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From: Marc Richard
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Subject: Senate Meeting Report, 2014-09-17

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Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, September 17, 2014.

Principal Fortier opened the meeting by conveying Provost Masi's regrets for being unable to attend today's meeting. Senate then heard memorial tributes presented for Professor Ellen Aitken by Acting Dean Henderson and for Professor Roderick Macdonald by Dean Jutras.

Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/final_senate_minutes_may_14_2014.pdf), the report of the Steering Committee (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/2._report_of_the_senate_steering_committee_5.pdf) and the agenda (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/1._agenda_-_senate_-_september_17_2014.pdf).

Principal Fortier turned to the business arising from the last Senate meeting. This is a new agenda item which has been introduced as per the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of Senate Meetings, which had also recommended that the May 2014 meeting of Senate be held in the Moot Court Room to assess its suitability compared with Leacock 232. Senators were surveyed after the meeting; Leacock 232, despite its flaws, was regarded as a better venue than the Moot Court Room, which nonetheless could serve as a back-up location if Leacock 232 were to be unavailable. The Ad Hoc Committee had also recommended that a starting time earlier than 2:30 pm be considered for Senate meetings; this recommendation has not been implemented because it would interfere with too many teaching schedules. Some of the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations which have been implemented include: 1) distributing ahead of each meeting written answers to formal written questions from Senators; 2) doing likewise with PowerPoint slides which are to be presented at Senate meetings; 3) distributing Senate dates to student societies, student clubs and athletic groups to provide them an opportunity to set up bake sales/fundraising at the entrance of the Senate meeting.

In her remarks from the Chair, Principal Fortier congratulated the McGill community on a very successful Orientation Week and gave some enrolment statistics for this year. She then turned to the subject of university rankings. In the QS survey, which came out this week, McGill held steady at the 21st rank, just behind University of Toronto's 20th-place ranking. In the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, released in mid-August, McGill dropped from 58th to 67th place; the Principal noted that the Shanghai ranking uses narrower criteria than the QS ranking. Two more rankings are expected in the next few weeks: the one produced by Macleans and the one produced by the Times Higher Education Supplement.

On the subject of government relations (the financial aspect of which she will discuss under the agenda item for formal questions), Principal Fortier reported that she had attended the Quebec government's *Forum des idées* last week. The focus of this three-day meeting was on innovation. On the federal scene, the Standing Committee on Finance is receiving briefs and hearing presentations that will assist the government in preparing the next budget. McGill has submitted a brief and has been invited to appear before the Committee. Principal Fortier will be chairing an AUCC committee on digital infrastructure. As an extension of the Principal's remarks, V.-P. Di Grappa provided an update on the McTavish Street construction work. Based on contractor estimates and on our own observations, it appears that the work will be completed in early November. To enhance pedestrian security, one more signal person has been added to the work site (bringing the total up to four), and improvements in signage and fencing have been made.

In the period allocated for questions or comments pertaining to the Principal's remarks, Senator Richard referred to a recent article in which the Rankings Editor of the Times Higher Education Supplement defined what a university must have to achieve a high ranking, notably the financial resources needed to attract and retain leading scholars and to build facilities. Principal Fortier concurred that a great deal of money is needed to be top-ranked university, but she added that one must also consider what a university does with the resources that it has; if value for money was a ranking criterion, McGill would be first.

Under the agenda point for formal questions, Senators Greenspon, Rourke, Godil and Benrimoh posed a question regarding the potential impact on McGill of the 2014-2015 Quebec budget and spending estimates. Principal Fortier answered the question via a short PowerPoint presentation (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/4a._question_re_qc_2014-15_budget_with_response.pdf) accompanied by some supplementary remarks. Although the government will not be providing McGill with as much money as it had originally promised, it does not appear that this lower level of funding will put McGill into a crisis situation because McGill, in developing this year's budget, had anticipated that this situation might occur. The budget includes various additional investments that the University would have wanted to make if the funding had been available for them, but which will have to be put off in the new financial situation in which we find ourselves. We are still moving in the direction that we want, but not at the pace which we would have wanted.

In response to a question from Senator Hastings about whether she was saying that there would not be cuts, Principal Fortier responded that it's still too early to be sure. McGill only received the government's *règles budgétaires* document in early September, four months into the new fiscal year, and this 180-page document is built around detailed enrolment assumptions which the Administration is now examining to assess their validity. It will take at least a month, and probably longer, to determine how much confidence we can have in the accuracy of the government's enrolment estimates. Moreover, some parts of the funding envelope have not yet been distributed. At the moment, however, it looks as if McGill is reasonably well prepared for the lower funding it will receive.

The second formal question, from Senators Rourke and Stewart-Kanigan, was a follow-up to the Joint Board-Senate Meeting on Mental Health. It was answered by Deputy Provost Dyens (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/4b._question_re_mental_health_strategy_with_response.pdf). The third and final question, posed by Senators Ibrahim and Stewart-Kanigan, concerned the promotion of consent and safer spaces on campus; it was answered by Deputy Provost Dyens (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/4c._question_re_consent_and_safer_spaces_with_response.pdf)

Senate next received for information the annual report concerning the investigation of research misconduct, which was presented by Professor Abraham Fuks, McGill's Research Integrity Officer (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/5._d14-01_research_misconduct_report_memo_and_appendix_2.pdf). Senator Hastings remarked that most of the allegations originated from outside McGill and wondered what might be behind this situation. Professor Fuks answered that the sample size is too small to interpret, but speculated that the situation may reflect a greater awareness of research integrity issues within the academic world. The pressure to obtain grants is perhaps also driving some researchers to push the envelope. There may also be a greater temptation among researchers to try to find fault with the papers of other researchers, given the increasing volume of electronic publications and the availability of tools which can be used to scrutinize them.

Senate approved the report of the Academic Policy Committee, which was presented by Associate Provost White (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6._d14-02_457th_apc_report_with_appendix_2.pdf), and received the annual report of the Committee on Student Services, which was presented by Deputy Provost Dyens (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/7._d14-03_css_annual_report_2013-2014_memo_and_appendix_1.pdf).

Associate Provost White presented the annual report on the Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/8._d14-04_harassment_report_memo_with_appendix_1.pdf). A student Senator noted that most of the cases stop at the inquiry stage, and wondered whether this indicates that the policy is not fulfilling its function. Associate Provost White responded that this interpretation is not necessarily what is going on. The Social Equity and Diversity Education Office is often contacted for information purposes; individuals who do so sometimes choose to pursue their case through other means than the Policy, for instance by going to a Dean. When people go elsewhere, for whatever reason, we can't track what happens subsequently. Senator Lu said that it sounds as if there is a need to collect information on a more global level, so that we can understand how cases are handled in other venues and get a better grasp of the overall situation. Professor White answered that she would look into whether this is feasible, one potential obstacle being that of confidentiality.

Associate Provost White presented for information the annual report of the Joint Board-Senate Committee on Equity (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/9._d14-05_jbsce_memo_and_appendix.pdf). Senate approved the report of the Senate Nominating Committee, which was presented by Dean Grant (http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/10._d14-06_report_of_the_nominating_committee.pdf).

There being no other business in the open portion of the meeting, Senate moved into closed session to consider the report of the Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee.

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2014. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Regards,
Your librarian Senate reps,

Maya Kucij
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Natalie Waters

