Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies
MINUTES

Meeting of March 18, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. TEAMS Conferencing Application

Present: Chris Buddle (Co-Chair)
             Angela Campbell (Co-Chair)
             Jennifer Chen
             Nancy Czemmel
             Rebecca Fuhrer
             Petra Rohrbach
             Daniel Weinstock
             Laura Winer
             Elyse Cragg (communications)
             Gillian Nycum (SME/resource person)
 	
Guests: Members of McGill Working Group on New Models of Academic Program Delivery (https://www.mcgill.ca/newmad/)
	Regrets : Claire Downie
	               Paola Colapelle

The Ad-Hoc committee met with the members of the New Models of Academic Program Delivery to discuss ways that some of the ad-hoc committee's work and recommendations may impact longer-term considerations around new ways of delivering programs. The meeting was divided into two parts, an overall presentation followed by a discussion:

- **Overview presentation**
  - The workgroup presented some of the overarching trends in academic program delivery (many of which existed pre-pandemic), introduced the mandate of the workgroup, and discussed the current phase of the work, which is about engagement around the University. The workgroup's goal at this stage is to listen to views around ways we can re-think some of our practices around academic programs, whether on topics such as development of online programs, new approaches to scheduling classes, student mobility, classroom designs, or new educational tools.
  - The Ad-hoc committee was presented with some open-ended questions to start the discussion:

What are the ways we can **design and deliver programs differently?**
Many people have an interest in increased **flexibility** in how they teach and learn at McGill – what opportunities do we have to adjust our academic practices to address this interest?

What are the ways we can use our **spaces and infrastructure** differently and more efficiently as we look to the future?

Is there a **different way of scheduling our courses and programs**, including the full use of our campuses year-round?

What is the **most exciting opportunity** you see for McGill's academic mission as you look forward 5-10 years? What **bold steps** can we take, starting now?

- **Discussion**
    - One theme that emerged was how many things that happen on-campus (in addition to courses) is important for student learning – don't want to lose that by going/staying online; Experiential learning is about those on-campus experiences.
    - When engaging with the community, there is a need to focus on instructors as well as students so that there is an open exchange of ideas that is not perceived as being from central administration.
    - One of the longer-term goals for the University should be to consider ways to get the best of both worlds: how do we take the best online aspects and integrate these with the best parts of being in person?
    - It was noted that we must be careful about unintended consequences, and we do not want to where opportunities are available only to some students (e.g., disparities created by online programs, accessibility concerns because of fee structures); It should be about expanding the toolbox of teaching and learning. Whatever changes we move forward with long term are not going to apply in the same way to every instructor and/or every course.
    - Engagement on this topic must be iterative and ongoing; it's not a 'one time' opportunity.
    - There was much discussion about 'Hybrid' classroom, a modified version of which is the 'online synchronous participation' that is being used by many instructors this term. It was noted that even full hybrid teaching is likely to be far from ideal and create subpar experiences for students (whether or not they are in person or on Zoom), and difficult for instructors. There are also increased expectations by some students that these opportunities are to continue, so there is a challenge ahead as we transition away from the support for online synchronous participation.
    - Communications around terminology remains difficult, and members of the community continue to use "hybrid" when the approach is not truly hybrid, and not recognizing that blended learning is significantly different from hybrid. There is interest in continuing to see ways to do some blended learning in some courses. Blended learning has many positive elements, as it is an intentional choice of online and in-person activities and ensures that students in a course all have the same experiences.
    - It was felt that the New Models of Academic Program Delivery Workgroup should meet with the Ad-Hoc committee again at the end of term, as there are more discussions to continue and the ideas will continue to percolate.