

Memorandum

Office of Student for Services
3600 McTavish Street, room 4100
Montreal Quebec, H3A 0G3

TO: Senate

FROM: Martine Gauthier, Co-Chair, Committee on Student Grievances

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Committee on Student Services

DATE: September 21, 2022

DOCUMENT #: D22-04

ACTION REQUIRED: ☒ INFORMATION ☐ APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE The annual report of the Committee on Student Services (CSS) is presented to Senate for information.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE The [Terms of Reference](#) of the Committee on Student Services provide that the Committee report annually to Senate. The annual report for 2020-2021 is attached as appendix A. It provides an overview of CSS's activities during the 2021-2022 governance year. A Student Services Update for the 2022-2023 academic year is attached as Appendix B.

PRIOR CONSULTATION N/A

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS N/A

IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS N/A

MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL N/A

APPENDICES Appendix A: Annual Report of the Committee on Student Services
Appendix B: Student Services Update

Annual Report of the Committee on Student Services

2021-2022

Highlights

In 2021-2022, the work of the Committee on Student Services focused on:

- Receiving updates on services and programming by Student Services units;
- Informing committee members of benchmarking, survey results, and other data to gain insight and fuel discussion for the continuous improvement of Student Services;
- Discussing the priorities, projects, and strategic direction of Student Services, including:
 - Our focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion, and advancing the Provost's Office's priorities in this area;
 - Our data-driven service model;
 - Our creation of predictable, integrated planning cycles;
 - The adoption of a new project-based approach;
 - Our efforts to re-center Student Services programming on specific skill sets with clear outcomes; and
 - Building a model around information, navigation, and student connection, including peer-to-peer programs, community partnerships, and collaboration with the faculties.
- Welcoming SSMU to present their Academic Wellness proposal and providing a forum for discussion and feedback on their approach to wellness;

- Discussing practices, strategies, and barriers to improving representation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour) staff in our services; and
- Strategizing on visibility and awareness within the campus community.

Mandate of the Committee

The Committee on Student Services (CSS) advises the Executive Director on the objectives and priorities relating to Student Services. CSS has a mandate to meet regularly to review Student Services initiatives based on reports from the Service Directors and Advisory Boards, formulate and promote policies in support of planning, and provide advice on budgetary matters.

2021-2022 Membership

- Executive Director, Services for Students (co-Chair) - Ms. Martine Gauthier
- Associate Dean (Student Affairs) Macdonald Campus - Professor Valerie Orsat

Two associate deans (student affairs and/or graduate and postdoctoral studies) or equivalent:

- Dr. Aimee Ryan (Biomedical BSc., Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, FMHS)
- Professor Manuel Balan (Associate Dean, Student Affairs, Faculty of Arts)

Two directors of Student Services:

- Richard Hink, Director of Communications
- Darlene Hnatchuk, Director of Career Planning Services

Three representatives appointed by Senate:

- Bassam Khoury, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology
- Nancy Czernmel, Director, Student Life and Learning, Faculty of Law
- Eric Galbraith, Professor Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences

Senior representative from GPS:

- Professor Nathan Hall (Associate Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies)

Three graduate students:

- Vacant
- Vacant
- Vacant

Student representative from Macdonald Campus:

- Sean Clarke (AES)

Six representatives of undergraduate Student Societies (three of whom shall be from Arts, Science, Engineering, Management, or Education):

- Claire Downie (ARTS)
- Karla Heisele Cubilla (ARTS)
- Darshan Daryanani (ARTS)
- Christian Tonnesen (SCIENCE)
- Zeke Bertrand (ARTS)

Resource persons with speaking rights, but no vote:

- From Student Services: EDI Advisor, Director of Operations, Director of Communications, Director, Strategy, Assessment and Evaluation
- Representatives from UA, SLL units, TLS

Secretary:

- Caroline Arpin, Administrative Manager, Office of the Executive Director, Student Services

Dates of Committee Meetings:

- September 27, 2021
- November 22, 2021
- January 24, 2022
- March 14, 2022 (postponed for lack of student attendees)
- April 12, 2022 (cancelled for lack of student attendees)

Participation Challenges

Due to lack of student participation, the committee was unable to move forward on many planned agenda items.

The March 14th meeting was postponed in favor of waiting for additional participation from student committee members. After soliciting their input, a new meeting date was selected on April 12th. That meeting also had to be cancelled for lack of student participation.

Student participation is key to advancing the important work of the Committee. The terms of reference (TOR) were updated during the 2020-2021 academic year, ensuring student-staff parity not only in membership but also by establish co-chairs—a student committee member and the Executive Director of Student Services. It is difficult to move forward without active engagement from student members, and we will explore more solutions to this problem in the upcoming year.



McGill

Student Services
Services aux étudiants

D22-04 Appendix B

Student Services Update

September 2022

Martine Gauthier

Executive Director, Services for Students

In 2021-2022, Student Services has continued the important work of connecting our services into an easy-to-use, holistic support system for our students. Lessons learned from the continuing pandemic have provided us with an opportunity to reimagine our programming, our projects, and the tools and approaches we use. At the centre of all of this is a firm commitment to building equity, diversity, and inclusion into everything we do, and this is reflected in the strategic direction framework we have developed to guide us through for the next three years.

While our full Annual Report will be presented to the Committee on Student Services in October, I am delighted to provide the Senate with this update on our accomplishments this year in Student Services.

Strategic Directions

In developing our “Strategic Directions,” we have renewed our vision and mission of McGill Student Services. My vision of Student Services is based on a comment made by a student leader during an early visioning session for the Student Wellness Hub. When asked what kind of support students needed, he responded, “a compass... but with a heart.”

This simple idea—that students need help getting their bearings and navigating university life, and that the help should come from a place of warmth and caring—guides our action today and is at the heart of how we imagine the future of our services.

We want to empower every student to flourish in their academic journey and beyond.

Our mission is to “help students navigate university life and achieve their academic goals by providing accessible and inclusive support services, campus and community connections, and opportunities for professional and personal growth in a welcoming and caring environment, virtually and in-person.”

To achieve this mission, we have adopted a set of Strategic Directions to guide us forward over the next three years. The pandemic has taught us that we may need to adapt and pivot around the uncertain at a moment’s notice. Rather than a traditional strategic plan that risks being shelved when its context changes significantly, we’ve opted to set broader parameters that will allow us to “re-route” along the way to our destination.

All our individual projects and performance objectives will be articulated and evaluated using this common framework, helping align our action to move us forward in these directions.

Improving Student Access and Navigation

- We will continue to add intuitive and accessible entry points to our services based on student needs.
- We will continue our existing projects to book online appointments and, where possible, expand them to other Student Services areas.
- We will develop a new focus on information and navigation, create new ways to access information about our services, and provide more assistance for students navigating student life based upon student need and the student lifecycle.
- We will continue integrating platforms as much as possible to minimize the number of systems used by students.
- We will apply a “student experience” lens to everything we do, analyzing how students are using our services and improving processes and procedures from a student—rather than an operational—perspective.

Creating Future-Ready Students

- We will include skills development elements in as many of our activities as possible to foster lifelong skills and habits that promote holistic personal, professional and academic well-being.
- We will provide learning opportunities for career development and cultivating well-being early in the student lifecycle so that students can begin engaging with these topics in smaller, less intensive offerings.

- We will adopt approaches where students, their peers, and professionals co-create goals, empowering students to make their own decisions and chart their own course.

Building Community and Connections

- We will coordinate diverse and inclusive partnerships with community organizations to better connect our students to activities and services in Montreal.
- We will coordinate and harmonize our peer programs.
- We will focus on academic success and community-building throughout the student life-cycle, continuing to add additional supports for student transitions.

Practising Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- We will embed equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-oppression into all of our services, systems, processes, procedures and all other activities.
- We train staff and build their capacity, including coaching and communities of practice, to help staff better understand intersectionality and to transform their training into action.
- We will increase representation as much as possible within the full-time staff through the hiring process and by removing barriers to retention and growth for staff with lived experience (e.g., BIPOC, staff living with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+).
- We will use data to make our programming more inclusive and more relevant to students' needs, particularly for Black students, Indigenous students, students living with disabilities, and other students facing systemic barriers.

Harnessing Data and Technology

- We will collect feedback in a modern, user-friendly way, helping us better understand our students and identify gaps in accessing services.
- We will serve as the authoritative source of data on the student experience, compiling data, sharing insights and reporting back to the University community.
- We will be accountable for the continuous improvement of our services and activities, collecting and acting upon data about the services we offer and about how students are navigating their student experience.

These strategic directions form the building blocks for progress and create a framework for decision-making and resource allocation across Student Services. They

identify key areas in which to focus our efforts in realizing our vision of Student Services and will help us define outcomes and the metrics by which to assess our progress.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

This year, Student Services focused its efforts on building the capacity of all our employees to design and deliver an inclusive and equitable experience to every student. From half days of all-staff EDI training aimed at raising awareness of key EDI issues, to intimate workshops where crucial inclusive living skills can be practised, our focus has been on providing our teams with practical tools and knowledge to approach EDI-related issues more confidently.

Several of our annual half-day training sessions were dedicated to EDI; an initial session in November 2021 presented the key pillars of our training plan and the Student Services Anti-Black Racism Plan. This was followed in December by presentations on building awareness of Canadian history from Black and Indigenous perspectives with Prof. David Austin and an exploration of how this history affects us today with Dr. Lana Potts, MD, a family physician at the Siksika Health & Wellness Centre, Indigenous health expert and a founding member of the Aboriginal Wisdom Council. In February, we came together again for an anti-racism workshop with Dr. Debra Thompson, Canada Research Chair in Racial Inequality in Democratic Societies and Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science here at McGill. A final workshop covering positionality, intersectionality and allyship was facilitated by Dr. Joseph Smith in March.

Recognizing that presentations and training alone will not create the transformational change we are seeking, we are following up these sessions with a custom-built staff coaching program in 2022-2023 that will help our team put these values into practice. I look forward to reporting back on this program next year.

Planning for the Year Ahead

Nearly all the administrative work that we must accomplish every year follows an annual cycle. From budgets that must be proposed to reports that need to be prepared, there is a relatively predictable ebb and flow that structures the administrative side of Student Services. Over the years, these timelines and deadlines have been documented by the different offices that do the work in a patchwork collection of different guides, policies, and other documents.

For the first time, we have brought all these different processes together to create a single planning cycle to be implemented across Student Services. The tool, which will

be linked to our staff intranet, will provide a clear guide of all the processes, deadlines and other administrative functions that need to be completed throughout the year and how they are interrelated to one another.

All our offices will submit funding requests, position requests, data and reports according to the same timeline, ensuring that we are better aligned and that resources are allotted efficiently and in line with the five strategic directions.

Making Progress, Project-by-Project

All the big picture goals we set are ultimately composed of individual projects, each with different tasks, timelines, and stakeholders. We relied heavily on a more structured project-management approach in developing the Student Wellness Hub, and the success of that implementation left us with the conviction that we should introduce a more standard approach to project management across Student Services.

In late 2021, three cohorts of our management teams participated in project management training provided by McGill Executive Institute Lloyd Bartlett. Thirty-five staff members who play important roles in developing, implementing, and keeping our projects on task attended three half-day sessions focusing on:

- applying tools and techniques to support project development from idea to delivery and implementation;
- incorporating change management practices into the project management process;
- communicating and engaging effectively about projects with decision makers, team members and stakeholders;
- anticipating, understanding, and adapting to project challenges;
- understanding the key roles of those involved in project work; and
- sharing common principles and terminology to support better collaboration between teams.

We have begun implementing this approach across Student Services, and all of our major projects are articulated using a common set of tools and vocabulary and tracked using the same software and methods. We are better able to track how our projects fit together and how developments in one project might have an impact on others.

Creative Solutions, by Design

Being equipped with a solid set of project management tools is important, but we also want to ensure that the projects we pursue are innovative, creative solutions that will have a genuine impact on our students' success and well-being.

To achieve this, our entire team of Student Services directors attended an intensive, two-week "boot camp" in Design Thinking. These tailored workshops, facilitated by Faculty of Management instructor and consultant Jared Lee, were developed to help us look at the challenges students face from their point of view and to provide us with tools to prototype and improve solutions based on user feedback.

Using this human-centred, creative approach to problem solving, Student Services directors split into project teams to apply the design-thinking process to some of the real-life challenges facing Student Services. Each team came conducted in-depth interviews with students to better understand how *they* understood the problems we had identified and then used those insights to develop creative solutions. They then created prototypes of their solutions, letting students test how they would work and provide feedback on how to improve the designs. Each of the solutions proposed—from mobile programming to new ways to provide information through the McGill app and an onboarding program to connect new students with campus jobs—were well received by students and include useful, concrete elements that we can implement into our services.

Even more importantly, our directors—and soon, our wider leadership structure—will be trained on how to apply this methodology to develop creative solutions and rapidly prototype and improve based upon the experience and feedback of our students. We're excited to face the opportunities ahead of us with the problem-solving tools that design thinking provides.

Service Highlights

Across all our areas, Student Services continued to have a significant impact on student well-being. More than 25,800 students participated in 821 events this year, including workshops, webinars, social gatherings, conferences, and other programming, even with the continued impact of COVID-19 on our ability to gather without restrictions. We answered 122,087 e-mail requests, 40,692 phone requests, and offered 24,170 one-on-one appointments with students. Our large collection of websites provided information to 1,873,245 users across all our services.

Below we provide a few items particularly noteworthy items, identified by our service areas, that highlight the exceptional work of their teams this year. While not an

exhaustive list, this gives you a sense of the wide range of services and activities we offer for students.

Campus Life & Engagement

Campus Life & Engagement (CL&E) supports all McGill students by connecting them to resources and creating meaningful opportunities for involvement. CL&E guides students in navigating the McGill student experience through orientation and transition programming and by providing student life opportunities across campus for students to develop their interests and skills.

New Student Mentorship Program

- Paired incoming students (undergraduate and graduate) with a returning student, helping them navigate their transition to university. In 2022, the program was reimagined to include structured opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet.

Career Planning Service

The Career Planning Service (CaPS) supports undergraduate and graduate student career and leadership development through career counselling and advising, skills development workshops, experiential learning and career exploration programs, mentoring, and career and networking events. As the University's central career service, CaPS provides a wide variety of resources and tools to help students search for part-time/summer jobs, internships, and post-graduation opportunities with the goal of helping students become career-ready now and for their futures.

Micro-Exp Program

- Developed a week-long micro Co-Curricular Work-Integrated Learning program to allow early year students gain knowledge, skills and experiences in their area of career interest.
- Created 440+ opportunities for micro-placements or micro-projects with employers. 474 students completed their Micro-Exp with 94% indicating they would recommend the program to a friend.

Space and Programming Enhancements

- Unveiled the Career/Life Design Lab in the former career library space, encouraging interactive and collaborative learning.

- Developed an online course “*Preparing for Your Internship: For Undergraduate Students*” (in collaboration with faculty career and internship offices), supporting students in organizing themselves and finding the necessary information for a successful internship.
- Delivered the *Industry Insiders* series providing insights into various industries and featuring speakers working in the field. Topics include film and television, data science, medical affairs, teaching in CEGEP, environmental careers, and more.

Communications

Student Services Communications includes our full-time communications staff and our growing peer information service, AskMcGill. Last year, when COVID restrictions meant that students were returning to a sparsely populated campus, our AskMcGill team responded to the challenge by rapidly expanding and providing pop-up information kiosks to help welcome students back to campus after the pandemic interrupted in-person studies.

AskMcGill

- Assisted approximately 7,000 students navigate their return to campus during the first four weeks of the 2021-2022 academic year.
- Provided regular kiosks operating throughout the year in as many as 10 buildings around campus.

Student Services Communications

- Deployed a new design platform across Student Services allowing areas to develop consistent graphics, videos and other visual assets while promoting a consistent visual identity and more engaging information for students.

International Student Services

International Student Services (ISS) provides a range of services and resources for international students including orientation webinars, immigration advising, health insurance guidance, and social and cultural programming and events. Main highlights last year included:

myISS – a new Electronic Record System

- Facilitated and streamlined the way students interact with ISS for immigration documents and advice, scheduling appointments, and uploading documentation securely.

- Improved triage of Requests for Information (RFI), including categorization, prioritization, and routing to staff while reducing our response time to students.

Enhanced First-Friend Program

- Partnered with Campus Life & Engagement during the pandemic, to pair students with a fellow student in the same time zone, helping students to feel supported and connected before arriving on campus.
- Modified the program this year to connect students with someone in their geographic region after identifying that immigration document delays were distressing for many students.

McGill-UQAC French Immersion Program

- Granted International students the opportunity to study French in a region providing nearly full immersion and to live with a local family in Saguenay.
- Prepared students for the Quebec labour market, especially for those in fields requiring they pass a French test (engineers, dieticians, etc.).
- Received over 200 applications with 50 selected to participate, each receiving a \$3000 stipend. Additional funds available (need-based) from SSAO.

McGill Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (MORSL)

The McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (MORSL) provides multi-faith resources and programming for the religious and spiritual well-being of all McGill students. MORSL offers support to students across the religious, spiritual, and secular spectrum and encourage students' spiritual exploration through workshops, events, publications, and a lounge and meditation space.

Parliament of the World's Religions

- Participated in this virtual event along with 8000 attendees from around the world, with the purpose of fostering interreligious harmony and addressing critical contemporary issues
- Led a cohort of 14 students over a two-month period in the fall, who were engaged in dialogue surrounding diverse cultures and faith identities, through access to 575 live workshops offered (including three organized by MORSL)

Did You Know? Student Panel Series

- Designed a series of panel discussions promoting interfaith relations and literacy, raising awareness of diverse religious traditions and practices on McGill campus
- Held three panels with students from the Abrahamic faiths (Islam, Christianity, Judaism), creating safe spaces for learning and sharing experiences and strengthened ties among campus faith clubs and the student body

Meaning Making Workshop Series

- Designed and piloted a new series of 6 workshops aimed to aid students connect their search for meaning and purpose with their university life, providing guided activities to help students draw on their own spiritual resources to build resilience, forge connections and compose meaning from their experiences.

Operations

Student Services Operations team provides the organizational expertise enabling us to offer a wide range of support to McGill students. Responsible for human resources, finance, and IT systems, Operations plays a key role in supporting the other service areas that focus on direct support of student development and holistic well-being.

New Roles and Initiatives

- Created roles to support implementation of IT platforms and developing our capacity to deliver and integrate IT systems to improve students' experience when interacting with our services.
- Developed and launched a welcome session for newly hired staff to assist with onboarding, connecting them with new colleagues and leadership. These sessions provide an overview of Student Services, how it fits into Student Life

and Learning, and covers our values, mission, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives.

- Completed our Strategic Planning Cycle, mapping out essential information, documents, and processes and where they occur throughout the year. This will inform our strategic activities and better support the student experience in years to come.

Scholarships & Student Aid Office

The Scholarship and Student Aid Office provides resources and advice to help students pay for their cost of studies, administers all provincial, federal and U.S. government student financial assistance programs, as well as offers financial wellness education with a focus on budgeting, and debt management. They offer Entrance Scholarships, as well as bursaries, interest-free loans and a Work Study Program based on financial need.

Increased Student Funding

- Disbursed \$21.3M in bursaries to students in financial need, an increase of 11% over the previous year thanks to generous donors and University contributions.
- Strengthened recruitment efforts with 14% more entrance scholarship offered and 12% more entrance bursaries increased over the previous year.
- Provided an additional relocation supplement to cover complex and costlier travel due to COVID-19 to all newly admitted international students who received Fall 2021 entrance bursaries.

Enhanced Financial Support for Indigenous Students

- Increased funding from Indspire partnership, as well as targeted University and donor contributions, led to a 350% increase in awards and need-based aid for undergraduate Indigenous students

Student Accessibility & Achievement

(formerly the Office for Students with Disabilities/Tutorial Services)

Student Accessibility and Achievement provides accommodations to students with documented disabilities (temporary, permanent, or episodic), as well as additional learner support for students facing barriers in university, with or without documented disability. Resources include webinars, a tutor-matching program, academic strategies programming, and more.

Access Services Advising

- Provided nearly 2170 student appointments during Fall 2021 and Winter 2022.
- Experienced a 32% increase in student registration in Fall 2021 alone, which has a direct impact on exam centre operations as 85% (2,677) of OSD students receive exam-related accommodations.

Learner Support

- Added an Assistive Technology Support Specialist, who helps students using adaptive technology overcome their barriers with the right tools.
- Received funding through the *Plan d'action* grant that allows the hiring of a second Learner Support Specialist who develops and implements programming for students needing targeted supports to overcome academic barriers, regardless of any documented disability.
- Responded to 2140 requests for tutoring (downtown and mac campus).

Exam Centre

- Provided nearly 5,000 exam accommodations between Fall 2021 and Winter 2022, plus an additional 3,000 exams during the final exam periods. This was the first all in-person final exam period since pre-pandemic times.
- Streamlined processes for collaboration with many units across McGill, including the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, the School of Continuing Studies, and Enrolment Services.

Strategy, Assessment and Evaluation

The Strategy, Assessment, and Evaluation team analyzes student needs across Student Service areas. Gathering data through surveys, interviews, focus groups and other means, the team uses best practices to analyze and report back on our programming and continuously improve the student experience.

- Awarded a \$25,000 Bell Let's Talk Postsecondary National Standard Student Mental Health ("the Standard") implementation grant to conduct an assessment of campus readiness for further supporting student mental health. The assessment was launched in November 2021, beginning with an audit tool for the Standard and interviews with over 120 members of the community.

Preliminary results from the interviews highlight positive changes to practices and policies related to student mental health implemented by the Student Wellness Hub,

including increased access through local wellness advisors, flexible service offerings and new online tools that promote resilience.

Findings and proposed next steps will be shared with the community later in the Fall to raise visibility about student mental health. Our next steps will be shared with student leaders who have developed a Student Wellness Academic Plan to align with existing initiatives on campus.

Student Wellness Hub

The Student Wellness Hub provides a range of health services to students with a focus on awareness, prevention, and early intervention. The Hub is home to a variety of clinicians that provide one-on-one appointments, therapy groups and other services. Within the Student Wellness Hub, the Healthy Living Annex focuses on health promotion and offers peer support programs for both the Macdonald and downtown campuses.

Local Wellness Advisors (LWAs)

- Acting as mental health supports within faculties and services across campus, and orienting students towards the appropriate resource, LWAs are an essential and key piece to the “hub and spoke” model of the Student Wellness Hub.
- Created two Local Wellness Advisor positions specializing in the needs of our Black, Indigenous, and Person of Colour (BIPOC) and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual+ (2SLGBTQIA+) student communities, with additional expansion planned in the upcoming year.

Student Satisfaction

- Received an 86% satisfaction rate for customer service, while experience with professionals received an 89% satisfaction rate.

Looking Forward

I’m exceptionally proud of our team in Student Services. As you can see from these highlights, we provide an extensive range of services that can have a positive impact on nearly every aspect of our students’ lives—that’s the holistic support system that we’ve worked so hard to build.

The accomplishments of our individual service areas are impressive, but it’s together that we’re helping students forge their own path forward and accomplish their goals.

It's an exciting time in Student Services. We're already seeing the impact of our common project management framework and the creative solutions we can find with design thinking. Our entire team will continue to work together on our EDI journey, learning and growing each and every week as we make our spaces more welcoming and inclusive. I'm very much looking forward to reporting back on our progress over the next few years as we continue to move forward.