

Minutes

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 20-21:04

Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at 2:30 p.m. via the Zoom Conferencing Application.

PRESENT

Arseneault, Louis	Hurtubise, Jacques	Richard, Marc
Bartlett, Joan	Jorgensen, Jan	Riches, Caroline
Beauchamp, Yves	Kemme, Bettina	Riddle-Merritte, Leela
Bede, Jacqueline	Kiester, Lucy	Robillard, Martin
Bedjanian, Tatiana	Kirk, Andrew	Rohrbach, Petra
Beech, Robin	Komarova, Svetlana	Rose, Jessica
Brulé-Champagne, Emile	Kouchakji, Kristi	Ruge-Murcia, Francisco
Campbell, Angela	Krishnamurthy, Srinivasan	Salameh, Samer
Cook, Colleen	Labeau, Fabrice	Salmasi, Kamal
Crago, Martha	Lach, Lucyna	Saumier, Geneviève
Cumming, Julie	Laywine, Alison	Sekhon, Harmehr
Cummings, Beth	Leckey, Robert	Shariff, Shaheen
Daryanani, Darshan	Lennox, Bruce	Shrier, Alvin
Deschenes, Jean	Loftus, Mary Lynne	Sparks, Tabitha
Dorval Courchesne, Noémie-Manuelle	Low, Bronwen	Sroka-Fillion, Nathalie
Drouin, Susan	Maioni, Antonia	Stephens, David
Earle, Jemark	Manchanda, Arnav	Subramanian, Narendra
Elbourne, Elizabeth	Manfredi, Christopher	Tessier, Adrienne
Elstein, Eleanor	McKenzie, Jeffrey	Theodore, David
Emami, Elham	Nalbantoglu, Josephine	Tureli, Ipek
Engle-Warnick, Jim	Ndao, Momar	Vallée, Jean-Sébastien
Eperjesi, Debbie	Nicell, Jim	Vennat, Manon
Faraj, Samer	Nilson, Laura	Voudouris, Nellie
Fortier, Suzanne	Nycum, Gillian	Weil, Carola
Frizzle, Brooklyn	Nystrom, Derek	Weinstein, Marc
Frona, Michael	Osiecki, Sophie	Willie, Bettina
Geddes, Maiya Rachel	Parsons, Addy	Winer, Laura
Geitmann, Anja	Qiu, Haoyi	Yalovsky, Morty
Gonnerman, Laura	Quitoriano, Nathaniel	Yang, Mu Rong
Grignon, Chantal	Ramnawaz, Shaainee	Zorychta, Edith
Hébert, Terence	Rassier, Dilson	
	Ravenscroft, Brenda	

REGRETS: Bob Babinski, Avery Bonair-Cyrus, Sébastien Breau, Dahlia Dias, Gael Eakin, David Eidelman, Joseph Hakim, Kenneth Hastings, Michael Meighen, Ram Panda, Dima Perepichka, Joella Reev, Jennifer Ronholm, Eran Shor, Laurie Snider, Maria Tippler, Krishna Uttamchandani, Tracy Webb.

1. Welcoming Remarks

The Chair welcomed Senators to the fourth Senate meeting of the 2020-21 governance year. As this was the last Senate meeting of the calendar year, she wished student Senators success in their exams and all Senators a relaxing holiday period. In light of the evolving situation regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19), the meeting was held virtually via the Zoom conferencing application. The Chair highlighted the guidelines for remote participation, which had been shared with Senators, noting that they were developed to enhance meeting effectiveness in a virtual format, while respecting the Senate Rules of Procedure. She mentioned that the audio portion of the Senate meeting was being livestreamed and the recording would be accessible until the approval of the meeting minutes.

2. Memorial Tribute: Professor Emeritus John Crawford

Senator Lennox read the following memorial tribute for Professor Crawford, which Senate subsequently unanimously endorsed:

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the passing of Dr. John Crawford, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Physics at McGill University, on September 19th, 2020.

John was born in Montreal. He attended the University Schools of Toronto high school and graduated with both a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Toronto in Mathematics and Physics. His Ph.D. in Physics was from McGill for which he designed a medical linear accelerator. This accelerator was built and installed at the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1962, the same year he received his degree. After his Ph.D., John remained at McGill as a Lecturer, then becoming a Professor in the Department of Physics in 1964 where he stayed for the rest of his life.

John's research was on experimental nuclear physics. At McGill's Foster Radiation Laboratory, he designed and installed new instruments to carry out cutting edge science. His expertise in laser spectroscopy and isotope separators was instrumental in measuring the properties of many important nuclear isotopes. He was also instrumental in constructing the Test Isotope Separator On-Line, or TISOL, at TRIUMF, which laid the foundation of TRIUMF's very successful ISAC facility. He remained an active researcher even after his retirement in 2008, contributing critically to experiments at the Canadian Penning Trap Mass Spectrometer at the Argonne National Lab and the Collinear Fast-Beam Laser Spectroscopy instrument at TRIUMF.

John was a great teacher and mentor. In his long career, he supervised numerous undergraduate and graduate students many of whom he kept in touch with long after their graduation. The two Physics courses that John created out of pure love of teaching physics, the Physics of Music, and the Planets, Stars and Galaxies (now evolved into two popular courses, Our Evolving Universe, and The Milky Way Inside and Out) are still thriving and will long remain as his legacy.

In his more than 60 year career at McGill, he has touched the lives of a great many students and colleagues in the Department. We will remember and miss his gentle humour, his quiet but always reassuring presence in the Department and its many events, enthusiasm for all things science, lively lunchtime discussions, and sage advice. We will remember and miss John as a great colleague, an innovative researcher, a caring mentor, but most of all, a true friend.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Elva, daughters and sons-in-law Cathy, Martin, Susan, Neil, Nancy and Ralph, and also grandchildren Kyle, Trevor, Gemma, Erik, Lindsay, Sara, and Anna, as well as to his extended family members, his many friends and colleagues, and to all those whose lives he touched. He will be deeply missed.

3. Report of the Steering Committee (20:21-04)

Senate received the Report of the Steering Committee (20-21:04).

Item 1. Approval of Minutes of Senate – November 18, 2020 meeting.

Item 2. Speaking Rights. Upon approval of the report, speaking rights were granted to Ms. Cristiane Tinmouth, Associate Vice-Principal (Financial Services), for item IIB2 (Annual Report on the Financial State of the University); Dr. Richard Martin, Executive Director, Analysis, Planning, and Budget, for item IIB3 (Budget Presentations); and Dr. Cameron Charlebois, Executive Director, Campus Planning and Development/ Chair of the Committee on Physical Development, for item IIB4 (Annual Report of the Committee on Physical Development).

Item 3. Approval of the Agenda.

Item 4. Review of Questions and Motions. A motion to extend the availability of the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) option for courses in the Fall 2020 term was submitted to the Steering Committee for review. After a thorough discussion, the Steering Committee did not approve the motion for submission to Senate.

Senator Cumming asked that the motion to extend the S/U option be added to the Senate agenda. She indicated that it was necessary to do so, mainly to support students who were struggling with remote learning amid the pandemic. Senator Frizzle noted that a revised motion was submitted to the Secretary-General right before the meeting addressing the concerns raised by the Steering Committee and asked that it be moved from the floor. Senator Ramnawaz shared one of the approximately 150 testimonials received from students regarding the negative impact of the pandemic on their mental health and studies. She spoke in favour of extending the S/U option, noting that many peer institutions had approved the use of flexible and compassionate grading systems for the fall 2020 term.

The Secretary-General indicated that the standard process would be to refer the motion to the Steering Committee for review. She noted that a special meeting of the Steering Committee could be convened for this purpose and would be followed by a special meeting of Senate if needed.

Certain Senators spoke against referring the motion to the Steering Committee as they believed that the Steering Committee would not be inclined to accept the newly-revised motion, given their refusal of the previous version. The Chair indicated that the Steering Committee, at its November 23, 2020 meeting, had agreed that the due diligence required to bring the motion forward was not done. She highlighted that the motion contained inaccurate information, as it cited data from March 2020 (which was an emergency situation) as support. She also mentioned that only one U15 university had implemented an alternative grade notation. The Chair stressed that it would not be a good practice to make an important policy decision without appropriate information.

In light of the interest in this item, it was agreed that the discussion would continue at the end of the meeting under “Other Business.”

On a motion duly proposed and seconded, Senate approved the Report of the Steering Committee.

4. Business Arising from the November 18, 2020 Minutes

There was none.

5. Chair’s Remarks

The Chair began her remarks by providing an update on the situation at McGill in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that the University would continue to operate under the same restrictions further to the extension of the red zone status in Montreal (the highest alert level in Quebec’s colour coded regional alert system). She highlighted that the number of cases at McGill remained low and that there was no evidence of community transmission on campuses. The Chair reported that the planning for Winter 2021 was progressing well and that the Registrar would be presenting a motion later in the meeting regarding the Winter 2021 Calendar of Academic Dates (item IIB1). She mentioned that there was encouraging news regarding vaccines; although, it was not yet known when they would be available to the general public.

Regarding government relations, the Chair reported that the University had participated in various discussions with government officials, noting that topics had included the ongoing COVID-19 crisis as well as the New Vic and Fiat Lux projects.

Regarding community relations, the Chair reported that although in-person celebrations would be delayed, the recipients for the annual Catalyst Awards for Sustainability were announced and encouraged Senators to view the list of winners on the Office of Sustainability website.

Regarding the senior administration, the Chair reported that McGill grad and former varsity hockey player Mr. Geoffrey Phillips (who is currently serving as Director of Sport Programs) was appointed as the new Senior Director of Athletics and Recreation, effective December 14, 2020. She thanked Mr. Philip Quintal for serving as Interim Senior Director since Mr. Marc Gélinas' retirement in December 2019.

The Chair concluded her remarks by giving highlights of the kudos circulated prior to the meeting. She congratulated the members of the McGill community appointed to the Order of Canada, including Senator Yves Beauchamp, Vice-Principal, Administration and Finance (Member); Dr. Guy Rouleau, Director of The Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital (Officer); Dr. Alice Benjamin, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology (Officer); and Professor Elliot Lifson, Desautels Faculty of Management (Member). She shared that McGill students Abdel Dicko, U3 Joint Honours Political Science and African Studies, and Ffion Hughes, U4 Honours in History, would be part of the Class of 2021 Rhodes Scholars. She reported that 13 McGill researchers have been named on the annual Highly Cited Researchers 2020 list from Clarivate. She congratulated Senator Martha Crago on receiving an honorary degree from the UBC Okanagan campus and Dr. Mathieu Lapointe, postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Chemical Engineering, on receiving the Mitacs Award for Outstanding Innovation.

In response to Senator Kiester's comment on possible asymptomatic transmission on campus, the Chair and Senator Labeau indicated that while there may be asymptomatic individuals on campus, the probability of asymptomatic transmission was low and would most likely be identified through contact tracing.

SECTION II

Part "A" –Questions and Motions by Members

There were none.

Part "B" –Motions and Reports from Organs of University Government

Open Session

1. Proposed Revisions to Calendar of Academic Dates for 2020-2021 (D20-23)

Senator Nycum presented this item for Senate's consideration. She stated that the proposed revisions would delay the start of the Winter 2021 term by three days for all Faculties except for the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and the Faculty of Dentistry. She mentioned that the revisions were being presented further to significant interest among the McGill community due to the pandemic and the fact that the current schedule has a shorter holiday break than other years. She highlighted some of the challenges and constraints in delaying the start date, such as covering the full academic term (of 13 weeks), not extending the term into May 2021, starting the Summer 2021 term as planned and not changing the scheduled Reading Break. Senator Nycum then provided an overview of the key dates and noted that, as applicable, programs in the Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences and Dentistry would adhere to the changes to the

Add/Drop and Withdrawal with Refund deadlines and the changes to the Final Examination Period as well as the last day of term.

Senator Nystrom asked if the holiday break would also be extended for staff members. Senator Nycum indicated that the motion only concerned the start of classes and that the University would open as planned on Monday, January 4, 2021.

Senator Daryanani acknowledged the work done by students that led to the presentation of this motion, which served as a response to the petition for an extended winter holiday that garnered over 8,000 signatures.

Senator Yalovsky spoke against the motion. He stated that increasing face-to-face instruction and activities in the winter semester, while respecting safety measures, required considerable preparation and coordination. He mentioned that students would lose a study day, indicated that external training sessions and panel speakers would need to be rescheduled or cancelled and spoke about the additional work that would be needed to revise course outlines and update systems such as Banner, Minerva and MyCourses.

Senator Elbourne expressed support for the motion as it would allow instructors more time to prepare for the semester and promoted student wellness. She also mentioned that it was valuable from a public health perspective, as it may help limit the spread of COVID-19. She acknowledged the hard work and contributions of the administrative and support staff and librarians, as they too were experiencing added stress due to the pandemic.

Senators Parsons indicated that feedback on the motion was collected from students in the Schulich School of Music. She shared some of the comments received on the difficulties students were facing, such as stress, burnout, mental health issues, and noted that an extra three days would provide some relief.

Senator Tessier thanked the Registrar for developing the motion. She indicated that it acknowledged the toll of the pandemic on students and would allow students to recharge before starting another challenging term.

On a motion duly proposed and seconded, Senate approved the following changes to the Academic Calendar for all Faculties except the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and the Faculty of Dentistry: For the Winter 2021 term, classes will begin on 7 January, end on Friday 16 April, and the Final Examination period would be adjusted to be ten days in duration, beginning on 19 April 2021 and ending on 30 April 2021. The ‘study day’ currently scheduled on 14 April 2021 will now be the weekend days of 17 and 18 April 2021.

2. Annual Report on the Financial State of the University (D20-24)

Senator Beauchamp and Ms. Tinmouth presented this report for Senate’s information. The report provided a summary of the operational and financial activities of the University for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2020. Senator Beauchamp highlighted that the University posted an operating deficit of \$11.5M based on Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and received a \$35M *subvention conditionnelle* from the *Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur* (MEES). He noted that capital expenditures were \$100.5M for deferred maintenance and \$69M for IT projects and that the total income distribution on endowment funds amounted to \$65.9M on realized income of \$55.1M. Ms. Tinmouth provided an overview of the operating fund results. She highlighted the favourable variances in revenues, non-salary expenses and surplus compared to the forecast. She mentioned that the accumulated deficit increased from \$332.3M in FY19 to \$354.8M in FY20, noting that 2020 represented the first year the total accumulated deficit increased since 2014. She then provided an overview of the sources of funding and expenditures.

3. Budget Presentations

3.1 McGill University FY2021 Final Budget (D20-25)

Senator Manfredi presented this report for Senate’s information. He reminded Senators that the Board of Governors had approved a provisional budget in April for FY21 due to the uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He then reviewed key elements of the final budget that would be presented to the Board of Governors for approval the following week. He reported that, as of Fall 2020, revenues and expenses were lower than predicted. He highlighted that a deficit of \$13M was anticipated for the final budget, with a total accumulated deficit of close to \$133M. He mentioned that Fall 2020 enrolment was comparable to Fall 2019, noting that enrolment in Bachelor’s degree programs and graduate research programs increased while enrolment in graduate non-thesis programs (particularly in self-funded programs such as the MBA) decreased. He also mentioned that, overall, international student enrolment remained unchanged due to a higher number of returning students.

Senator Tessier asked about the projections for Winter 2021 enrolment and their impact on the budget. Senator Manfredi responded that no major change was anticipated and highlighted that there was a provision in the budget in case of lower tuition fee revenues. He explained that enrolment data is submitted to the government in October and that a three-year rolling average was used for the calculations, noting that this year’s numbers would be excluded.

Senator Kirk acknowledged that members of the academic staff and non-unionized administrative and support staff received a reduced salary raise to ease the budgetary pressures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senator Faraj asked how McGill’s budget compared to that of other Quebec and Canadian universities. He also asked if there was a need to reduce expenses in light of the growing government debt. Senator Manfredi stated that Quebec universities were doing well compared to other Canadian universities due to the measures taken to support the university sector by the

provincial government. He indicated that the University would have to be cautious going forward and more information would be available in April when the *orientations budgétaires* are received from the government. The Chair added that many universities in the United States were facing serious difficulties and have implemented salary cuts, layoffs and furloughs. She noted that some universities even had to pause admissions to Ph.D. programs in the humanities.

Some Senators raised concerns regarding Workday, McGill’s new human resource information system, stating that a number of employees, many of them students, had not been paid since it was implemented in August 2020. They expressed the view that the implementation was not successful and underlined the importance of resolving the situation. Senator Beauchamp indicated that resolving the issue with Workday was a priority. He reassured Senators that the problem was not related to the system but rather to data entry and communications. Senator Manfredi disagreed that the implementation was unsuccessful, noting that over 12,000 McGill employees were paid on time and accurately. He stated that difficulties were experienced with some new hires and that a small number of unresolved cases remained. He stated that it was a regrettable situation and stressed that Human Resources and IT Services were working to resolve it and to ensure that it would not reoccur in the winter term. Senator Rose asked if the implementation of Workday resulted in any unforeseen expenses. Senator Beauchamp indicated that McGill was able to implement the system within the \$50.7M budget approved by the Board of Governors. He mentioned that UBC spent \$335M to implement three modules of the system (McGill only implemented one module). Further to a question by the Chair on resources made available to help graduate students affected by Workday, Ms. Tinmouth indicated that a bridge loan of \$1,500 (payable in January) was made available to Teaching Assistants and other student employees. Senator Daryanani commented that the loan was not made available to undergraduate students and advocated for the students affected. The Chair reiterated that the University was taking the issue very seriously and working diligently to resolve it.

3.2 Budget Planning FY2022 Report I

(D20-26)

Senator Manfredi delivered the first of three presentations concerning the FY22 University budget, for Senate’s information. He indicated that there is continued uncertainty due to COVID-19 impacting all major revenue sources. He mentioned that the University would continue to explore expense reduction measures and include contingencies in the FY22 budget. He highlighted some of the uncertainties and risks (noting that very limited information was available at this time) and mentioned that it was anticipated that the University would return to a balanced budget in FY24.

Senator Riddle-Merritte asked whether student residences were included under “goods and services.” Senator Manfredi responded in the affirmative and indicated that they were a large driver of the decrease in revenues as they were operating at 30 to 40% capacity.

Senator Quitariano asked if it were possible to better align McGill’s budgetary process with that of the provincial government’s. Senator Manfredi mentioned that there have been improvements over the past several years. However, he indicated that not much can be done as McGill’s budget needs to be approved before the end of the fiscal year (which is on May 1st) while the *Règles budgétaires* are only available afterwards.

4. Annual Report of the Senate Committee on Physical Development (D20-27)

Dr. Charlebois presented this report for Senate's information, in accordance with the terms of reference of the Senate Committee on Physical Development. He highlighted that the Committee discussed several major planning initiatives, including Wilson Hall, the New Vic Project, Macdonald Stewart Library Building (Schulich Library) and the Fiat Lux (Library) Project.

Further to a question by Senator Richard on the progress of the Fiat Lux Project, Dr. Charlebois clarified that the report summarized discussions held during the 2019-2020 governance year, noting that the Fiat Lux Project was currently well underway.

5. Report of the Joint Board-Senate Meeting (2020) (D20-28)

The Principal presented this report for Senate's information. She highlighted that Dr. Tim Evans, Associate Dean and Director of McGill's School of Population and Global Health in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Professor Christopher Buddle, Associate Provost (Teaching and Academic Programs), delivered presentations related to the COVID-19 pandemic that informed breakout session discussions. She noted that the main ideas that emerged from the discussions were included in the report.

6. Other Business

Senators continued the discussion on the S/U motion. The Chair reminded Senators that the objective was not to debate the motion but determine whether it should be referred to the Steering Committee for review, in line with the Senate's governance processes and the Senate Rules of Procedure.

Senators Parsons, Frizzle, Daryanani and Loftus spoke in favour of Senate considering the motion at this time. They stated that the motion was time-sensitive and shared more student testimonials. It was noted that the motion was revised following the feedback from the Steering Committee and had received considerable support among the student body. Senator Frizzle disagreed with the Steering Committee's decision to refuse the motion and questioned the argument that implementing the motion was unfeasible as the S/U option was extended in Winter 2020 at McGill and in Fall 2020 at other universities.

Senator Campbell, who serves on the Steering Committee, stated that motions need to demonstrate due diligence and contain accurate data supported by credible sources (as per the *Guidelines for the Review of Questions and Motions by the Senate Steering Committee*). She mentioned that the S/U motion was not canvassed with Faculties and the Registrar's Office to understand the limits of the proposal and how it would be implemented. She underlined that the administration was not dismissing student concerns, noting that the S/U option was not extended in Fall 2020 due to the potential negative long-term consequences, many of which are unforeseeable (mainly regarding students' academic and career paths, scholarships, and program accreditation). Other members of the Steering Committee stated that they were unaware if the revised motion addressed the concerns raised, as they had not received it. They noted that the

original motion applied to all programs, did not describe its impact, implementation or how the burden imposed on administrative staff would be managed.

After a motion to suspend the Senate Rules of Procedure and debate the S/U motion failed to carry, the motion was referred to the Steering Committee for review. It was indicated that a special meeting of Senate would be convened following the review, if necessary.

There being no other business to deal with, on a motion duly proposed and seconded, the meeting ended at 5:12 p.m.

END

The complete documents, including presentations at Senate, are kept as part of the official minutes.