

Senate Meeting Report, 2014-10-22

Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, October 22, 2014.

The meeting opened with Dean Grant presenting a memorial tribute for Professor Emeritus Joachim Lambek.

Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_minutes_final_september_17_2014.pdf), the report of the Steering Committee (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_18.pdf) and the agenda (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/agenda_-_senate_-_october_22_2014.pdf).

In her remarks from the Chair, Principal Fortier discussed the budget cuts which have been announced by Quebec. McGill's share is a \$15 million decrease which we already know about, to be followed by further cuts (whose amount has not yet been specified) which the provincial government has told Quebec universities to expect later in the academic year, probably in early 2015. The government has also asked Quebec universities to present balanced budgets. There will be two open forums next Monday at which the McGill community will have an opportunity to discuss these cuts.

The Principal indicated that more and more universities in Quebec (including McGill) are asking for a simpler and more flexible funding formula. The government is showing openness towards reviewing the formula, so there is more to come on this subject. In September, the government introduced Bill 10, which provides for a major reorganization of Quebec's health system. McGill has concerns over governance issues raised by this bill; it wishes to ensure that the academic and research mandates of teaching hospitals are clear, and that positive elements related to citizen participation (such as volunteering and philanthropy) are not affected.

On the subject of rankings, the Principal noted that McGill (and Canadian universities as a whole) lost a few spots in the Times Higher Education Supplement ranking, in contrast with the QS ranking which showed Canadian institutions doing better.

In the period for questions and comments following the Principal's remarks, Senator Richard noted that about half of Quebec's universities typically have even larger deficits than McGill; he asked if the government genuinely believed and expected that every university in Quebec was going to balance its budget next year. Principal Fortier responded that the government is urging all universities to balance their budgets as quickly as possible, and is providing incentives (in the form of increased funding) for universities to do so. Few of Quebec's rectors and principals, however, believe that they will be able to balance their budgets this year, in view of the difficulties in absorbing cuts in a fiscal year which is already in progress.

Under the agenda section for formal questions, Senator Moore asked a question regarding a recent statement by the Deputy Provost (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_question_regarding_the_statement_of_deputy_provost_sll.pdf). The question was answered by Deputy Provost Dyens and by Provost Masi (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/response_-_senate_question_regarding_the_statement_of_deputy_provost_sll.pdf).

The next question, from Senators Snyder and Claire Stewart-Kanigan, concerned promoting a safer campus and was answered by Deputy Provost Dyens (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_question_regarding_promoting_a_safer_campus_with_response.pdf).

The final question, from Senator Greenspon, concerned institutional support for Off-Campus Fellows Program. It was answered by the Deputy Provost (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/senate_question_regarding_institutional_support_for_off-campus_fellows_program_with_response.pdf).

Dean Kreiswirth presented for adoption a revised set of Regulations and Guidelines on Graduate Student Advising and Supervision (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-08_regulations_and_guidelines_on_graduate_student_advising_and_supervision_memo_appendix.pdf). Senator Lu indicated that, while she was not in disagreement with the substance of the document, she found it confusing in several respects. She drew attention to the fact that the document is a combination of regulations, guidelines and policies, that it lacks definitions, that despite its title it does not mention advising, and that the document's parts are in no rational order. Senator Lu expressed concern that the document would be difficult to implement because of these problems. Dean Kreiswirth responded that there are hundreds of documents on the McGill website which are not approved by Senate, that it was not possible for the present document to be deemed a policy because otherwise it would have had to go to the Board, that the changes being proposed were modest, that the principles contained in the document had already been endorsed by Senate and that it was time to put it to a vote.

Senator Saroyan noted that article 1.3.1 was problematic because it sometimes happens that a department's only specialist in a field being worked on by a graduate student leaves the University. Senator Pinto stated that the document was critically important for graduate students and their work, and that from a student point of view it was easy and accessible. Senator Hill concurred that the document does a good job of advocating for students.

Senator Richard asked whether the Administration would be willing, if the document were adopted today, to monitor its implementation and to revisit the document with Senate at a later date to correct any flaws that manifest themselves. Dean Kreiswirth agreed with this suggestion, concurring that the document needs to be put into a better order; he noted that there are many other existing documents which will need to be fixed over the long haul. Following a suggestion by Senator Cooke that an expiry date be built into the document, Senate concurred with a proposal by Associate Provost White that the document be reviewed within three years if Senate so determines.

Provost Masi presented for information the annual report of the Academic Policy Committee (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-09_apc_annual_report_memo_appendix.pdf) and the 458th report of the Academic Policy Committee (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-10_458th_report_of_apc_to_senate_october_2014.pdf). Regarding the Course Evaluation Policy, Senator Saroyan asked whether the changes made to the default on the accessibility of the results created any infringement of Quebec law. Provost Masi answered that there is no infringement because the policy is an administrative mechanism and does not involve the collection of dues.

The next agenda item, presented by Provost Masi, was the approval of proposed revisions to the University Statutes pertaining to the composition of Senate (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-11_proposed_revisions_to_statutes_re_composition_of_senate_-_memo_appendices_0.pdf). Regarding section 6.1.1.d, Senator Robaire expressed concerns that Ms could end up being excluded and proposed a

friendly amendment that would address this by reserving two of the six administrative and support staff Senate seats. The proposal was not incorporated into the text of the document.

Senator Stewart-Kanigan noted that the document does not increase student representation to Senate and asked why such an increase had not been entertained. Provost Masi responded that the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Composition of Senate had decided to keep Senate representation more or less under its current configuration, and that no recommendation had been made to increase student proportions. Senator Riches asked Provost Masi to explain why the number of representatives from the Faculty of Education would be going from four to two. The Provost responded that the allocation of Senate representatives does not follow a strictly proportional formula; if this were the case, Senate would need to have about 200 members. The new allocation reflects the number of tenure-track staff that the University has now, which is why the composition of Senate needs to be reviewed at least once every ten years. Senate voted on the document and approved it.

Senate approved the report of the Senate Nominating Committee (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-12_report_of_the_nominating_committee_0.pdf), which was presented by Provost Masi. Senate then received for information the annual report from the Senate Committee on Physical Development (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-13_scpd_memo_report_0.pdf). Regarding the \$8 to \$12M project to repair the Wong Building, whose exterior limestone envelope will be completely disassembled and replaced with new stone, Senator Richard asked why such extensive work was required on a structure built only eighteen years ago and wondered whether there had been flaws in the building's original design and construction. Mr. Robert Couvrette, Associate Vice-Principal (University Services), answered that the problem involves the insulation of the stone; the design was bad, and a lawsuit against the architect and the contractor is in progress. The replacement work has to be done for safety reasons.

The last two agenda items, both presented for information, were the report from the Board of Governors to Senate (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-14_report_from_bog_to_senate_oct_2014.pdf), which was presented by Mr. Ram Panda, and the notice of the Joint Board-Senate meeting of November 4, 2014 (https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/d14-15_notice_joint_bog-senate.pdf), which was presented by Secretary-General Strople.

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

Regards,
Your librarian Senate reps,

Maya Kucij
Marc Richard
Natalie Waters