



Memorandum

To: Dean David Eidelman

From: Abraham Fuks
Chair, Honours & Awards Committee

Date: December 19, 2016

Re: Criteria and Process for Distinguished University Professors

Background:

The McGill Medal for Outstanding Academic Achievement has been successful in honouring those members of our academic community whose achievements warrant special recognition. However, these are available only upon or shortly after retirement. The James McGill Professorships (108) and Dawson Scholarships (46) have been valuable mechanisms to complement the Canada Research Chairs (157 at McGill) that have permitted us to attract senior and junior scholars to McGill. In total, these three programs now comprise 311 members of the University faculty. At the same time, we note a number of national and international universities that have long standing programs to recognize a small cohort of faculty members who have achieved exemplary status and international recognition in their field of scholarship and who would, at McGill, be likely recipients of the McGill Medal upon retirement. Thus, following a request from Dean David Eidelman, the Honours and Awards Committee reviewed the Distinguished University Professor (DUP) programs or their analogs at nine national and international sister institutions. We are pleased to provide this memorandum with recommendations on criteria and processes for a similar program at McGill University.

Rationale:

Universities are communities based on excellence and merit whose members strive for outstanding achievements in scholarship and teaching. Thus, a program that honours and recognizes the top ranks of the faculty is consonant with and celebrates our values and traditions. We can learn from, for example, the Sterling Professorships at Yale that were established a century ago; there have fewer than two hundred in Yale's history and between thirty and forty at any one time. Harvard's University Professors number in the low twenties. There are currently sixteen University Professors at Columbia and a total of thirty-five since 1964, when the program was instituted. There are currently just under 50 University Professors at the University of Toronto. In all the instances we reviewed, such distinctions are accorded to about 2% of the total tenured and tenure track faculty. In other words, a very small group of colleagues. Appointments of DUPs can provide opportunities for academic celebrations and enhance morale when access to resources are limited—a chronic condition on university campuses in Canada. As well, such appointees may constitute a panel of trusted and wise advisors to the Principal and ambassadors for the University. Finally, such appointments can provide added retention value in competitive environments.

Recommendation:

The Faculty of Medicine recommends that the University establish a Distinguished University Professorship program with the following criteria and characteristics.

1. Distinguished career with achievements that are transformative of discipline or led to the creation of a new field of study
2. International recognition
3. Full Professor at McGill University
4. Excellence in teaching and graduate supervision
5. A cohort of 30 Distinguished University Professors at equilibrium
6. Two possible approaches to equilibrium
 - a. Appointments last for 10 years or until retirement (whichever comes first). Then Distinguished University Professor Emeritus
OR
 - b. Appointments until retirement and appoint three per year over a ten year period—then await retirements for new appointments
7. DUPs meet with the Principal at least two times per year with open agenda.
8. Unrestricted scholars fund of \$10,000 per DUP per annum
9. DUPs serve as Ambassadors and representatives of the University
10. Selection process via Committee Chaired by Principal
11. Featured on University website and letterheads. Perhaps installed at Convocation.

Next Steps:

Review by Faculty Executive demonstrated a preference for 6b rather than 6a. This memo can now proceed to Faculty Council for review and approval and then to the Principal and Provost for consideration.