

## APPENDIX B

### MC GILL UNIVERSITY STUDENT DIVERSITY SURVEY: PRELIMINARY REPORT

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In 2006, The *Final Report of the Principal's Task Force on Student Life and Learning*<sup>2</sup> (PTF-SLL) summoned the University to action with important, far-reaching recommendations:

*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. (p. 22)*

To advance this goal, we needed to know about the range of students who study at McGill, but it is difficult to describe the diversity of our student body, because we ask students to provide only limited demographic information when they apply and register. Therefore, in the Fall of 2009, we launched the Student Demographic Survey (Diversity Survey). The complete McGill Student Diversity Survey Report will be available by the end of the semester, but some of the main findings are outlined below; the survey questionnaire, the preliminary data, and my presentation to Senate are available online at [www.mcgill.ca/deputyprovost/diversitysurvey/](http://www.mcgill.ca/deputyprovost/diversitysurvey/).

The survey has enabled us to examine the demographic characteristics of our student body in more detail than would otherwise be possible. Among other things, it also assessed students' perceptions of discrimination, to help us assess – albeit to a limited extent – whether different groups of students experience a welcoming environment. As a whole, the survey will guide us to serve students better and to make the the University even more welcoming.

The quantitative data obtained from the survey complement the qualitative information obtained by the Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement (PTF-DECE), which was struck in 2009. One set of recommendations from that Task Force is meant to enhance diversity and broaden access to McGill, in support of our offering the best education available to outstanding students. The results from future administrations of the Diversity Survey will enable us to measure our progress toward some of the goals we set for ourselves in response to these recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Diversity Survey would not have been possible without the help of the following people from Planning and Institutional Analysis (PIA); Lina Di Genova was instrumental in devising, pretesting, and running the survey and in initial analyses; Isabelle Carreau continued the analyses, helped prepare this report, and is continuing work on the project; Joseph Berger also contributed to the initial report. In addition, Robyn Wiltshire, Director of the Office of the Deputy Provost, made important contributions to this report.

<sup>2</sup> [www.mcgill.ca/principal/focus/final/](http://www.mcgill.ca/principal/focus/final/)

## Student Demographic Survey

In Fall 2009, we invited 9,000 randomly selected McGill students who were registered in degree, certificate or diploma programs to complete our web-based Student Demographic Survey; 2,072 students (23%) responded.<sup>3</sup> The survey tapped the following: general information (e.g., age, program, etc.); knowledge about services for McGill students<sup>4</sup>; language; financing education; persons with disabilities; sex, gender identity and sexual orientation; geographic, ethnic and cultural origin; religion; and identity. A full breakdown of the demographic data by level of study for these dimensions is available online.<sup>5</sup> In this brief summary, I highlight issues related to socio-economic status, linguistic diversity, and perceived discrimination.

### Socio-economic Status

The responses to questions regarding parental education and debt suggest that McGill students are more advantaged, as a group, than students in the general university population of Canada. A substantial majority of McGill students reported that their parents have completed some form of post-secondary education, typically at a university; 76% of respondents reported that at least one parent had completed a university degree.<sup>6</sup> According to the 2008 Canadian University Survey Consortium's Student Survey (CUSC) (the last that included undergraduate students in all years), the comparable figure was only 44% of students with at least one parent who had completed some type of university education.<sup>7</sup>

Among undergraduates who responded to the survey, 34% reported having education-related debt, which is lower than the 49% of undergraduates from Canadian universities who reported such debt in the CUSC survey. At McGill, graduate students reported more education-related debt than did undergraduates, presumably because of the longer time they have been studying. McGill students at all levels reported government-funded programs as the most common source of loans, followed by financial institutions, parents and other sources, which was a similar pattern to that for students at Canadian universities who responded to the CUSC survey.

The mean total education-related debt was \$16,572 for the 34% of McGill undergraduates who reported debt, \$20,041 for the 49% of master's students with debt, and \$18,634 for the 49% of doctoral students with debt. However, McGill undergraduates with debt reported lower levels than did students in the CUSC survey, who reported \$18,935 of debt on average.

Thus, the survey indicated that, as a whole, McGill undergraduates as a group enjoy socio-economic advantages relative to students at Canadian universities. Proportionally many more McGill students have at least one parent with a university degree. Furthermore, proportionally fewer McGill students carry debt, and those who are indebted carry less debt.

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<sup>3</sup> The margin of error is 2%, with a 95% level of confidence, for the sample of 2,072, 3% for subgroups of one half the sample size, and 4% for subgroups of one quarter the sample size.

<sup>4</sup> Assessing students' knowledge of the services available to them, the survey was a first step in determining if we are reaching students who can benefit from help available at McGill, but these issues are not addressed here.

<sup>5</sup> [www.mcgill.ca/deputyprovost/diversitysurvey/](http://www.mcgill.ca/deputyprovost/diversitysurvey/).

<sup>6</sup> The data reported in this report are based on frequencies that have been weighted with respect to sex, level of study (undergraduate, master's and doctoral), and origin (Quebec, rest of Canada, US, and other international).

<sup>7</sup> Prairie Research Associates, 2008. *Undergraduate Student Survey 2008: Master Report*. Canadian University Survey Consortium.

McGill is striving to increase resources available for financial aid to undergraduate students to ensure that qualified potential students do not have to refuse their offer of admission to the University on financial grounds, which was one of the recommendations of the PTF-SLL. Efforts are also needed to improve “pipelines” of qualified students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and to offer such students not only the financial aid they require to attend McGill, but also the support they may need in transitioning to and succeeding at university. Future surveys will indicate whether efforts undertaken to broaden access have been successful in increasing the socio-economic diversity of our student body.

### **Linguistic Competence**

The results of the Diversity Survey suggested that McGill students are comfortable in a number of languages. When asked about the languages they first learned and still understand and use, 76% of respondents indicated English, while 44% answered French, and 27% reported an altogether different language; these figures exceed 100%, because many students selected more than one language, and many appear to have been multilingual since childhood. While 92% of respondents said they speak English with friends and relatives, 49% reported French, and 26% reported a third language. It is common, then, for McGill students to function in more than one language in their daily lives.

The survey asked students to rate their language skills, their level of interest in improving their skills, and the steps they may have taken to do so. Among the 604 students who reported any of their French skills (i.e., speaking, oral comprehension, reading and writing) as poor or fair, 22% had taken formal or informal steps to improve their French language abilities. Moreover, about 80% were interested in continuing to improve their French speaking and understanding skills. Thus, many McGill students who have not mastered French appear to be quite motivated to improve their language skills.

### **Perceived Discrimination**

The two Principal’s Task Forces have called the University community to action with respect to ensuring that McGill is a welcoming environment for our students. Such an environment would have a number of positive characteristics, such as active efforts to include students in our community regardless of their background, mutual respect, as well as openness to diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, ideas, and worldviews. A welcoming environment would also be free of discrimination, and it is this issue that was addressed by the Diversity Survey.

Respondents were asked about their experience of discrimination on campus both by people who work at McGill and by other students with respect to a number of areas: language, disability, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, ethnic/cultural background, and religion. As indicated in Appendix I (Section A), the majority of students reported not having experienced any discrimination whatsoever by students (61%) or by McGill employees (70%), while only a small percentage of respondents said they had experienced “quite a lot” or “very much” by students (4%) or by employees (4%).

Students who reported such levels of discrimination by other students did not necessarily report discrimination by staff; consequently there were approximately 7% of respondents who reported relatively high levels of discrimination by individuals in one or the other group. An extrapolation of 7% to the target population of 30,586 students suggests that over 1,800 students

would report experiencing this level of discrimination. Moreover, we should not dismiss the students who reported experiencing discrimination “very little” or “somewhat”. Ideally, McGill should be a no-discrimination zone, and no members of our community should feel that they are the victims of discrimination.

The survey also allowed us to determine whether certain groups of students were more likely to report discrimination. Data on the percentage of students in specific groups who reported discrimination based on specific characteristics are presented in Appendix I (Section B). Again, although there were few students who reported relatively high levels of discrimination, the following groups of students had fewer than 80% of students reporting no discrimination at all by either students or by employees: monolingual students regarding language; students with disabilities regarding disabilities; homosexual and bisexual students regarding sexual orientation; American and other international students regarding country of origin; south asian, black, and Latin American students regarding ethnic/cultural background; and Muslim and Jewish students regarding religion.

Our goal must be to make McGill a welcoming environment where all students can feel included in the community. As a first step, we must consult with students who report experiencing discrimination to determine the circumstances that prompt such reports. Then, at the very least, we must raise awareness in our community – among students, academic, administrative and support staff – that there are identifiable groups of students who feel that they are experiencing discrimination. Finally, we must take proactive steps to ensure that all students feel comfortable as members of the McGill community.

## Appendix I

### Diversity Survey Responses to Questions on Students' Experience of Discrimination on Campus<sup>8</sup>

#### Legend

Discrimination by students
Discrimination by McGill employees

Group	n	% of Respondents				
		Not at all	Very little	Some-what	Quite a lot	Very much

#### A. Discrimination on Any Basis

Students who answered relevant questions	1984	61	19	16	3	1
		70	14	12	3	1

#### B. Discrimination on the Basis of ...

##### ... Language

Only speak French with Friends and Relatives	120	72	18	10	1	0
		75	13	10	2	0
Only speak English with Friends and Relatives	769	76	15	7	2	1
		80	11	7	1	0
Other(s)	1117	81	12	7	1	0
		86	7	6	1	0

##### ... Disability

Students with any Disability	110	82	11	6	0	1
		74	13	8	1	5

##### ... Gender

Female	1142	85	9	6	1	0
		88	7	4	1	0
Male	856	94	4	2	1	0
		95	2	2	0	1

##### ... Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual and Other	1834	96	3	1	0	0
		97	2	1	0	0
Homosexual and Bisexual	153	67	20	10	1	1
		86	7	5	2	0

<sup>8</sup> The data presented in this table are based on the frequencies of students in particular groups who responded to the questions on discrimination and have been weighted with respect to sex, level of study (undergraduate, master's and doctoral), and origin (Quebec, rest of Canada, US, and other international).

Group of Students	n	% of Respondents				
		Not at all	Very little	Some-what	Quite a lot	Very much

**Discrimination on the Basis of ...**

**... Country of origin**

Canadian	1671	92	4	2	1	0
		95	3	2	0	0
American	184	64	22	12	2	0
		75	13	9	2	1
Other International	146	74	15	9	1	1
		82	9	7	1	1

**... Ethnic/Cultural Background**

White <sup>9</sup>	1576	91	5	3	1	0
		95	3	2	0	0
Chinese	147	78	12	10	1	0
		84	7	8	1	1
South Asian	89	73	17	10	0	0
		82	8	10	0	0
Arabic	69	82	13	1	3	0
		91	4	1	0	3
Black	52	77	13	6	4	0
		79	8	10	2	0
Latin American	49	79	13	8	0	0
		84	8	4	2	2

**... Religion**

Buddhist	41	85	5	10	0	0
		90	5	5	0	0
Christian	762	86	7	5	1	0
		95	3	1	1	1
Muslim	75	75	15	5	4	0
		85	7	7	0	1
Jewish	157	71	14	12	2	1
		84	8	7	1	0
No Religion	797	95	3	1	1	0
		97	2	1	0	0

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada categories that, except for the first one, identify visible minorities.