

## Faculty of Science – Strategic communications plan

The premise of this plan is that a consistent, purposeful approach to communications will help the Faculty of Science achieve its objectives. The first section of this plan identifies areas of the Faculty's activities where the task of communication requires especial attention; it sets out the principles that will guide our approach to communications in these areas; and it lists action items with respect to each of these principles. The second section expands on these action items, providing more detail on how they will be implemented.

### Principle #1 – Helping to provide an outstanding student experience

At the Faculty of Science, our first communications priority centres on our student community. At every step of the way, the quality of our students' time at McGill depends on how well we communicate with them. We must excel in providing students with the information they need to navigate the myriad program and course choices they face on the way to obtaining a degree. Anecdotally, our students tell us they know very little about the content or significance of the research work done by the lecturers standing in front of them. By telling real stories about the research done at McGill and its impact on the community, we will nurture in our students the broad-minded scientific curiosity that brought them here in the first place. We have no less a responsibility to empower our students to become effective science communicators themselves.

#### Action points

- Improve the Faculty of Science website to provide easy access to information about programs, courses, internships, fieldwork, research opportunities etc.
- Create and maintain a Faculty of Science Facebook page to draw students' attention to FoS research
- Develop a pilot project for using Facebook as a platform for student advising
- Provide students with opportunities to participate in science communications by integrating communications into coursework and encouraging involvement in outreach activities
- Develop a communications plan to support the launch of the Office of Science Education
- Foster a culture of diversity and inclusion by highlighting relevant news, events, initiatives, statistics
- Investigate ways to improve the graduate student and international student experience through better communications

### Principle #2 – Enhancing the visibility of the Faculty within the McGill community and beyond

To shed light on the impact of our research and establish ourselves as a trusted voice, we need to build a presence in new media and mainstream news. As a complement the Faculty's output in academic papers and conferences, this form of popular science communication can draw the attention of funding agencies, boost citations, and help build networks that can lead to interdisciplinary research and industry collaborations. While these are all meaningful incentives for our researchers, no less real are the challenges faced in finding the time and developing the skills to participate.

### Action points

- Source and develop stories about research for dissemination through Faculty and McGill channels, including mainstream news, web and social media
- Engage doctoral students to use social media to draw attention to their research
- Connect researchers with training and support resources to facilitate participation in mainstream science communication
- Provide communications support to the Faculty's public outreach programs

### Principle #3 – Supporting a culture of creative, interdisciplinary collaboration

From participating in international projects in particle physics, to tackling the multi-dimensional challenges of sustainability, to interrogating the ethical conundrums of computational science, McGill scientists excel in cutting across disciplinary, institutional and sectorial boundaries. This strength deserves particular attention in our communications, both to call attention to the achievements of our researchers and to highlight the many pathways available to our students to integrate different methodologies and pursue interdisciplinary lines of inquiry.

### Action points

- Source and develop stories to highlight McGill Science's strength in interdisciplinary scholarship
- Align Faculty and departmental websites with an interconnected view of the scientific disciplines, allowing ease of navigation between traditional departments without losing sight of the whole

### Principle #4 – Helping to attract the best students to McGill Science

Providing an excellent student experience is the best way to ensure the Faculty maintains its reputation as a desirable destination for the best new applicants. However, additional strategies are warranted to target specific recruitment objectives at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

### Action points

- Recommend improvements to the Department of Geography website to better explain what the discipline encompasses
- Develop a communications plan for a CEGEP outreach program for EPS with the aim of increasing undergraduate enrolments from Quebec students
- Highlight McGill's and Montreal's attributes to prospective graduate students and recommend improvements to departmental websites to facilitate the search for academic supervisors
- Gather data on why prospective graduate students turn down offers from McGill

## Faculty of Science – Communications objectives

### Objective: Helping to provide an outstanding student experience

Strategy	Tactics and next steps
Enhance ease of access to the information students need about programs and courses	Revise Faculty of Science website's undergraduate section
	Review coordination between Faculty and departmental websites, eliminate duplication of information
	Review integration of eCalendar into Science websites; lobby for more frequent updates to eCalendar
Celebrate excellence of students	Improve website as platform for news and use social media to drive traffic to stories on the website Develop e-newsletter for Faculty of Science students w/ assistance from Communications & External Relations (Envoke)
Engage students in communications activities	Build roster of student photographers, story-tellers to engage in science communications
	Launch science photography competition
	Recruit work-study student to assist with finding and developing Faculty of Science stories
Enhance students' awareness of and contact with life beyond the classroom	Cross-reference McGill's student support services in Science communications (e.g. CAPS, Office of Sustainability etc.)
	Invite to alumni to share their stories of science career paths
Increase students' awareness of opportunities beyond their department/discipline	Develop single-point-of-reference calendar on Faculty of Science website for seminars and events

### Objective: Enhancing the visibility of the Faculty within the McGill community and beyond

Strategy	Next steps - Tactics
Make visual identity and communications consistent across the Faculty	Support Department of Biology in transition to McGill web management system. (Explore using as a pilot to bring remaining non-WMS dept sites over in time)
	Work w/ Communications & External Relations' visual identity guide and assets (like logos, avatars etc.) to assist in standardizing faculty collateral

Strategy	Next steps - Tactics
	Communications group presentation on social media best practices and to introduce standard avatars
Improve the way Science stories are told; create Faculty "voice"	Enable Faculty website to serve as a platform for news
	Develop e-newsletter w/ assistance from Communications & External Relations (Envoke)
	Create and maintain Faculty Facebook page, initially for outbound messaging, then explore as means for students to make contact with the Faculty
	Feed student success stories to McGill-wide channels
	Feed research, faculty stories to McGill-wide channels
Support community outreach initiatives	Provide communications advice and support to Outreach Program Advisor

**Objective:** Supporting a culture of creative, interdisciplinary collaboration

Strategy	Next steps - Tactics
Highlight interdisciplinary research wherever possible	Report on MSI-funded research projects
Increase students' awareness of opportunities beyond their department/discipline	Develop single-point-of-reference calendar on Faculty of Science website for seminars and events

**Objective:** Helping to attract the best students to McGill Science

Strategy	Next steps - Tactics
Improve visibility of specific programs to potential undergraduate students	Recommend improvements to Dept. of Geography website to better explain what the discipline encompasses
	Investigate options for CEGEP outreach program for EPS to attract Quebec students
Improve visibility of advantages of McGill and Montreal for prospective graduate students, especially international students	Build a more extensive 'Graduate' section on the Faculty website to highlight Montreal's ranking as a student-friendly city, funding support provided by McGill etc.
	Improve coordination between Faculty and departmental communications to facilitate access to information for prospective grad students

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Next steps - Tactics</b>
Improve visibility of the Faculty's efforts to support diversity in STEM	Highlight relevant news, events, initiatives, statistics through websites, social media etc.
Gather data on why prospective students turn down an offer from McGill	Check with Enrolment Services to see what data they may have on this. Distribute survey to applicants – refer to Chemistry example