

**FOCUS ON STUDENTS:
Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at
McGill**

Final Report

December 2006

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The Mission of McGill University is the advancement of learning through teaching, scholarship and service to society: by offering to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students the best education available; by carrying out scholarly activities judged to be excellent when measured against the highest international standards; and by providing service to society in those ways for which we are well-suited by virtue of our academic strengths.

In the spring of 2005, the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill was struck by Principal Heather Munroe-Blum, with a mandate to investigate whether the university was as engaged in its mission with respect to students as it was with respect to research, and to examine the strong synergies between the two.

The Task Force was given a broad mandate to review issues affecting student life and learning at McGill, and has aimed to make a small number of substantial recommendations that will be given priority for implementation, and that will have an impact across the University.

Briefly stated, the Principal's Task Force has focused on:

- ❖ The place of students in the McGill community: where and how can McGill be more supportive of the academic life of our students, including transitions into and out of the University?
- ❖ A review of the supports to personal well-being and of special supports and counselling in times of personal crisis. A review of financial assistance currently offered, the level of student need, and how we can best bridge the gap.
- ❖ Diversity among our students and the internationalization of education: how can the University administration best foster sensitivity to cultural and personal differences in the delivery of academic and other administrative supports to our students, while respecting our primary academic purposes? How can we best provide an internationally informed experience for McGill students, both in terms of experience abroad and in the content of programs based on our campuses.
- ❖ McGill University and the Québec experience: how can we enhance relations between students from Québec and students from outside Québec, and enrich the Québec experience for students coming to McGill from outside the province?
- ❖ The e-experience: what is the optimal role of e-interaction between students and the University? How effective are the various ways in which students deal with the administration electronically? What additional services and information could most effectively be provided via the web? What is the impact of electronic aids to teaching on student life and learning?

Initially, the Task Force was composed of twenty-four individuals from the McGill community, who had broad experience of, and/or a demonstrated interest in, issues affecting student life and learning. Half of the appointed participants were students, and half faculty members or members of the administrative and support staff of the University. Each member also served on one of five working groups, two of which are chaired by students, two by faculty members, and one by a member of the administrative staff. Over the course of the Task Force's work, the membership has changed, although the composition of the group continued to include a mixture of students, faculty and administrative staff.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE STUDENT-CENTRED, RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

At the core of McGill's mission, along with the conduct of outstanding research, is the provision of an education of excellent quality to our students in our undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. As a research-intensive university, McGill aims to provide students with an academic experience that benefits directly from the research programs and agendas of Faculty members. A supportive campus environment is also essential for students to thrive. We wish to set the stage for a stimulating, enjoyable and fulfilling learning experience for our students, with services and administrative processes that are effective, efficient and, most importantly, student-oriented.

The Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill encourages the University to ensure that decision-making at all levels is informed by principles and goals appropriate to a student-centred, research-intensive University. The following is a statement of McGill's aspirations in this regard:

McGill is an outstanding research-intensive University that strives to offer its students the best education possible, in a vibrant environment for learning and campus life that supports students' academic progress and personal development. All members of the McGill community are committed to ensuring that students' concerns and interests pervade all aspects of University life.

Students are valued members of a cooperative academic community, and a primary concern of the University. They are treated as individuals, whose diverse backgrounds, goals, aspirations, needs, talents, and successes are welcomed and celebrated. Students are given the means and opportunities to freely probe, examine, debate issues and ideas, and actively pursue their educational goals. As members of a research-intensive university, students learn about, and are encouraged to participate in, research and scholarship in their field.

From the first contact of prospective students with the University, interactions among students, faculty, and administrative and support staff are based on mutual trust and respect. McGill strives to make the information needed by students easily accessible to them. The rights and responsibilities of students are clearly articulated and supported.

University decisions are made with due consideration given to their impact on students. Students participate in University governance and influence goals set by academic units, faculties, and the administration. Moreover, students are encouraged to participate in ongoing dialogue, where their voices are heard and where their concerns are addressed.

The University provides students with a wide variety of academic and support services, striving to make them easy to access, and it fosters students' interest in organizing their own activities. Students' best interests are a principal focus of academic, administrative, and support staff.

The University helps students obtain the financial support they need to pursue their education, by providing internal programs that are as generous as possible, and by supporting students in their efforts to find employment and external support.

The University helps students develop the means to succeed, to inquire after truth, and to contribute to society over their lifetimes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Principal's Task Force propose three recommendations, in the areas of academic advising and mentoring, resources for students, and the building of a learning community.

1. ACADEMIC ADVISING AND MENTORING AT MCGILL

McGill should ensure that quality academic advising is available and accessible for all students, geared to the stage of the student's academic career. Particular attention should be paid to advising students on interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty programs. Members of the academic staff should be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to assume mentoring roles vis-à-vis students, usually on the basis of shared academic interests.

The University is accountable for minimising unnecessary obstacles to students in academic and administrative matters, for making relevant information available in a timely fashion, and for providing the guidance students need through the academic cycle. Students are accountable for taking reasonable steps to inform themselves, to seek advice where they need it, and to follow the advice they are given, as appropriate.

Whether or not they hold academic appointments, Advisers should be integrated into the academic functions of the department (or Faculty). The priority attached to providing quality advising to students should be reflected in the allocation of resources.

2. RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS: FUNDING AND SPACE

McGill University should develop a base level of funding for graduate research students in all departments that is competitive with that offered by our peers, both Canadian and international. The University should provide adequate and safe laboratory and office work space on campus for all graduate students. The attraction of funds for graduate student support should be made a priority, and awards should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner. This recommendation is consistent with goals set out in the University White Paper, of improving completion rates and time to completion for graduate students.

The University should take measures to secure the resources necessary to offer sufficient assistance to undergraduate and professional students over the course of their program so that no candidate offered admission to McGill need turn down that offer for lack of financial assistance. Financial assistance for which students are eligible should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner. The University should consider how resource requirements for much-improved need-based financial assistance can be met, while enhancing our ability to offer an appropriate number of merit-based scholarships to exceptional applicants.

Informal meeting space available for students' use should be distributed across the campus, including some quiet space, and space within easy access of snacks and beverages. The University should take into account the special role the University Libraries can play in supporting individual and group working space, as well as informal social space. It should take measures to ensure that access to virtual space across the campus is made easier for all students. The processes required for, and the costs associated with booking University space for extracurricular activities should be reviewed.

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3. BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

In creating a learning community, McGill should enhance the opportunities for the McGill experience to provide students with a window on the world. In doing so, the University should take advantage of its unique assets as a leading academic institution with a diverse student body, whose primary language of instruction is English, located in a cosmopolitan and multicultural city, in a French-speaking province.

The achievement of this learning community requires both an institutional commitment, and a commitment from members, to creating an inclusive and welcoming community, one that supports the development of strong collegial bonds and mutual respect and accountability among its members. This learning community is one that is welcoming and easy to manoeuvre, and that is the enemy of bureaucracy and red tape. It is one that celebrates diversity and is welcoming to its students.

CONCLUSION

The work of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning, and its report, will be completed by the end of 2006. The University Administration has undertaken to prepare a response that will be delivered in two stages: a preliminary response will be submitted to the community in the winter term of 2007, with a final, more detailed response delivered early in the fall term of 2007.

The final administrative response will address, among other things, processes and timelines for implementation of the recommendations of the Principal's Task Force, the costs of implementation, and mechanisms for evaluating the University's progress in implementing these recommendations. In preparing this response, there will be consultation, as necessary and appropriate, with students, Deans, and members of the University staff. The recommendations of each of the individual working groups that made up the Task Force will be conveyed to the relevant University administrators, so that they may be considered in developing administrative responses to the recommendations contained in this report.

The goal is clear: to provide students with the support and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential while at McGill and to ensure that all members of the community share in this goal. McGill is only as great as what it can offer to students, to society and to the advancement of knowledge; and in that respect, the life and learning that each of our students experiences while at the University is a measure of its success.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The Mission of McGill University is the advancement of learning through teaching, scholarship and service to society: by offering to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students the best education available; by carrying out scholarly activities judged to be excellent when measured against the highest international standards; and by providing service to society in those ways for which we are well-suited by virtue of our academic strengths.

At the core of McGill's mission, along with the conduct of outstanding research, is the provision of an education of excellent quality to our students in our undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. Superior levels of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction are fundamental to the quality of a student's education. As a research-intensive university, McGill aims to provide students with an academic experience that benefits directly from the research programs and agendas of Faculty members.

Although financial resources have been constrained for the last fifteen years, McGill is fortunate to enjoy other resources needed to achieve its mission. The University attracts outstanding students, as well as talented and dedicated faculty, administrative and support staff. The McGill campuses are located in a bilingual metropolis that serves as a magnet for intelligent and creative people. The University's challenge is one of optimization: how should it best structure and position itself to provide a stimulating and supportive learning environment? Only by both continuously improving the quality of the education it provides, and fostering excellence in research, can McGill remain one of the world's best learning environments.

The quality of a university education depends in significant part on a student's experience with peers and within the classroom; it also depends on the quality of relations with faculty and staff, and of the academic and other services delivered to students. A supportive campus environment is essential for students to thrive. The atmosphere on our campuses should be open and tolerant, respecting academic freedoms and building strong accountability, both on the part of individuals and of the community. We aim to celebrate the diversity of our student body, and make the most of our unique position as a highly internationalized university at the crossroads of the English and French cultures in Québec and in Canada.

Members of the Principal's Task Force wish to set the stage for a stimulating, enjoyable and fulfilling learning experience for our students, with services and administrative processes that are effective, efficient and, most importantly, student-oriented. This experience begins, and services must be available, the moment a prospective student thinks of applying to McGill, and will extend over a lifetime. We will set our goals and standards high in this regard, and assess our progress toward concrete objectives, while operating within our means.

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MANDATE

“FOCUS ON STUDENTS: Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill” was launched by the Principal during the winter term of 2005, to take place during 2005 and 2006 period. Following consultation with the four umbrella student organizations (the Students' Society of McGill University, the Post-Graduate Students' Society, the Macdonald Campus Students' Society and the McGill Association of Continuing Education Students) and with members of the administration, twenty-four individuals from the McGill community, who had broad experience of, and/or a demonstrated interest in, issues affecting student life and learning were invited to participate in the Principal's Task Force. Half of the appointed participants were students, and half faculty members or members of the administrative and support staff of the University. Each member also served on one of five working groups, two of which are chaired by students, two by faculty members, and one by a member of the administrative staff.

The Principal's Task Force was given a broad mandate to review issues affecting student life and learning at McGill, and has aimed to make a small number of substantial recommendations that will be given priority for implementation, and will have an impact across the University.

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The full text of the mandate, as initially circulated to the McGill community, is appended to this report (Appendix B).

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PROCESS

From the outset, the Principal's Task Force has sought the views of people and organizations across the McGill community. A call for submissions was issued at the end of the 2004-05 academic year, a copy of which is appended to this report (Appendix C).

A number of other activities and initiatives relevant to the work of Task Force have informed the deliberations of members. The Annual Joint Meeting of the McGill Senate and Board of Governors, held on October 31st, 2005, was devoted to discussion of questions that had arisen during Task Force deliberations. On February 15th, 2006, members met with Deans to solicit input on three themes: advising, the student-centred university, and building an academic community.

A portion of the open forum held by the McGill Association of University Teachers on March 9th, 2006, consisted on a presentation of the work of the Principal's Task Force by Dr. Joan Wolforth, Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities. Principal Heather Munroe-Blum and Morton Mendelson, then Associate Provost (Academic Programs and Services), were on hand to answer questions from forum participants.

The First Year Office organized a symposium in November 2005 as an opportunity for exposure to the perspectives of first year students. At the invitation of the Students' Society of McGill University, individual members of the Task Force (as well as members of the senior administration) toured the January edition of 'Activities Night', the semi-annual event at which student clubs and activities make information on their organizations available to prospective members. Early in the winter term of 2006, the Principal and a small group of members of the Task Force visited Douglas Residence, meeting with members of the Residence Council, having dinner in the hall, and touring the buildings.

Over the course of the last seventeen months, a number of members of the senior administration have been invited to meetings of the Principal's Task Force to address aspects of its mandate: Professor Rod Macdonald, former Dean of Law, and author of the 1993 report "Toward a Service-Oriented Culture and a User-Friendly Environment for Students"; Provost Anthony Masi; Vice-Principal (Administration and Finance) Morty Yalovsky; two former Deans of Students, Professor Rosalie Jukier and Professor Bruce Shore; Ms Flo Tracey, Director of Residences; Ms Janyne Hodder, Vice-Principal (Inter-Institutional Relations), in her capacity as former Principal of Bishop's University. In addition, members of the Task Force met with Lina Di Genova, Planning Analyst, Office of Planning and Institutional Analysis, regarding her work on surveys of McGill students.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

By October 2005, the Task Force had received more than 150 submissions, most from students and from members of the administrative and support staff who work with students, with the balance from alumni, Deans, senior administrators and faculty members. Additional submissions have been received since that time, all of which have been distributed to members of the Task Force. Twenty-two individuals were invited to present briefs at sessions held on November 7th and 9th. Those invited included student organizations, individual students, alumni, and members of the University administration who work closely with students.

During the November 2005 meetings with authors of submissions, a number of points were made about students' perceptions of their place at McGill University. A summary list of these points is provided below; a full account of the concerns expressed is appended to this report (Appendix D).

- ❖ While McGill students recognise the overall quality of the education they receive at this University, it is clear that many do not feel that they are fully-fledged members of the McGill community.
- ❖ Funding for graduate students is neither adequate nor competitive with that offered at peer institutions.
- ❖ The lack of adequate financial support for students with significant financial need may adversely impact the goal of attracting a diverse student body, and result in qualified students refusing offers of admission to McGill.
- ❖ Students expressed frustration at their inability to find the information they need, and might reasonably expect to have, on everything from program and course options, to administrative supports, to activities going on in the University.
- ❖ Space constraints are an impediment to a fulfilling experience for students generally. These include a lack of adequate work space, informal meeting space, and the excessive difficulty and cost of accessing University premises for student activities.
- ❖ Opportunities for students to broaden their horizons, arising from the diversity of the McGill student body, with its significant international student component, could be better fostered.
- ❖ Many of our students who chose McGill in part because of its location in Québec do not succeed in bridging 'divides' between students from Québec and those from outside the province, or between English-speaking and French-speaking students.

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PROGRESS REPORT AND FEEDBACK

In May of 2006, the Principal's Task Force communicated a Progress Report to Senate, the Board of Governors and the broader community. The Progress Report outlined three broad recommendations, which are included in this Report. It was made available on the McGill University web site, and all members of the McGill community were asked for feedback.

ROUND TABLES

In parallel with the work of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning, the then Associate Provost (Academic Programs and Services) organized three round tables on issues related to the work of the Task Force over the course of the 2005-06 academic year. These round tables brought together students and members of the administrative and support staff from different units involved in each of the areas of academic advising, financial assistance, and international education, with a view to understanding the mechanisms used to deliver services to students, and how they might be improved. The reports of the round tables were delivered to the Principal's Task Force, and recommendations on advising and financial assistance have been annexed to this report as appendices E and F. They may be of assistance in understanding the context in which the Task Force made its recommendations, as well as directions taken.

PART TWO: RE-IMAGINING THE PLACE OF STUDENTS IN THE RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

Some broad themes very quickly became salient to members of the Principal's Task Force, including a perception among students that collegial relationships within the community do not extend to them, and that University procedures have become hampered by excessive bureaucracy and red tape.

The University is a learning community: a place where knowledge is advanced and disseminated, for the benefit of humanity and the betterment of individual members of the community. As fully-fledged members of this learning community, students should be challenged not only to achieve their potential but to excel. They should learn in conditions that encourage them to remain curious, to value diversity in opinions and perspectives, to think critically and communicate effectively. Through their participation in the McGill community, students should have opportunities to develop personally and socially, and to become thoughtful and contributing members of society.

Accountability in the University context should apply to all: just as students are accountable to their professors and to members of the administrative and support staff, so too are faculty and other staff members accountable to students, as members, present and future, of the McGill community.

Members of the Principal's Task Force determined early on that the adoption of an aspirational statement on what it means for McGill to think of itself as student-centred, as well as research-intensive, would constitute a necessary step in re-imagining the place of students, and ensuring that they are treated as fully-fledged members of a learning community. All three aspects of the University mission – research, teaching and community service – are integrally related to, and have significant impacts on, student life and learning. Solving problems of bureaucracy and red tape will require both the instillation of a culture that rewards service to students, as well as other members of the University community, and the participation of those charged with delivering services in the formulation of solutions to particular problems.

THE STUDENT-CENTRED, RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

The aspirational statement below addresses what it means for McGill, Canada's most research-intensive University, to consider itself 'student-centred'. This description of the student-centred, research-intensive University was developed on the premise that students choose McGill on the basis of our academic mission. Our students are outstanding, and have the potential to achieve excellence. The University community must provide them with the academic opportunities and challenges that will enable them to excel, but must also offer other supports to learning and to challenges that may interfere with student success, so that they can take advantage of academic opportunities and meet academic challenges – and, indeed, thrive. Students, on their part, must accept their responsibilities, as members of the learning community, for taking advantage of opportunities and support offered.

One step in providing adequate supports is to work toward ensuring that all decision-making in the University is informed by principles and goals considered appropriate to a student-centred, research-intensive University:

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DEPUTY PROVOST (STUDENT LIFE AND LEARNING)

On July 17th, 2006, Professor Morton J. Mendelson was appointed Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), in line with a recommendation made in the Progress Report of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill.

The Office of the Deputy Provost should provide an institutional 'home' within the University's senior administration for ensuring the advancement of McGill as a student-centred, research-intensive University. Through his participation in the most senior levels of University administration, the Deputy Provost should champion the idea of McGill as a convivial and positive environment for student learning, encouraging ownership across the University of the goals this will involve. He should provide overarching direction and oversight needed to effectively integrate the building of a learning community into the achievement of the University's academic and research priorities. This integration of goals, considerations and directions that promote student-centredness with the University's missions of research, teaching and service to the community, is at the core our understanding of what constitutes a student-centred, research-intensive university.

The Principal's Task Force recommends that the following goals be included in the mandate of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning):

- a. Articulating McGill's values, standards and goals with respect to student life and learning and overseeing their integration, as appropriate, into University policies, operations and procedures.
- b. Working with Deans and chairs to find means to integrate faculty members into efforts to create an academic community that is experienced as inclusive by all members.
- c. Considering the most effective configuration of positions and responsibilities for the Dean of Students, and the direction of Student Services.
- d. Supporting the Dean of Students in working closely with student organizations to ensure the highest quality of student life on our campuses, consistent with our academic missions and our identity as a research-intensive university.
- e. Supporting the establishment of mechanisms at all levels of decision-making to ensure that considerations of student-centredness are taken into account in processes of academic policy development and in administrative decision-making.
- f. Ensuring that institutional ownership is assumed for the student advising initiatives, and for those relating to the building of a learning community, proposed in this report.
- g. Exploring institutional mechanisms that might better support students in undertaking extra-curricular activities that contribute to the life and learning of their peers, particularly in relation to processes for the approval of access to University space and for establishing the fees charged for the use of that space.

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- h. Encouraging and supporting the establishment, in consultation with other senior administrators in the University, including Faculty administrators, of consistent policies, institutional standards and operations for services to students wherever appropriate.
- i. Ensuring that institutional ownership is assumed for initiatives relating to international education, including the articulation of standards and goals for the administration of exchange and study-abroad programs.

DEPUTY PROVOST (STUDENT LIFE AND LEARNING): DISCUSSION

The creation of the position of Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) addresses several recurrent themes that emerged throughout the deliberations of the Principal's Task Force. Among the issues that the Deputy Provost will champion is the development of a greater sense of belonging for McGill students. Faculty members may be included in these efforts in a range of ways, including mentoring of students and the creation of opportunities for the discovery and exploration of academic interests shared among professors and students at all levels.

In striving to be a student-centred, as well as a research-intensive, university, McGill has made a sustained commitment to providing high quality services that meet the needs of our diverse student population. Ultimate responsibility for University policy governing the provision of a broad range of services to students should rest with the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), with policies elaborated in consultation with students and members of the community involved in the delivery of services to them.

Given the size of the student body at McGill, Student Services encompass a very broad array of professional service-providers, and a considerable budget. The Principal's Task Force therefore suggests that a position be created, appropriately described so as to attract individuals with the expertise necessary to ensure the effective management of services, and reporting to the Deputy Provost. The roles played by the Athletics Department and by University Residences in supporting student life and learning should be taken into account in defining the responsibilities associated with this position.

UNDER-FUNDING, BUREAUCRACY AND RED TAPE

References to bureaucracy and red tape provided a backdrop to discussions of a number of issues raised by students, ranging from admission to an exchange or study-abroad program to access to University premises for student activities. The University is accountable for minimising unnecessary obstacles to students in academic and administrative matters, for making relevant information available in a timely fashion, and for providing the guidance students need through the academic cycle. Students are accountable for taking reasonable steps to inform themselves, to seek advice where they need it, and to follow the advice they are given, as appropriate.

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Several factors contribute to obstacles for students that are summed up in complaints of excessive bureaucracy and red tape. To some degree, they stem from the context of under-funding in which the University has operated for more than 15 years. The unfortunate consequence of this context is that administrative decisions have sometimes been made to save money, without sufficiently accounting for a negative impact on students and on other members of the McGill Community. The obstacles encountered by students are also due in part to unevenness in the service orientation of members of the University staff in their dealings with students. Finally, members of the Principal's Task Force recognize that these obstacles are exacerbated by the abundance and complexity of University regulation.

The University should continue to address issues of under-funding, as well as all elements of University administration that contribute to user-unfriendliness. Central to this undertaking is the realisation that service to students is an essential component of activities carried out in offices across the University and that all members of the University Community contribute to the creation of a learning community that welcomes students.

The University should work to enhance communications to students and to expand responsibility for communicating relevant information in a timely fashion, and should use electronic and other innovative supports, including the MyMcGill web portal, to target information to appropriate points in the cycle of the student's academic program.

Determining mechanisms and institutional standards appropriate for the implementation of the broad recommendations of the Principal's Task Force in different academic and administrative units across the University should include input from students and the individuals who work with them daily in these various contexts.

An important component of overcoming bureaucracy and red tape for McGill students is the idea of a single point of contact for students attempting to solve problems. In some cases, this will mean combining services and making them available in one physical location; in others, services can be effectively delivered to students by making the single point of contact virtual rather than actual. The underlying idea is to plan service delivery with coordination and collaboration uppermost, and to create conditions in which incentives for competition among different units are minimised. Members of the Principal's Task Force note that this notion of single point of contact reflects the position expressed by the Student Customer Services Committee in its 1993 report "Toward a Service-Oriented Culture and a User-Friendly Environment for Students". The position may be summed up by saying that the essential point is not combining services in a single physical location, but developing an attitude of service to students on the part of all members of the University community.

PART THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Principal's Task Force propose four broad recommendations: in addition to the position of Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning), these are in the areas of academic advising and mentoring, resources for students, and the building of a learning community.

1. ACADEMIC ADVISING AND MENTORING AT MCGILL

McGill should ensure that quality academic advising and mentoring are available and accessible for all students, geared to the stage of the student's academic career. Particular attention should be paid to advising students on interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty programs.

Members of the Principal's Task Force are conscious that the provision of advising and mentoring will have to be tailored to different Faculties and units, as well as to the stage of a student's career. They strongly recommend that Deans consider the appropriateness of providing advising on policies and procedures around programs and courses to students through full-time professional advisors. Among the perceived advantages of this model are the opportunity to develop expertise in the requirements of a range of programs, and much greater availability to meet with students during regular business hours. Academic staff would, on this model, have increased opportunities and availability to take on mentoring roles vis-à-vis students, focused on shared academic interest, learning and careers, and would be expected to do so.

There cannot be a hard-and-fast line drawn between advising and mentoring that will be appropriate in every case, but the idea is that the burden of expectations in relation to each role be in line with the above description. It is important to note that, while this recommendation focuses on academic advising, it is not meant to preclude enhancements to advising on careers and employment during a student's program or on graduation.

Members of the Task Force suggest that the following steps be considered as means to achieve quality advising for all students.

- 1.1 An advising mission statement should be adopted, which both reflects the value of academic advising to the community, and explains the purpose of advising in facilitating student life and learning.
- 1.2 All members of the academic staff of the University should be encouraged to contribute to the enhancement of the life and learning of students outside the classroom, consistent with McGill's academic goals and mission. Through mentorship roles, as well as in other ways, members of the professoriate should have the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a welcoming learning community at McGill.
- 1.3 For undergraduates, quality advising would mean ensuring that every student has an Academic Adviser, who can provide support in accessing the community's resources. This will entail that each department have access to one or more full- or part-time Academic Advisers.
- 1.4 Whether or not they hold academic appointments, Advisers should be integrated into the academic functions of the department (or Faculty), including, for example, by serving on the Curriculum Committee and attending departmental meetings.

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- 1.5 Consistent with our institutional mission, values and goals, institutional standards should be adopted, setting out the number of students each full-time, dedicated Adviser should be asked to advise and guide. In doing so, the University should take stock of academic advising currently available to students in different academic units, and should consider, for example, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) standard.
- 1.6 In consultation with Student Affairs Offices, the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) should ensure that protocols are developed for records of advice given to students by Academic Advisers, as well as access to those records.
- 1.7 Deans and departmental chairs should be encouraged to develop structured opportunities within their unit, such as the First Year Interest Groups, which would enable professors and students to discover academic interests in common, and promote opportunities for mentoring by members of the academic staff.
- 1.8 The University should review the effectiveness of standards and mechanisms of accountability for supervisors and graduate students, and consider where implementation might be enhanced.
- 1.9 The priority attached to providing quality advising to students should be reflected in the allocation of resources, including personnel, space, equipment and the development of systems, and in professional development.

ADVISING AND MENTORING: DISCUSSION

Goals

The University should ensure that students have easy access to the resources it offers in order for them to become better learners and better leaders. A system of consistent, high quality advising should facilitate this access: qualified, helpful, knowledgeable and accountable advisers are recommended for all undergraduates across the University. In addition, members of the academic staff of the University should be expected to contribute to the enhancement of student life and learning not only through their teaching and research, but also by acting as mentors for students.

Over the course of their academic career at McGill, students require access to a range of resources. Too frequently, these resources, including people, time, money, space and knowledge, are difficult for students to access. High quality advising may not generate more resources; indeed, the provision of high quality advising across the University will require that additional resources be devoted to this purpose. Members of the Principal's Task Force nevertheless regard this investment as crucial. Since one goal of advising will be to support students in getting access to the resources they need, such an investment should help to ensure that all types of resources are more easily available to them, and used more effectively by them.

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Standards and Accountability

Departmental student-to-adviser ratios reported to the Principal's Task Force in submissions and consultations indicate that they currently range from 600 to 1100 students per Adviser. Lower ratios would provide continuity, and allow Advisers the time to establish a real connection with individual students throughout the course of their academic careers at McGill. The standard of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), that an Adviser be responsible to guide no more than 400 students, should be considered for implementation at McGill.

While Task Force members believe that there is, in many cases, a great deal of merit in the appointment of full-time Academic Advisers who are not members of the tenured or tenure-stream academic staff of the University, they also support the idea that academic staff who wish to take on the role of Academic Adviser on a part-time basis should be encouraged to do so. Academic staff should be provided the time and training to do the job appropriately, and should be held accountable to the same standards, as Advisers who are not academic staff.

The existence of records creates the basis for reciprocal accountability between Advisers and students. Each Adviser should keep a record of discussions and advice provided to students in accordance with protocols and standards set for the University. Students should be expected to take responsibility for the advice that is given to them, while Advisers should be accountable for the course of action they suggest.

Advising, Mentoring and Counselling

While Advisers cannot be all things to all students, members of the Principal's Task Force envisage professional Advisers playing a crucial role in facilitating undergraduate student life and learning as 'point persons', assisting students in gaining access to resources and supports beyond academic advising that they may need while they are at McGill.

The Task Force expects that the continuing relationship between Adviser and student will, in many cases, tend to make the Adviser a student's first stop in seeking assistance. All Advisers should be aware of other services offered to support students, including health services and counselling, and career counselling, and should refer students to them as appropriate. Advisers would thus be uniquely placed to assist in overcoming problems of bureaucracy and red tape encountered by students at McGill.

Through their teaching and research, members of the academic staff of the University are uniquely positioned to contribute to the enhancement of student life and learning, both in the classroom or laboratory and through mentorship roles. Members of the academic staff will be expected to take on mentoring roles with students, usually, but not exclusively, focused on shared academic interests. The University can enhance the experience of students by supporting opportunities for mentorship to develop, and by communicating successful initiatives to other academic units.

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Students and Academic Advisers: Reciprocal Responsibilities

Standards of accountability should be predicated on the expectation that, from the very start of their time at McGill, students will take reasonable steps to inform themselves about the requirements and options of their academic program.

Some individuals may acquire the skills and understanding necessary to function as Academic Advisers at the undergraduate level without an undergraduate degree. However, members of the Principal's Task Force strongly believe that a Bachelor's degree is a very significant factor in enabling Academic Advisers to fully understand student concerns, and to provide them with the guidance they need.

Advisers should be provided opportunities to meet with counterparts in other academic units on a regular basis, to share information about resources and best practices. In addition, they should become aware of services and resources available beyond those offered in their unit, so as to assist students in overcoming problems of bureaucracy and red tape.

Deans and departmental chairs should encourage Academic Advisers to participate in all aspects of Faculty life where their expertise and experience with students can add value. These will include, but not be limited to, sitting on Curriculum Committees and taking a role in student information sessions.

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2. RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS: FUNDING AND SPACE

The second recommendation of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill relates to the enhancement of funding for graduate students, financial assistance for undergraduate and professional students, and improvements to work and social space available to all students. It is understood that, in order to implement this recommendation, significant resources, whether new or reallocated, will be needed.

RESOURCES: FUNDING AND SPACE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

McGill succeeds in attracting excellent graduate students. However, there are persuasive indications that current funding is inadequate, and that we are losing many outstanding candidates as a consequence of our inability to guarantee adequate funding at the time that decisions on offers of admission must be made. Yield rates for many graduate programs are consistently lower than optimal. The recommendation for enhanced funding set out below is consistent with goals of the White Paper Call to Action on improving completion rates and time to completion for graduate students.

McGill University should develop a base level of funding for graduate research students in all departments that is competitive with that offered by our peers, both Canadian and international. The University should provide adequate and safe laboratory and office work space on campus for all graduate students. The attraction of funds for graduate student support should be made a priority, and awards should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Members of the Principal's Task Force understand that the implementation of the recommendation on funding for graduate students would entail the following:

- 2.1 Funding packages would be offered at the time that students are deciding on offers of admission.
- 2.2 Combinations of bursaries, fellowships, research and teaching assistantships would be considered to make up funding packages.
- 2.3 Faculty members would be encouraged and supported in applying for all external funding that might enhance McGill's ability to meet graduate student enrolment targets with financial support.
- 2.4 The University would increase resources available to fund graduate students over time. As additional funds became available, funding priorities would be established, taking into consideration the research component of the program and individual earning potential on graduation.
- 2.5 Levels of funding for graduate students might vary across disciplines, as necessary to ensure that McGill's offers are competitive with those made by peers.
- 2.6 Prospective graduate students would be advised in recruitment materials that they are expected to apply for all appropriate external support for which they are eligible.
- 2.7 Target enrolments would be established through a consultative process, taking into account resources available to support students, including funding and laboratory and work space available in each department or Faculty.

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RESOURCES: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

The University should take measures to secure the resources necessary to offer sufficient assistance to undergraduate and professional students over the course of their program so that no candidate offered admission to McGill need turn down that offer for lack of financial assistance. Financial assistance for which students are eligible should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner.

The University has taken steps to ensure that candidates for admission to undergraduate and professional programs are encouraged to apply for need-based financial assistance at McGill as of the date of admission, and to ensure that they receive a response on eligibility, and on the amount of assistance for which they are eligible, prior to the deadline for making a decision on an offer of admission.

Members of the Principal's Task Force recommend that the following steps be taken to enhance the University's ability to provide financial assistance to all qualified candidates:

- 2.8 Self-assessments collected by the University from students who apply for financial assistance should be aggregated and analysed to assist in determining the amount of the unmet financial need of our undergraduate and professional students.
- 2.9 The University should consider how resource requirements for much-improved need-based financial assistance can be met while enhancing our ability to offer an appropriate number of merit-based scholarships to exceptional applicants.

RESOURCES: STUDY AND SOCIAL SPACE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Anecdotal information on the cost of, and difficulties associated with booking, university space for activities indicates that structural issues need to be addressed.

- 2.10 The Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) and the Vice-Principal (Administration and Finance) should engage in broad-based consultations, through a round table or other appropriate mechanism, to streamline procedures and decision processes for the reservation of university space by student organizations wherever possible.
- 2.11 The University should review the principles underpinning the fee structures associated with the use of University facilities, including those applying outside of normal working hours, to determine whether they strike an appropriate balance between McGill's role as a student-centred, research-intensive University, and the financial imperatives associated with the University's resource situation.
- 2.12 In assessing the adequacy of work space for students, the University should take into account the special role the University Libraries can play in supporting individual and group working space, as well as informal social space.

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- 2.13 The University should take measures to ensure that access to virtual space is easier for all students, by:
- encouraging the development of a central policy framework that would ensure convenient access across campus regardless of Faculty;
 - looking into the possibility of providing additional convivial and multi-purpose space in locations across campus to accommodate computers for public use; and
 - with the support of the Office of CIO, developing and publishing a map on the University web site showing all points of computer access on McGill campuses.

FUNDING AND SPACE FOR STUDENTS: DISCUSSION

One of the points made in a number of submissions to the Principal's Task Force was the need to review the availability of space for use for students both for academic purposes and activities, and for other purposes.

In order to best achieve the goals in the White Paper Call to Action of ensuring that graduate students have the support they need to complete their programs in a timely fashion, the University must take steps to provide all graduate students with adequate and safe laboratory and office space on campus. If graduate students do not have appropriate space available on campus, they will tend to work elsewhere. This may result in a lesser degree of integration into the community, and may also have a negative impact on completion rates and time to completion.

Informal meeting space available for students' use should be distributed across the campus, including some quiet space, and space within easy access of snacks and beverages.

Members of the Associate Provost's round table on financial support raised a number of issues around the provision of financial support that warrant further attention. These include service to students; coordination across offices; the long and complicated process for receiving funds; lack of relevant information; lack of resources for both direct aid to students and for personnel and systems to bring the aid more effectively to them.

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3. BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

In creating a learning community, McGill should enhance the opportunities for the McGill experience to provide students with a window on the world. In doing so, the University should take advantage of its unique assets as a leading academic institution with a diverse student body, whose primary language of instruction is English, located in a cosmopolitan and multicultural city, in a French-speaking province.

In order to enhance the McGill experience, members of the Principal's Task Force recommend that the Office of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) take the lead in the following initiatives:

- 3.1 Articulating, as appropriate, and in consultation with students and the Social Equity and Discrimination Officer, institutional expectations of students as members of a learning community that celebrates diversity.
- 3.2 Exploring possibilities for the development of academic orientations to the University tailored to students entering at different points in the program.
- 3.3 Encouraging departments to examine course offerings, with a view to assessing the capacity to offer students access to more small or medium size classes at all stages of their program.
- 3.4 In consultation with members of the Interhall Residence Council and the Director of Residences, considering the role that residences might play in bringing McGill students from different regions of Québec, Canada and the world together.
- 3.5 In conjunction with the Chief Information Officer, developing and implementing policies and operations designed to enhance communication, both to students and within the University, including:
 - optimizing the use of electronic sources of information;
 - centralizing points of access to systems across campus;
 - enabling customization of information conveyed automatically to students;
 - enabling an integrated online calendar of events.
- 3.6 Articulating, in consultation with Faculties, standards and goals for the administration of services for international students at McGill, including students enrolled in our programs and those on campus as exchange students.
- 3.7 In consultation with the McGill's International Students' Network and the Office for International Students, exploring mechanisms to support student activities that bring together International and Canadian students.
- 3.8 Exploring with units the possibility and appropriateness of providing program options, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, to students allowing them to enhance their second language skills and learn about Québec culture.
- 3.9 Exploring with departments and the Dean of Continuing Education opportunities for making additional non-credit and three-credit courses available to provide options for the enhancement of second-language skills.
- 3.10 Exploring with sister universities in Montreal the possibility of joint programs that would enable McGill students to take advantage of opportunities to fulfil some program requirements at a French-language institution.

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- 3.11 Exploring the University's ability to provide services to candidates and students in French as well as in English, and to communicate the availability of these services effectively to French-speaking candidates and students.
- 3.12 Exploring the support available for staff members wishing to enhance second-language skills, and the options for improving this support where appropriate.

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY: DISCUSSION

The achievement of the learning community McGill aspires to be requires an institutional commitment, as well as a commitment from members, to creating an inclusive and welcoming community, one that supports the development of strong collegial bonds and mutual respect and accountability among its members: students, professors, academic and administrative staff members, alumni and friends. This learning community is one that is welcoming and easy to manoeuvre, where bureaucracy and red tape are minimised. It is one that celebrates diversity and is welcoming to its students.

Building a learning community entails unique challenges for McGill, challenges that arise out of the rich diversity of its student body. This diversity extends to different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, different sexual orientations and gender expressions, and students with disabilities. In addition, the University also welcomes French- as well as English-speaking students from Montreal, Quebec, Canada and abroad, and is split between campuses located in downtown Montreal and the Macdonald campus on the West Island. Without an institutional commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming community, the tendency may be toward fragmentation, as different groups and individuals essentially go their own ways. Opportunities to make the benefits of diversity an integral part of students' learning experience are then lost.

Submissions from students, as well as information gleaned during consultations, point to the need to enhance the experience of a substantial number of students who choose McGill because of the Quebec or French-language promise, but who discover a 'walled city', and don't break through to the broader community. To this end, the Principal's Task Force has made recommendations aiming to enhance access to second-language courses for interested students and staff members and exposure to other Quebec institutions, as well as exploring mechanisms for creating points of contact between members of different communities.

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PART FOUR, CONCLUSION: THE MCGILL EXPERIENCE

Years spent at a university transform each one of us, and are often among the most memorable of a lifetime. Students discover passions on which careers are built. They develop friendships and social networks, and acquire skills and knowledge that shape their lives and futures. University years are a time of intellectual and personal discovery and growth.

The role of a great university is not limited to providing the very best education in the classroom. A great university also offers a range of experiences and environments in and out of the classroom that enable students to reach their full potential, by taking full advantage of their time at the university.

McGill has more to offer students than a world-class academic experience based on classroom teaching. Students need opportunities to participate in research discoveries and to explore ideas, the world and other cultures through academic and other experiences. High quality academic and career counseling services, support and student services, McGill's location in a dynamic and multicultural city, its unique international character, its research activities and focus on excellence, its public character and commitment to enhancing accessibility for qualified students are among the many distinctive characteristics which can further enhance the McGill experience.

The Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill was established to respond a range of issues related to student life and learning outside the classroom. The recommendations of the Task Force are designed to have an impact across the University, and across many aspects of student life; they aim to enrich and enhance the experience that our students have while at McGill. One of the goals of the Task Force is to signal to the entire McGill community the need for a change of institutional culture that is essential if the University is to achieve its aspiration to student-centred as well as research-intensive. It recommends that issues which have not been specifically dealt with in this report be addressed in the spirit of the student-centred approach expressed here.

There is a great deal of experience and expertise on how to enhance student life, and among members of the University community, that could not be made directly available to the Task Force. This experience and expertise should inform the University administrative response, as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force in different academic and administrative units, and particular programs and processes. This experience and expertise should contribute to the development of mechanisms that are feasible and effective to meet the legitimate expectation of McGill students that they will be treated with respect, and as fully-fledged members of a welcoming learning community that celebrates academic excellence, service to the community and the benefits of diversity in its membership. In this regard, each member of the community has a contribution to make, beginning with examining interactions and operations in which he or she is involved, to identify ways in which University culture and attitudes can be improved.

The Task Force encourages an institutional culture that includes a strong commitment to accountability on the part of all members of the McGill community. Specific measures to encourage individual initiative and greater accountability are expected in University's administrative response to the Final Report of the Task Force.

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The work of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning, and its report, will be completed by the end of 2006. The University Administration has undertaken to prepare a response that will be delivered in two stages: a preliminary response will be submitted to the community in the winter term of 2007, with a final, more detailed response delivered early in the fall term of 2007.

The final administrative response will address, among other things, processes and timelines for implementation of the recommendations of the Principal's Task Force, the costs of implementation, and mechanisms for evaluating the University's progress in implementing these recommendations. In preparing this response, there will be consultation, as necessary and appropriate, with students, Deans, and members of the University staff. The recommendations of each of the individual working groups that made up the Task Force will be conveyed to the relevant University administrators, so that they may be considered in developing administrative responses to the recommendations contained in this report.

The goal is clear: to provide students with the support and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential while at McGill and to ensure that all members of the community share in this goal. McGill is only as great as what it can offer to students, to society and to the advancement of knowledge; and in that respect, the life and learning that each of our students experiences while with the University is a measure of its success.

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List of Members

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The following were appointed to the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill during the spring term of 2005:

NAME	
Ms Nicole Allard	Lecturer and Undergraduate Academic Advisor, Department of Psychology
Ms Jodene Baccus	Post-doctoral Fellow, Department of Psychology
Ms Jenny Becker	Undergraduate Student, International Development Studies
Dr. Michael Bisson	Chair, Department of Anthropology
Mr. Gregg Blachford	Director of Career and Placement Service
Ms Leslie Copeland	First-year Coordinator, First-year Office
Dr. Martha Crago *	Associate Provost (Academic Programs)
Ms Gayle Delahunt	Undergraduate Student, Desautels Faculty of Management
Dr. Michael Doxtater	Director, Indigenous Studies in Education Research and Teaching
Mr. Marc Edwards **	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Science
Ms Sylvia Franke	Registrar and Executive Director, Admissions, Recruitment and Registrar's Office
Mr. Rohan Gulrajani	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Law
Dr. David N. Harpp	Professor, Department of Chemistry
Ms Idil Issa **	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Science
Ms Amanda Jager	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Education
Mr. Jean-Philippe Julien	Alumnus, Former Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Science
Mr. Luke Lavallée	Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Medicine
Mr. Ives Levesque	Graduate Student, Medical Physics Unit
Dr. David J. Lewis	Associate Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

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Mr. David Matthews	Undergraduate Student, Schulich School of Music
Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum	Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Dr. Philip Oxhorn	Director, Centre for Developing Area Studies
Ms Judy Pharo	Associate Director (Student Affairs), Faculty of Engineering
Mr. Ali Shivji	Alumnus, Former Undergraduate Student, Faculty of Engineering
Dr. Ann Wechsler	Professor, Department of Physiology

* Dr. Crago was replaced by Dr. Morton Mendelson during the Fall Term, 2005.

** Mr. Marc Edwards and Ms Idil Issa withdrew from the Task Force during the Fall Term, 2005.

Task Force Secretariat:

Ms Sharon Bezeau
Ms Victoria Meikle
Ms Caroline Baril
Ms Ann Dadson

Graduate Assistants:

Ms Christa Clinchy
Ms Marna Lew
Ms Nathalie Ivanov
Ms Raj Sohal
Ms Ora Szekely

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CONTEXT

The Mission of McGill University is the advancement of learning through teaching, scholarship and service to society: by offering to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students the best education available; by carrying out scholarly activities judged to be excellent when measured against the highest international standards; and by providing service to society in those ways for which we are well-suited by virtue of our academic strengths.

At the core of McGill's mission is the provision of an education of excellent quality to our students. Superior levels of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction are fundamental to the quality of a student's education. As a research-intensive university, McGill aims to provide students with an academic experience that benefits directly from the research programs and agendas of Faculty members. Formal and informal feedback indicates that we are well-positioned to achieve this part of our mission.

Our admissions standards are demanding: we are intent on attracting the best students. Our standards of accessibility should also be demanding: we should aim to ensure that all qualified students will be able to participate in student life at McGill and fulfill their program requirements irrespective of their financial means, something we cannot currently do. The achievement of this goal will require a better understanding of the resource gap that must be filled and of the concrete efforts required to bridge that gap. Further, we aim to be competitive with our peer public universities in Canada and the United States, with respect to scholarship offerings and the support we offer to graduate students. What will this entail?

The quality of a university education depends in significant part on a student's experience with peers and within the classroom; it also depends on the quality of academic and other services delivered to students. A supportive campus environment is essential for students to thrive. The atmosphere on our campuses should be open and tolerant, respecting academic freedoms and building strong accountability, both on the part of individuals and of the community. Students need access to effective advising and institutional supports in order to achieve their greatest potential. 'Life happens' while at university, so services are required to promote healthy lifestyles and well being and to assist students in times of stress and personal crisis, as well as in times of opportunity.

We must provide student services that further enhance both the academic experiences of our students and their opportunities for learning and personal growth outside the classroom. We wish to set the stage for a stimulating, enjoyable and fulfilling learning experience with services and administrative processes that are effective, efficient and, most importantly, student-oriented. We will set our goals and standards high in this regard, and assess our progress toward concrete objectives, while operating within our means.

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The Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning is an opportunity for the McGill community to stand back and reflect on the impact of University resources, services and administrative structures on the quality and comparability of academic and other services and support delivered to our students. The Task Force is not intended as a substitute for the work of University officials and members of governing bodies who deal with particular dimensions of student support and student services. Certain aspects of the student experience fall within the mandate of committees and task forces now at work, including the Task Force on Residence Life and Dining at McGill; members of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning will take the reports of these committees into account in their deliberations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill will seek views broadly in the McGill community on the most effective ways to resource and structure University administrative support and services so as to deliver services that further enhance student life and learning. It will consider how we can most effectively frame our standards and goals for the delivery of services to our students in a secular setting. It will seek input from students, individually and through their representative organizations. In carrying out the mandate, members of the Task Force will pay close attention to the different perspectives of full-time and part-time students, undergraduate and graduate students, students in professional faculties, Quebec students, Canadians from outside Quebec and international students, as well as the experiences of students who are members of minority groups. The Task Force will aim to report its findings and make recommendations in the fall term of 2006.

The Task Force will consider and make recommendations on:

- ❖ The aspirations of McGill with respect to student life and student learning
- ❖ How best to structure services so as to foster the optimal personal well-being and active engagement of our students, not only within the McGill community, but in the broader community as well
- ❖ The range, structure and delivery of services and support currently provided to students at McGill University and at our peer institutions, including consideration of the 2004 National Survey of Student Engagement.
- ❖ The optimal administrative requirements, including structures and guidelines, for planning and achieving the most effective and efficient delivery of student services at McGill. These must be realistic with respect to constraints imposed by our best estimates of our resources over the next five to ten years, but must also be ambitious.

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WORKING GROUPS

In light of the nature of our campuses, the international orientation of McGill University and the very rapid transition to electronic interaction within our community, the following themes will be addressed by working groups made up of members of the Task Force. It is expected that members of the working groups will consider how best to deal with their mandate, and the topics that might be covered by each group will inevitably overlap to some extent. A list of topics that might be considered for a working group follows the statement of the themes.

- ❖ Where and how can McGill be more supportive of the academic life of our students, including transitions into and out of the University?
- ❖ What range of other services linked to student life and learning does and should the University offer students to ensure their personal well-being, as well as to assist in times of personal crisis, should these occur? What levels of financial assistance are we currently offering, what is the level of student need, how can we best bridge the gap?
- ❖ How can the University administration best foster sensitivity to cultural and personal differences in the delivery of academic and other administrative supports to our students, while respecting our primary academic purposes? How can we best provide an internationally informed experience for McGill students, both in terms of experience abroad and in the content of campus-based programs?
- ❖ How can we enhance relations between students from Quebec and students from outside Quebec and enrich the Quebec experience for students coming to McGill from outside the province?
- ❖ What is the optimal role of e-interaction between students and the University? How effective are the various ways in which students deal with the administration electronically? What additional services and information could most effectively be provided via the web? What is the impact of electronic aids to teaching on student life and learning?

Topics for Working Group A: The Place of Students in the McGill Community

- ✓ How should the administration best support the transition into the McGill community? What are the purposes of, and best vehicles for, student orientation? How should the administration and student groups best work together to provide an effective and positive orientation for students and their families?
- ✓ How might we better offer and structure academic advising across the University and in faculties and programs so as to most effectively meet the needs of our students?
- ✓ How can the University administration minimize students' experience of 'bureaucracy and red tape'?
- ✓ How, from an administrative perspective, do we best facilitate student participation in interdisciplinary and, especially, inter-faculty course offerings?

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- ✓ How can we best maintain relationships with our students as they make the transition from student life and become our Alumni and Alumnae? What supports do we offer in the transition to graduate studies or the working world? How can we structure services so as to further enhance our ability to meet our students' needs?

Working Group B: Administrative Supports: Personal Well-being, Counseling and Special Support in Times of Personal Crisis; Residences; Financial Assistance

- ✓ What services do we provide in support of student life and learning and how do they compare with those offered by our peer institutions? Where and how can we do better within context of our academic mission and the limits of our resources?
- ✓ How do we best compete, in the context of our peer universities and our resources, in residence programs and the residence experience?
- ✓ What levels of financial assistance do we currently provide for our undergraduate students and for students in professional faculties? What are our best estimates of the unmet need among these students?
- ✓ How is financial assistance provided to undergraduate students and students in professional faculties (i.e., through work-study, scholarships, loans and bursaries)? What is the appropriate level and combination of sources of assistance for these students?
- ✓ What support do we currently provide for graduate students? What resources would be required in order to offer prospective graduate students a competitive funding framework?
- ✓ What combination of tuition waivers, teaching assistantships, research assistantships and scholarship funding can best achieve this goal in different disciplines?

Working Group C: Diversity among our Students and the Internationalization of Education

- ✓ How can we best provide effective and supportive student services for students who come from a diversity of ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds while respecting the non-denominational character of the University and fostering understanding and openness? How can the University administration best foster sensitivity to cultural and personal differences of all kinds?
- ✓ What targeted recruitment activities and outreach to minority groups do we currently undertake? How can we enhance these activities, given competing demands and reasonable expectations regarding the resources available?
- ✓ What particular challenges and opportunities do international students face?
- ✓ Are there obstacles to broad participation in study abroad and exchange experiences? How do we optimize administrative processes for students who wish to take advantage of these opportunities? How can we further enhance advice and support for them?

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Working Group D: McGill University and the Quebec Experience

- ✓ How does, and how should, the University build on its unique place as an internationally-oriented English-language institution in a French-speaking province to broaden the experience of all students who choose to study at McGill? How can we best support students from outside Quebec in seeking a broader Quebec experience, both those from other provinces in Canada and international students?
- ✓ How do we better foster the interaction between Quebec students and students from outside Quebec?
- ✓ What are the different experiences of McGill, Montreal and Quebec among our students?
- ✓ What are our current practices in reaching out to Quebecers and to particular communities within the province? What is our capacity to deliver student services in French? How can and should we position that capacity going forward?

Working Group E: The E-experience

- ✓ Is the information provided on University and Faculty web sites accessible, accurate and up-to-date? Which specific pages work well, and which could be made more user-friendly and effective? What additional information can most effectively be conveyed to students through the web sites?
- ✓ What has been the student experience with registration using Minerva? Should additional administrative services related to programs, e.g., degree audit, be offered over the web?
- ✓ Is the policy of using e-mail for official communications with students working well? Could it be made more effective?
- ✓ Are current systems providing access to libraries, electronic collections and the full range of information resources for study and research appropriately supported? How could the support for users of these systems be improved?
- ✓ What impact have Web CT and the availability of video or audio tapes of lectures and classes had on student learning?
- ✓ Are there additional services that could optimally be offered over the web? Which interactions should remain face-to-face?

RANGE OF UNIVERSITY SERVICES THAT MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON STUDENT LIFE AND LEARNING

A. ACADEMIC SERVICES

- ❖ Recruitment and visitor orientation: ability to get general information about programs, admissions standards, ability to get answers to particular questions concerning the admissions process, financial assistance and related items on the web, by phone and/or in person
- ❖ Admissions process: ability to get information about the timing of decisions on the web and through personal contact (e-mail or telephone)

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- ❖ Registration: availability of advising, user-friendliness of electronic registration on Minerva, availability of technical help during the registration process
- ❖ Academic advising, mentoring and tutoring: Who is currently providing these? What are the issues? What would be the optimal administrative structures in each case?
- ❖ Access to libraries and the full range of information resources for study and research
- ❖ Access to exchange programs

B. OTHER SERVICES

- ❖ Personal well-being: residences, health care, health and recreation services, crisis counseling
- ❖ Sports and fitness facilities, activities and supports
- ❖ Future career and professional development counseling
- ❖ Transitions: to first year, through orientation to graduation from the University, through support for placement on graduation, to Alumni/Alumnae status

CONSULTATION AND INPUT

- ❖ An invitation to submit memoranda will be extended to the McGill community, broadly defined.
- ❖ The invitation will be posted on the University web site.
- ❖ The Task Force and/or working groups will invite selected oral representations from members of the community, including Alumni and Alumnae, on the basis of the work undertaken and of matters raised through the submissions received.
- ❖ Members of the working groups will consult available information on the issues within their mandate, including practices at McGill's peer institutions.

TIMING

- ❖ Establishment of Task Force January/February 2005

WINTER TERM 2005

- ❖ Creation of Task Force and formation of working groups
- ❖ Establishment of web sites for working groups
- ❖ Compilation of information available within the University and elsewhere to support the work of the Task Force and working groups

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Summer 2005 – Early to Mid-Fall

- ❖ Review of experience at McGill and elsewhere
- ❖ Analysis of best practices

Fall 2005 – Winter 2006

- ❖ Consultation with members of McGill community through meetings
- ❖ Reports of individual working groups for Summer 2006

SUMMER 2006

- ❖ Formulation of draft conclusions and recommendations

FALL 2006

- ❖ Consultation on draft recommendations
- ❖ Final report

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Call for Submissions
December 2006

The *Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill* aims to improve the deployment of the University's resources to enhance student life and learning. The Task Force is currently seeking written submissions from organizations and individuals across the McGill community – students, faculty members, staff, alumni, and friends – who have comments on today's conditions or suggestions for tomorrow's McGill. **The deadline for receipt of submissions is Saturday, October 15, 2005.**

McGill's mission is to provide an education of excellent quality to our students. Principal Munroe-Blum established the Task Force to assess our strengths in achieving this mission and, where needed, to make suggestions to strengthen and improve the services and support the University provides to students. It will arrive at recommendations after consultations, analysis and a review of McGill's practices and those of peer institutions. These recommendations will target issues of student life and learning of relevance across the whole McGill community.

The Task Force invites submissions on any issue of concern for its consideration, with particular emphasis on:

- ❖ **The place of students in the McGill community** – How can the University better support students in their academic pursuits? How can McGill better help its alumni use their learning upon graduation?
- ❖ **Administrative support and financial assistance** - What services should McGill offer to support the well being of students, such as financial support, the experience in residence, assistance in periods of personal crisis? What resources and programs are required for McGill to attract and retain talented students at all levels?
- ❖ **Diversity at McGill and the internationalisation of education** – How should McGill promote understanding and respect for diversity? How should McGill use its international stature to become an important center for the education of globally-minded scholars and citizens?
- ❖ **The Québec experience** – How do students from Québec and those from other parts of Canada and the world interact and advance their understanding of each other? What potential University initiatives would allow McGill to play a more valued role in its home city and province?
- ❖ **Communication and electronic support to assist student life and learning** – How can McGill best use communication methods and information technology to support the learning environment? How can we ensure that our information technology services are user-friendly, accessible, comprehensive and timely?

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Call for Submissions
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The Task Force will not consider anonymous submissions. Issues of a particularly sensitive nature can be raised in confidence with Victoria Meikle, Special Assistant to the Principal, who will determine whether the matter might be put before the Task Force. Ms Meikle's address is: victoria.meikle@mcgill.ca.

The Terms of Reference for *FOCUS ON STUDENTS: Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill* are available on the Principal's page of the University web site, at: www.mcgill.ca/principal/focus.

For further information, or to submit comments and ideas, please contact focusonstudents@mcgill.ca or:

Sharon Bezeau
Recorder and Chief Invigilator
Office of Student Affairs
Faculties of Arts and of Science
Dawson Hall, Room 115
853 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal H3A 2T6

The deadline for receipt of submissions is Saturday, October 15, 2005.

AN OVERVIEW OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS

A University that does not always make students feel welcome

While our students recognise the overall quality of the education they receive at McGill, it is clear that many do not feel that they are full-fledged members of the McGill community. These perceptions are based on their day-to-day experiences with other members of the community, and on messages communicated to them, explicitly and implicitly, about the place of students in this community. In a nutshell, our students, who are one of our two central *raison d'être* as a University, often do not feel welcome at McGill.

Several aspects of the student experience contribute to this feeling. Many undergraduate students do not make meaningful personal contact with a professor or a member of the administrative or support staff over the entire course of their program. Students generally do not feel that they have ready access to the information they need in order to make decisions on course and program choice in a timely fashion, or to participate in University activities, both academic and extra-curricular, that are of interest to them. As one contributor offered, there is a sense that collegiality at McGill extends only to professors: many students do not have any relationship that they would characterise as collegial with a member of the faculty or of the administrative and support staff of the University.

While a number of excellent advisers - both professors and members of the administrative staff - were identified, students report that, on the whole, academic advising is far from adequate, and constitutes a great weakness in the achievement of McGill's academic mission. As one upper-year undergraduate student summed it up, "I don't feel that there is anyone in the University who cares whether I am here or not".

During consultations, many students stated that they did not "know where to go" with many problems. The administrative cleavage between Student Affairs Offices, including Academic Advisors, on the one hand, and Student Services units, on the other, was cited as one source of difficulty in dealing effectively with programmatic and life problems.

Financial Support

Concerns specific to the financial support of graduate students include the fact that funding is not adequate or competitive with that offered at peer institutions, and that information about total funding available may not be communicated to candidates sufficiently early to influence decisions on offers of admission.

Students stressed the need to be free of serious financial concerns in order to succeed in their programs and take full advantage of student life at McGill. The lack of adequate financial support for students with significant financial need was thought to adversely impact the goal of a diverse student body, and to result in qualified students refusing offers of admission to McGill. The University's inability, until very recently, to make financial assistance available to entering undergraduate students during the first term of studies was similarly seen as a serious obstacle for students with financial need who might wish to enrol at McGill.

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Overview of Student Perceptions and Concerns reported to the Task Force

It was suggested that high interest rates for late payment of tuition fees may constitute a financial disadvantage for international students in particular, since funding from outside of Canada does not always become available as quickly as expected, or in time to pay fee invoices. While there is funding available from the Student Aid Office to assist students in these cases, it is not clear that they are always made aware of this support when they need it.

Accessibility of Information, Academic and Extra-Curricular

Students repeatedly expressed frustration at their inability to find the information they need, and might reasonably expect to have, on everything from program and course options, to administrative supports, to activities going on in the University that might interest them. Disparate sources of information and a lack of transparency, as well as a search engine on the McGill web site seen by some as inadequate, were identified as obstacles to student attempts to inform themselves. The fact that students don't know where to go for help when solutions are not available through the 'usual channels' is one element of the problems of bureaucracy and red tape identified by many.

Students often experience difficulty obtaining accurate information about programs that cross faculties or other academic units. One presenter stated that the moment a student looks for information on programs outside of their core area or in relation to interdisciplinary programs, "confusion settles in"; it was also suggested that the extensive flexibility of programs, and plethora of options for students, contribute to the difficulty of providing each student with accurate and helpful advice. Another example concerns the fact that, in some large faculties at least, students going on exchange do not know until the last moment whether they have been accepted. This can cause both administrative and financial problems, including the subtlety of their accommodation in a very short period of time, timely registration for classes at McGill, and discovering too late that the courses they are taking elsewhere, or in some cases, have already taken, are not accepted for credit toward their degrees.

Space

Space constraints were cited by many as an impediment to a fulfilling experience for students generally, and for members of student organizations, clubs and activities in particular. A main concern for graduate students is the need for normal daily working space at the University. To the extent that the University is not in a position to provide adequate working space, graduate students compensate by working off campus; time spent off campus then becomes an additional barrier to their integration into the McGill community and to their ability to interact with professors. For undergraduate students, concerns identified included a lack of informal social space, and the cost of using University space for student activities, especially during evenings and weekends.

The Diversity of the Student Body

There was general agreement that opportunities arising from the diversity of the McGill student body for students to broaden their horizons, potentially a great asset for students at McGill, could be better fostered. Presenters noted there is often a ‘disconnect’ between international, Canadian French-speaking and Canadian English-speaking students, noting that many of their peers tended to socialise within networks established prior to their arrival at McGill, or shortly thereafter. As a consequence, many did not bridge ‘divides’ between students from Québec and those from outside the province, or between English-speaking and French-speaking students. Obstacles may be exacerbated by the fact that Canadians from outside Québec, as well as many international students, start their studies in the Freshman program (U0), while Québec Cégep graduates start in the first year of a departmental program (U1).

It was suggested that the opportunity to improve English or French as a second language should be integrated into students’ programs in order to make it feasible for them to do so. At present, there are not enough courses offered to accommodate all McGill students who may be interested in exposure to French in particular. Courses offered by the English and French Language Centre are six-credit courses, and may bridge the fall and winter semesters. For some students, the structure of their program is such that fitting in a six-credit option is not possible. Others might be more attracted to a three-credit course, rather than six, even where it is possible to fit it into their program, because of the desire to balance other course options.

FOCUS ON STUDENTS: Final Report, Appendix E
Recommendations of the Round Table on Advising
December 2006

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ROUND TABLE ON ADVISING

Members of the round table on advising suggest that the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) should take responsibility on an ongoing basis for:

- ◆ identifying areas of advising and mentoring that might be enhanced at McGill;
- ◆ promoting improvements in administrative structures and student services in this area;
- ◆ promoting structures to address issues of interdisciplinary advising, and advising in the context of exchange and study abroad programs;
- ◆ supporting relevant activities of faculties—especially with respect to their need to freely explore the types of advising and mentoring that best suit them;
- ◆ ensuring the sharing of best practices and appropriate coordination of activities across units involved in academic advising and mentoring;
- ◆ ensuring a high common standard and practice of information sharing with students, both at singular points in time and sequentially over the course of their program and the cycle of their academic life at the University;
- ◆ advancing the role of academic advising as an important component of the educational process;
- ◆ reducing bureaucracy in the delivery of academic and other services to McGill students.

FOCUS ON STUDENTS: Final Report, Appendix F
Recommendations of the Round Table on Financial Support
December 2006

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ROUND TABLE ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Members of the round table recommended that a Director of financial support be established, with overall responsibility for delivery of financial support to students. The Director would be tasked with looking into the following:

- ◆ further identifying areas of student financial support that might be enhanced at McGill, ensuring a clear articulation of the types of support we offer and the University's academic goals;
- ◆ ensuring that appropriate distinctions are made between the needs of undergraduate and graduate students when it comes to funding;
- ◆ promoting improvements in administrative structures and student services in this area;
- ◆ ensuring coordination across units involved in student financial support;
- ◆ ensuring coordination of information on financial assistance provided to students, including the time at which information is provided;
- ◆ promoting improvements in web and information system services to students and administrators;
- ◆ supporting relevant activities of Faculties—especially with respect to their need to freely explore the types of financial support packages that best suit them;
- ◆ helping reduce bureaucracy in the delivery of funding to graduate students, and scholarship and other financial support to undergraduate and professional students;
- ◆ participating in fund-raising.

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Summary of Recommendations of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill
December 2006

1. ACADEMIC ADVISING AND MENTORING AT MCGILL

McGill should ensure that quality academic advising and mentoring are available and accessible for all students, geared to the stage of the student's academic career,. Particular attention should be paid to advising students on interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty programs.

Members of the Principal's Task Force are conscious that the provision of advising and mentoring will have to be tailored to different Faculties and units, as well as to the stage of a student's career. They strongly recommend that Deans consider the appropriateness of providing advising on policies and procedures around programs and courses to students through full-time professional advisors. Among the perceived advantages of this model are the opportunity to develop expertise in the requirements of a range of programs, and much greater availability to meet with students during regular business hours. Academic staff would, on this model, have increased opportunities and availability to take on mentoring roles vis-à-vis students, focused on shared academic interest, learning and careers, and would be expected to do so.

There cannot be a hard-and-fast line drawn between advising and mentoring that will be appropriate in every case, but the idea is that the burden of expectations in relation to each role be in line with the above description. It is important to note that, while this recommendation focuses on academic advising, it is not meant to preclude enhancements to advising on careers and employment during a student's program or on graduation.

Members of the Task Force suggest that the following steps be considered as means to achieve quality advising for all students.

- 1.10 An advising mission statement should be adopted, which both reflects the value of academic advising to the community, and explains the purpose of advising in facilitating student life and learning.
- 1.11 All members of the academic staff of the University should be encouraged to contribute to the enhancement of the life and learning of students outside the classroom, consistent with McGill's academic goals and mission. Through mentorship roles, as well as in other ways, members of the professoriate should have the opportunity to contribute to the creation of a welcoming learning community at McGill.
- 1.12 For undergraduates, quality advising would mean ensuring that every student has an Academic Adviser, who can provide support in accessing the community's resources. This will entail that each department have access to one or more full- or part-time Academic Advisers.
- 1.13 Whether or not they hold academic appointments, Advisers should be integrated into the academic functions of the department (or Faculty), including, for example, by serving on the Curriculum Committee and attending departmental meetings.
- 1.14 Consistent with our institutional mission, values and goals, institutional standards should be adopted, setting out the number of students each full-time, dedicated Adviser should be asked to advise and guide. In doing so, the University should take stock of academic advising currently available to students in different academic units, and should consider, for example, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) standard.

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- 1.15 In consultation with Student Affairs Offices, the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) should ensure that protocols are developed for records of advice given to students by Academic Advisers, as well as access to those records.
- 1.16 Deans and departmental chairs should be encouraged to develop structured opportunities within their unit, such as the First Year Interest Groups, which would enable professors and students to discover academic interests in common, and promote opportunities for mentoring by members of the academic staff.
- 1.17 The University should review the effectiveness of standards and mechanisms of accountability for supervisors and graduate students, and consider where implementation might be enhanced.
- 1.18 The priority attached to providing quality advising to students should be reflected in the allocation of resources, including personnel, space, equipment and the development of systems, and in professional development.

2. RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS: FUNDING AND SPACE

The second recommendation of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning at McGill relates to the enhancement of funding for graduate students, financial assistance for undergraduate and professional students, and improvements to work and social space available to all students. It is understood that, in order to implement this recommendation, significant resources, whether new or reallocated, will be needed.

RESOURCES: FUNDING AND SPACE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

McGill succeeds in attracting excellent graduate students. However, there are persuasive indications that current funding is inadequate, and that we are losing many outstanding candidates as a consequence of our inability to guarantee adequate funding at the time that decisions on offers of admission must be made. Yield rates for many graduate programs are consistently lower than optimal. The recommendation for enhanced funding set out below is consistent with goals set out in the University White Paper of improving completion rates and time to completion for graduate students.

McGill University should develop a base level of funding for graduate research students in all departments that is competitive with that offered by our peers, both Canadian and international. The University should provide adequate and safe laboratory and office work space on campus for all graduate students. The attraction of funds for graduate student support should be made a priority, and awards should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner.

Members of the Principal's Task Force understand that the implementation of the recommendation on funding for graduate students would entail the following:

- 2.14 Funding packages would be offered at the time that students are deciding on offers of admission.
- 2.15 Combinations of bursaries, fellowships, research and teaching assistantships would be considered to make up funding packages.

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- 2.16 Faculty members would be encouraged and supported in applying for all external funding that might enhance McGill's ability to meet graduate student enrolment targets with financial support.
- 2.17 The University would increase resources available to fund graduate students over time. As additional funds became available, funding priorities would be established, taking into consideration the research component of the program and individual earning potential on graduation.
- 2.18 Levels of funding for graduate students might vary across disciplines, as necessary to ensure that McGill's offers are competitive with those made by peers.
- 2.19 Prospective graduate students would be advised in recruitment materials that they are expected to apply for all appropriate external support for which they are eligible.
- 2.20 Target enrolments would be established through a consultative process, taking into account resources available to support students, including funding and laboratory and work space available in each department or Faculty.

RESOURCES: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

The University should take measures to secure the resources necessary to offer sufficient assistance to undergraduate and professional students over the course of their program so that no candidate offered admission to McGill need turn down that offer for lack of financial assistance. Financial assistance for which students are eligible should be made available to students in an efficient and expeditious manner.

The University has taken steps to ensure that candidates for admission to undergraduate and professional programs are encouraged to apply for need-based financial assistance at McGill as of the date of admission, and to ensure that they receive a response on eligibility, and on the amount of assistance for which they are eligible, prior to the deadline for making a decision on an offer of admission.

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Members of the Principal's Task Force recommend that the following steps be taken to enhance the University's ability to provide financial assistance to all qualified candidates:

- 2.21 Self-assessments collected by the University from students who apply for financial assistance should be aggregated and analysed to assist in determining the amount of the unmet financial need of our undergraduate and professional students.
- 2.22 The University should consider how resource requirements for much-improved need-based financial assistance can be met while enhancing our ability to offer an appropriate number of merit-based scholarships to exceptional applicants.

RESOURCES: STUDY AND SOCIAL SPACE FOR ALL STUDENTS

Anecdotal information on the cost of, and difficulties associated with booking, university space for activities indicates that structural issues need to be addressed.

- 2.23 The Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) and the Vice-Principal (Administration and Finance) should engage in broad-based consultations, through a round table or other appropriate mechanism, to streamline procedures and decision processes for the reservation of university space by student organizations wherever possible.
- 2.24 The University should review the principles underpinning the fee structures associated with the use of University facilities, including those applying outside of normal working hours, to determine whether they strike an appropriate balance between McGill's role as a student-centred, research-intensive University, and the financial imperatives associated with the University's resource situation.
- 2.25 In assessing the adequacy of work space for students, the University should take into account the special role the University Libraries can play in supporting individual and group working space, as well as informal social space.
- 2.26 The University should take measures to ensure that access to virtual space is easier for all students, by:
 - encouraging the development of a central policy framework that would ensure convenient access across campus regardless of Faculty;
 - looking into the possibility of providing additional convivial and multi-purpose space in locations across campus to accommodate computers for public use; and
 - with the support of the Office of CIO, developing and publishing a map on the University web site showing all points of computer access on McGill campuses.

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3. BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

In creating a learning community, McGill should enhance the opportunities for the McGill experience to provide students with a window on the world. In doing so, the University should take advantage of its unique assets as a leading academic institution with a diverse student body, whose primary language of instruction is English, located in a cosmopolitan and multicultural city, in a French-speaking province.

In order to enhance the McGill experience, members of the Principal's Task Force recommend that the Office of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) take the lead in the following initiatives:

- 3.1 Articulating, as appropriate, and in consultation with students and the Social Equity and Discrimination Officer, institutional expectations of students as members of a learning community that celebrates diversity.
- 3.2 Exploring possibilities for the development of academic orientations to the University tailored to students entering at different points in the program.
- 3.3 Encouraging departments to examine course offerings, with a view to assessing the capacity to offer students access to more small or medium size classes at all stages of their program.
- 3.4 In consultation with members of the Interhall Residence Council and the Director of Residences, considering the role that residences might play in bringing McGill students from different regions of Québec, Canada and the world together.
- 3.5 In conjunction with the Chief Information Officer, developing and implementing policies and operations designed to enhance communication, both to students and within the University, including:
 - optimizing the use of electronic sources of information;
 - centralizing points of access to systems across campus;
 - enabling customization of information conveyed automatically to students;
 - enabling an integrated online calendar of events.
- 3.6 Articulating, in consultation with Faculties, standards and goals for the administration of services for international students at McGill, including students enrolled in our programs and those on campus as exchange students.
- 3.7 In consultation with the McGill's International Students' Network and the Office for International Students, exploring mechanisms to support student activities that bring together International and Canadian students.
- 3.8 Exploring with units the possibility and appropriateness of providing program options, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, to students allowing them to enhance their second language skills and learn about Québec culture.
- 3.9 Exploring with departments and the Dean of Continuing Education opportunities for making additional non-credit and three-credit courses available to provide options for the enhancement of second-language skills.
- 3.10 Exploring with sister universities in Montreal the possibility of joint programs that would enable McGill students to take advantage of opportunities to fulfil some program requirements at a French-language institution.

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- 3.11 Exploring the University's ability to provide services to candidates and students in French as well as in English, and to communicate the availability of these services effectively to French-speaking candidates and students.
- 3.12 Exploring the support available for staff members wishing to enhance second-language skills, and the options for improving this support it where appropriate.