

Student agenda for sustainability at McGill



Contact: Camille Ouellet Dallaire
(Camille.OuelletDallaire@mail.mcgill.ca)

Axes of change for sustainability in higher education institutions from a student perspective, were identified over the course of a participatory research project lead by the Sustainability Research Symposium team. We then ranked McGill's performance for each of these axes of change (Figure 1).

Seven axes were ultimately selected based on three focus group discussions. McGill's average scores out of five for each axis are presented in parentheses below.

1. Connectivity, information access & sharing (2.3/5)

McGill should prioritize connecting different units within the institution specifically, between the MacDonald and downtown campuses, among different disciplines and among students, staff, and professors.

2. Accessibility and inclusiveness (3/5)

McGill should welcome diversity, and all spaces should be inclusive and universally accessible (both physically and socially).

3. Integrity in governance (2.2/5)

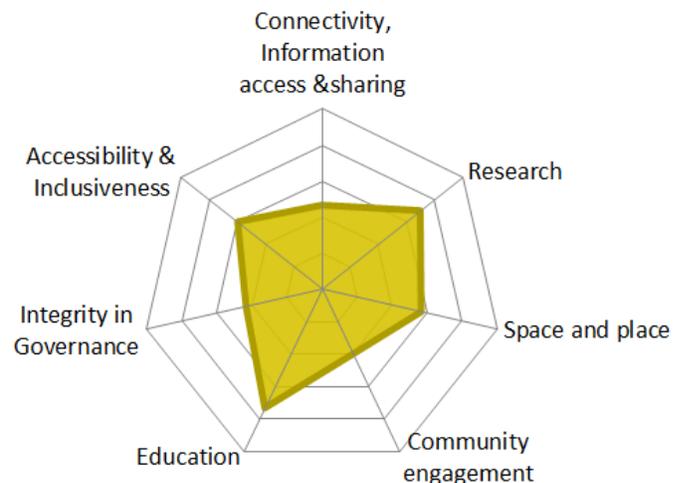
Governance of McGill operations should reflect what is preached by the broader administration. The administration also needs to be consistent with the messages and objectives they set for the institution.

4. Education (3.7/5)

Promote education that is linked to real-world challenges, that embraces interdisciplinarity and extend beyond the walls of McGill.

5. Community engagement (2/5)

McGill should ensure that it is part of the Montreal community and the global community through outreach and inclusive projects.



6. Space and place (2.8/5)

Create a sense of place at McGill, and foster attachment and a sense of belonging by managing and creating physical spaces that reflect sustainability principles (incl. environmental, social, & economic)

7. Research (3.5/5)

Maintain the status and role of a world-leading research institution through innovation and engagement in cutting-edge interdisciplinary research.

Following the focus groups, we used a participatory approach ('open-space technology') to encourage students to come up with project ideas that could help improve McGill's performance along the axes of change for sustainability (Figure 1). Four main project ideas emerged from this workshop section:

1. Inclusive open green spaces

There are existing project suggestions for a 'greener' campus, from groups across campus. We want to take these great ideas and actually implement them on campus so that they can act as "sanctuary places": places where students and the broader community can get together, exchange ideas, host workshops, etc. This could promote partnerships between student groups and community organizations. Examples include creating green roofs, greenhouses, building swings/ hammocks in lower field from recyclable materials, and setting up quiet green spaces or a permanent relief room for students dealing with chronic pain issues. McGill should capitalize on the 375th of Montreal as an opportunity to link McGill to the Montreal cityscape by inviting artists to paint a mural on Burnside and paint benches around campus. This could better link McGill to the Montreal cityscape.

2. Open data and health at McGill

We propose to create an open data repository of administrative data and data collected by the university (STAR) for individual use in class projects, research projects, or during 'hackathons', etc. This could have a direct impact on efficiency and inclusivity of projects for the McGill community. This could increase collaborative work between faculties and between staff/students/faculty. Furthermore a centralized open data portal could provide opportunities for innovation and help promote existing data driven work currently occurring on campus.

3. Our people's fair – fair for all

We would like to see the implementation of a relaxed open space 'event' for learning, communicating, and collaborating once a semester. This could initially be implemented during Orientation Week (everyone can be involved because they are not restricted by class times). This should be co-sponsored by every faculty at McGill. This would increase access to collaborative opportunities between groups within the McGill community and between communities in Montreal (students, staff, professors, administration, government, companies, CEGEPs, etc.). It would also allow for an integration of various community perspectives and break down the silos between faculties, departments, schools, academic levels, administration, and build greater attachment to our campus as an inclusive space.

4. Collaborative website and calendar for sustainability related groups

We want to see a centralized website (or database) that would act as a resource for sustainability-related information. It should include definitions, where different groups & organizations stand, upcoming activities, services provided by each group. This would create an online institutional memory available for student groups. The goal would be to have this as part of a long-lasting structure that increases the visibility of existing sustainability related services and would not be a new student group.

More information about the Sustainability Research Symposium is available at <https://mcgillsustainabilitysymposium.wordpress.com/>