last month's meeting of the U15 with the federal Minister of Science, and on the recent announcement that the QS ranking organization has named Montreal the best student city in the world.

Under the agenda point for formal questions and motions, a question was submitted by Senator Dunn with regard to graduate student teaching at McGill; a response was provided by Provost Manfredi ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate\\_question\\_and\\_response\\_re\\_graduate\\_student\\_teaching\\_a](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_question_and_response_re_graduate_student_teaching_a)

[t\\_mcgill.pdf](#)). Senate also considered a motion from Senator Keita regarding the annual celebration of Black History Month ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/5.\\_d16-36\\_motion-re-recognition-of-black\\_history\\_revised.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/5._d16-36_motion-re-recognition-of-black_history_revised.pdf)), which was adopted.

Senate next conducted an Open Discussion on the draft McGill University Strategic Academic Plan 2017-2022 ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6.\\_d16-37\\_open\\_discussion\\_-\\_strategic\\_academic\\_plan\\_2017-2022.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6._d16-37_open_discussion_-_strategic_academic_plan_2017-2022.pdf)), which was presented by Provost Manfredi. The Provost indicated that the document is intentionally short (currently 4 pages), that it aims to be focused and concise, and that it emphasizes elements which fall under the responsibility of the Office of the Provost and which are achievable within a time frame of five years. It does not replace the University's various other strategic planning documents, of which there are several, but instead helps to connect these other documents. The Provost added that he intends to present on an annual basis a review of what has been accomplished over the past year in relation to the Strategic Academic Plan, as well as an implementation plan for the coming year.

During the course of the discussion, Senator Hastings noted the importance of reducing the administrative burden carried by academic staff, given that it is difficult to be innovative when one is bogged down by these tasks. Senator Saroyan commented that the covering memo's reference to a "transition from a risk-averse culture to a culture of calculated risk-taking at McGill" is problematic, given that no framework of clear principles is provided to guide this transition. She added that it is no helpful to have contradictory rewards systems. Senator Robaire concurred that the reference to a risk-averse culture is confusing, saying that it is not clear to what things currently being done at McGill this phrase refers, and that the reference to a culture of calculated risk-taking is open to interpretation. He suggested that some specific examples might be helpful. Senator Dow noted that innovation can be difficult in programs that have strict accreditation requirements which are set by external bodies.

Principal Fortier thanked Senators for their input. She indicated that the final version of the document will be presented to Senate at a later meeting, and that in the meantime additional feedback by interested individuals on the current draft can be sent to the Provost's Office.

Senate adopted the 478th report of the Academic Policy Committee ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/7.\\_d16-38\\_478th\\_apc\\_report.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/7._d16-38_478th_apc_report.pdf)), and the report of the Senate Nominating Committee ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/8.\\_d16-39\\_nominating\\_report\\_revised.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/8._d16-39_nominating_report_revised.pdf)).

Provost Manfredi and V.-P. Beauchamp presented the McGill University staffing report for 2015-2016 ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/9.\\_d16-40\\_staffing\\_report.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/9._d16-40_staffing_report.pdf)). Senator Richard noted that Table 13 is described by the report as showing "a slight, gradual reduction in the number of full-time tenure-track/tenured librarian staff over the five-year period." He remarked that the same phrase, referring to the same five-year decline, appears in the staffing reports for 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, and that this decline has therefore been going on for the past eight years; he asked whether this was a cause for worry. Provost Manfredi responded that, as the text accompanying Table 13 indicates, this is a strategic decision by the Dean of Libraries.

Senator Snow asked if more employment equity data could be included in future annual staffing reports rather than being presented every two years in a separate report on employment equity. Associate Provost Campbell responded that the biennial requirement is contained in the Employment Equity Policy; the two-year period reflects the fact that this is the minimum amount of time which is needed for movement to be seen. Senator Robaire drew attention to a 9% increase in management staff, and noted that the Administration Excellence Centres (AEC) process is currently being reviewed by the Faculty of

Medicine; he asked whether the AEC process might undergo a University-wide cyclical review. Provost Manfredi responded that AECs fall under the purview of the faculties.

As the final item of business, Senate received for information the annual report on the Advisory Council on the Charter of Students' Rights ([http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/10\\_d16-41\\_advisory\\_council\\_on\\_the\\_charter\\_of\\_students\\_rights.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/10_d16-41_advisory_council_on_the_charter_of_students_rights.pdf)), which was presented by Professor Jane Everett, Chair of the Advisory Council.

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 22, 2017. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Regards,  
Your librarian Senate reps,

Genevieve Gore  
Marc Richard  
Natalie Waters