

Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Quitariano, Elbourne, Bede, and Bartlett

RESPONSE FROM: Senator Christopher Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

SUBJECT: The Promotion of Stakeholder Feedback

MEETING DATE: December 1, 2021

PREAMBLE: This question seeks to strengthen feedback processes within the university, particularly involving systems at the University-wide level by contacting stakeholders (faculty, staff, students and administration) most impacted by them, those who implement them and those affected by them.

Over the last few years, new University-wide systems, such as Workday, have been adopted. At the time of conception and implementation, the workload implications of these processes and systems are not always known. Sometimes to implement these systems, procedures are developed without sufficient consideration for the technology or human resources available, which can result in less time of the staff member to dedicate to other priorities. This question seeks to help mitigate unforeseen impacts of these systems and procedures that accompany their implementation, by building more robust and frequent, feedback mechanisms.. Some areas within the University which could see improvements from these mechanisms include:

1. Workday: there are large unresolved problems associated with hiring TAs and graders, which is the bulk of the hiring process, and which have not yet been addressed. Additionally, there are tedious process associated with having to approve letters of reference individually.
2. Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: many tasks which used to be done by the GPS office have been delegated to graduate program directors and graduate program coordinators.
3. McGill Marketplace: There is some inflexibility of the system when purchasing which would be made easier if the creator and/or FST could modify an existing request, without having to disapprove and then recreate the request.

The above examples are not meant to be exhaustive or to single out any particular group or system; they are listed here merely to illustrate how the University could improve by increasing stakeholder interactions. Many reach out for feedback on various practices and procedures; but,

not always to the people most affected by them. We are aware, for example, that deans are often consulted for feedback; without in depth consultation, however, deans are often not aware of the details associated with the work needed to implement changes.

QUESTION:

With all of this in mind, could every report presented to Senate include survey results which look at the effects of University-wide systems on the various stakeholders in the community (students, staff, faculty and administration)?

Could those responsible for establishing or reviewing processes supporting the implementation of University-wide systems, which affect academic staff, start with a comprehensive consultation to gauge the most significant pain points of stakeholders?

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your questions, Senators Quitariano, Elbourne, Bede, and Bartlett.

The policies and regulations by which our community are governed, together with the business processes, software, and other support tools that facilitate the work of academic and administrative staff across the university are devised and selected with a view to ensuring the protection and support of our community, compliance with external authorities, and the best use of University resources. To these ends, it is important that those responsible for such policies and processes consider their effect on stakeholders, and that University community members both understand the impacts of such policies and processes and participate in their implementation.

Stakeholder consultation is built into the process for developing and reviewing all policies and regulations that affect staff and students. For policies and regulations related to academic staff, for example, MAUT is listed as a party that is consulted. During the course of a typical academic year, Senate receives upwards of twenty reports between September and May. We would risk overburdening our community with the addition of twenty surveys for the purposes of Senate to the regular cycle of queries and invitations for sharing information already put to our staff and students.

Major new systems transitions ought always to be implemented with open communication and consideration of the downstream effects of such change. With respect to the most recent major change to the University's administrative structure, the introduction of Workday as a new comprehensive human resource information system, the core principles of the project included a commitment to achieve efficiency and avoid redundancy, while ensuring consistency and compliance in our processes with respect to University policies and external regulations and legislation. Business processes within Workday were designed by users

drawn from across the University, and were later tested by other users similarly drawn from units across the University. This included HR specialists supporting HR processes for both administrative and academic staff, as well as general users. Project leads also met regularly with Faculty representatives and visited Faculties to speak directly with academic staff to apprise them of the changes that would come and solicit feedback during design phases. In the 15 months since the transition, there have been challenges, as there would be with any major change of this sort, but the central team continues to listen to and support local users and processes continue to be refined and improved as a result. Here, user surveys have been implemented to solicit feedback. Likewise, project stewards remain available to community members who have questions or concerns about the new tool or who wish to make suggestions.

Going forward, McGill leadership will continue to ensure that active, sustained stakeholder engagement remains a core part of University planning.
