



# Memorandum

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**TO:** Senate  
**FROM:** Professor Suzanne Fortier, Principal and Vice-Chancellor  
**SUBJECT:** Report of the Joint Board-Senate Meeting (2019)  
**DATE:** December 4, 2019  
**DOCUMENT #:** D19-27  
**ACTION REQUIRED:**  INFORMATION    APPROVAL/DECISION

**ISSUE** The report of the Joint Board-Senate Meeting held on November 14, 2019, is presented for information.

**BACKGROUND & RATIONALE** Article 6.3.9.1 of the Statutes of McGill University states:  
*The Senate and Board of Governors shall hold an annual joint meeting in the fall term. At this meeting, the Principal, the Provost, the Deputy Provost, and the vice-principals, as appropriate, shall present for discussion matters they consider relevant to the University’s mission for the ensuing year.*  
At the joint Executive Committee/Senate Steering Committee meeting of March 28, 2019, the following topic was proposed and agreed upon for the 2019 joint Board-Senate meeting: “How can McGill be a Model of an Open, Connected and Purposeful University?” The Joint Board-Senate meeting was held on November 14, 2019.

**PRIOR CONSULTATION** N/A

**SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS** The Joint Board-Senate meeting is an annual meeting that provides a sustainable framework for the University governing bodies to discuss topics relevant to the University’s mission.

**IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS** The report will be presented to the Board of Governors on December 5, 2019.

**MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL** This item is presented for information

**APPENDICES** Appendix A: Report of the Joint Board-Senate Meeting of November 14, 2019  
Appendix B: Evaluation



## **Report of the Joint Board-Senate Meeting of November 14, 2019**

The Chancellor welcomed the 72 Senators, members of the Board of Governors and guests attending the joint meeting. He reminded participants that the annual joint meeting provides an opportunity for Senators and members of the Board of Governors to explore important matters affecting the University's mission. He then presented a brief progress report on the 2018 Joint Board-Senate meeting on "How could McGill transform itself for a world of lifelong learning?"

The Principal introduced the meeting's topic, "How can McGill be a Model of an Open, Connected and Purposeful University?" She mentioned that this topic is of particular importance to the University as it is articulated in the University's Strategic Academic Plan, which is guided by the vision of a university that is:

1. Open to new ideas, other ways of looking at the world; open to cultural and human diversity; open to new ways of doing things;
2. Connected to its local and global community; connected across disciplines, boundaries of geography and sectors; and
3. Imbued with a clear sense of purpose.

The Principal then presented the five key objectives of the Strategic Academic Plan: Be open to the world, expand diversity, lead innovation, connect across disciplines and sectors, and connect with our communities. She also highlighted the Strategic Research Plan (SRP), which reaffirms McGill's commitment to five goals including: Problem solving through collaboration and Partnership and serving society. She underlined the importance of facilitating interdisciplinarity and connecting across disciplines and sectors in order to solve worldwide problems, such as climate change.

The Principal ended her remarks by stating that as McGill prepared to celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was important to keep in mind the University's mission, which is "the advancement of learning and the creation and dissemination of knowledge, by offering the best possible education, by carrying out research and scholarly activities judged to be excellent by the highest international standards, and by providing service to society." She noted that the reflections at the joint meeting would help shape how the University could transform its academic programs, strategic initiatives and priorities in order to become a leading model of an open, connected and purposeful university.

Professor Henry Mintzberg (Desautels Faculty of Management) and Ms. Susan Mintzberg (PhD candidate, School of Social Work) introduced the topic with a presentation entitled "*Looking Down – Reaching Out: The University in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*" which proposed contrasting views of today's universities: the Ivory Tower Model, which shows a university that is 'looking down from the Ivory Tower'; and the Octopus Model, which presents a university that is reaching out. They concluded that the model of the university in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is evolving towards the

octopus idea, which supports the image of universities as more open and connected, with a sense of purpose that promotes internal collaborations and outreach to the greater community.

The meeting also included presentations touching on the meeting topic from:

- Ms. Katya Marc (Faculty of Engineering Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre (Engine)) on the Faculty of Engineering's role in supporting technological innovation and entrepreneurship;
- Professor Doina Precup (School of Computer Science) on McGill's role in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Revolution; and
- Professor Nandini Ramanujam (Faculty of Law) on the McGill Center for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP), which facilitates dialogue and fosters networks for advancing global justice.

Following the presentations, Senators and Governors engaged in roundtable discussions on the following question, which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

*What do you consider to be the top opportunities and challenges with respect to McGill's objective to be a model of an open, connected and purposeful 21<sup>st</sup> century global university?*

- a. In the immediate term?*
- b. In the medium term? [within 5 years]*
- c. In the long term? [within 10 years]*

Groups were assigned specific elements of the question (a, b, or c) to address during their discussions. Each group had a discussion leader to facilitate the exercise.

The questions generated lively discussion. At the end of the discussion, participants shared with the general group, in an open discussion format, comments and ideas discussed at their tables with respect to McGill's objective to be a model of an open, connected and purposeful 21<sup>st</sup> century global university. The main ideas that emerged from the discussion are:

- McGill benefits from an international and diverse community, which allows for greater exchange of ideas and perspectives.
- Participants expressed that to be able to take advantage of that diversity, the University must break the silos that exist between faculties, departments and programs. There also needs to be more collaborative teaching and research, and more interdisciplinarity. Participants gave examples including joint programs and generalized courses on topics such as community outreach and climate change. It was noted, however, that there were already initiatives at the University, such as McGill Engine and the McGill Dobson Centre for Entrepreneurship, that were successful in building connections and providing experiential opportunities to students.
- Participants identified the need to rethink the tenure promotion criteria to place more emphasis on engagement and other ways of disseminating research. This would encourage Faculty members to invest more time in making connections internally and with the community and in staying relevant.

- Space was found to be a challenge on campus. However, it was noted that the University was investing in improving the physical resources and technologies to transform the campus and provide collaborative and innovative environments for students, faculty and staff. The New Vic Project and the Fiat Lux Library Project were highlighted as examples that would provide collaborative spaces in the near future.
  
- Participants concluded that increased efforts and funding were needed to design additional opportunities for the University to become more open, connected and purposeful, recognizing that there were already successful examples and that some faculties were, by nature, more connected to the community, such as the Faculties of Medicine, Law and Education. It was also noted that in building more partnerships, space outside the McGill campus would become available and relieve some of the current space pressures.

Feedback provided from Senators and members of the Board of Governors was generally positive (see Appendix B) and will be taken into account in planning future Joint Board-Senate meetings.

**McGill Joint Board-Senate Meeting - November 14, 2019  
Evaluation**

**Total number of attendees = 72**  
**Number of surveys completed = 42**  
**Response rate = 58%**

**Level of satisfaction with:**

<b>Guest Speakers:</b>	Majority of respondents indicated that the guest speakers' presentations were very interesting, informative and highly relevant.
<b>Meeting Materials:</b>	30.95% were very satisfied 40.47% were satisfied 26.19% were neutral 2.38% were dissatisfied
<b>Roundtable Discussion Format</b>	50% were very satisfied 35.71% were satisfied 14.28% were neutral
<b>Location:</b>	61.91% were very satisfied 33.33% were satisfied 2.38% were neutral 2.38% were dissatisfied
<b>Time allotted:</b>	40.47% were very satisfied 45.24% were satisfied 4.76% were neutral 9.52% were dissatisfied
<b>Did the overall session fulfill your expectations?</b>	Yes, completely = 35.71% Yes, somewhat = 64.28%