

Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Fatima Anjum and Ahmer Wali

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

SUBJECT: Question and Response Regarding McGill’s Commitment to Access to Education

MEETING DATE: April 19, 2018

PREAMBLE: Whereas, McGill’s Strategic Academic Plan for 2017-2022 states: “McGill will strive to be a leading example of the global university by expanding our reach, by facilitating the mobility of our faculty and students, **by welcoming new faculty and students from across the world**, by ensuring the world is reflected in our research and in our curriculum and pedagogy, and through a commitment to preparing our graduates to be global citizens”¹;

Whereas recent restrictions on mobility, such as the “travel ban” in the United States, have had significant effects on community members’ ability to participate in academic opportunities such as “research partnerships, international studies, academic conference participation, field visits and in some cases family relationships of our university students, faculty and staff”²;

Whereas, McGill has in the past implemented financial aid, admission flexible requirements, amongst other measures, to support current or potential university members adversely affected by the March 6th United States Travel Ban³ and its related policy decisions;

Whereas, McGill has in the past contributed to and therefore increased the capacity of the World University Services of Canada student fee, which sponsors new refugee students to complete a degree at McGill⁴;

Whereas McGill is affiliated with the Canadian Bureau of International Education, which is a member association of the International Institute of Education, an organization that supports international displaced students with scholarship access;

¹ <https://www.mcgill.ca/provost/article/mcgill-university-strategic-academic-plan-2017-2022>

² <https://www.univcan.ca/media-room/media-releases/statement-response-u-s-executive-order>

³ <https://www.mcgill.ca/principal/communications/statements/statement-response-us-executive-order>

⁴ “[McGill to increase refugee-student placements.](#)” McGill Reporter, Sep. 25, 2015

Whereas McGill is a member of the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI)⁵, an initiative that aligns institutions of higher education with the United Nations in supporting and contributing to the realization of United Nations goals and mandates, including the promotion and protection of human rights, access to education, sustainability and conflict resolution⁶;

QUESTION:

1. As a world class institute, how does McGill see its role within the academic community with respect to issues of access to education for international students?
2. How can McGill adapt to the changing international socio-political realities which impact student mobility and ability to access post-secondary education?
3. What financial and other resources does the University currently have to specifically address the needs of refugees and displaced persons' experience in applying, enrolling and completing a degree at McGill?

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your question, Senators Anjum and Wali.

Nearly 30% of McGill's students hold citizenship of countries other than Canada. In 2016-17 more than 12,000 students represented 150 countries around the globe. We take pride in the diversity of our community and also recognize that navigating an international education can present particular challenges for our students.

For students who may be refugees or displaced persons in particular, the University has some discretion with respect to the sorts of official documentation normally required of applicants. For example, on a case-by-case basis, for refugees or victims of natural or human generated disasters, Enrolment Services may extend deadlines for the submission of transcripts, accept alternate forms of documentation, or where official documents simply do not exist or are inaccessible, a sworn affidavit may be accepted instead. Students whose refugee status has been accepted by the Canadian government and have a study permit issued by Canada are charged tuition at the Quebec rate if they also have a CSQ issued by Quebec. If they don't have a CSQ they must apply for a CAQ issued by Quebec and a study permit issued by Canada and would be charged tuition at the Canadian rate.

While there are ways to adapt the application and admissions process and mitigate the cost of international tuition rates for qualifying displaced persons, applicants to McGill must still meet the University's academic requirements for admissions, which are quite rigorous. Where an applicant may be denied admission initially for academic reasons, we can propose

⁵ <https://www.mcgill.ca/about/intro/affiliations>

⁶ <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/about-unai>

alternative pathways to possible, eventual admission to McGill degree programs, which may include starting one's education in Canada at a different institution, or with a certificate program in the School of Continuing Studies.

The Scholarship and Student Aid Office helps administer the World University Services Canada (WUSC) Student Refugee Program (SRP), in collaboration with the local McGill WUSC student group who led this initiative at McGill as a recognized SSMU club. A fee charged to all undergraduate and graduate downtown campus students, levied as the result of a student-led referendum, provides full funding for first year of studies to up to three eligible refugee students. In subsequent years of study, the Scholarship & Student Aid Office can further help students acquire additional aid through the Quebec loan and bursary program and possibly also through financial aid available from the University directly. To this student effort, the University added places for up to four Syrian refugees, who are provided first year full funding from University sources and through the support of a donor.

Beyond direct financial support, the McGill WUSC student group also helps refugee students with transition support and ongoing community support. This help, as needed, may range from airport pick-up, establishing bank accounts, buying supplies, and understanding course registration. The Office of the Dean of Students has helped further establish academic advising support for students participating in the WUSC program, and a Student Aid Counselor meets regularly with students to provide support and advise on related matters such as budget management.

Students with refugee status are permanent residents of Canada by virtue of that same status. As permanent residents, they are not served directly by International Student Services (ISS), but ISS remains available to support and advise students of international origin.

To further build the University's capacity to respond to the particular needs of certain vulnerable student populations, Student Services recently partnered with the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office (SEDE) on a Café Collab project to use student art and media-making to understand how Student Services can better support under-represented students, and refugees and newcomers to Canada in particular. The opportunities identified by the workshop will be incorporated in the Student Services' programming going forward.
