



# Innovation Steering Committee

June 2014

Recognizing and Rewarding Innovation and  
Entrepreneurship in the Academic Career  
Path at McGill University

## Preamble

As one of Canada's most research-intensive universities, McGill has a lead role to play in disseminating knowledge, ideas and path-breaking discoveries to the global society; however the University has not been particularly successful in engaging with business/community groups in highly impactful ways, commercializing research, spinning off social ventures, or fostering a culture that supports and rewards innovation and entrepreneurship, be it technological, industrial or social.

Over the last decade, governments have explicitly stated their desire to "speed the movement of ideas from basic science labs to commercial application"<sup>1</sup>. Agencies funding science and social research are increasingly echoing these motivations in their application processes by asking investigators to identify clear pathways through which their research may come to benefit society.

Recognizing and rewarding innovation activities that drive socio-economic value creation are important means of propelling knowledge translation and can have substantial academic benefits. Many of our peer institutions have moved to acknowledge these activities as legitimate contributions to academic promotion dossiers and several reasons have been identified for this shift:

1. "Technology commercialization through patents, licenses, and start-ups is a critical component of the dissemination of knowledge. These fall under the umbrella of engagement, and represent an important aspect of being a university."<sup>2</sup>
2. "Successful technology transfer brings recognition to universities and helps communicate, in a tangible way, the impact of university research, which might otherwise seem esoteric."<sup>3</sup>
3. "Faculty with industrial connections are academically more productive and have more impact than those without such connections"<sup>4</sup>. For instance, a survey of 3,080 life science faculty members found that academic staff with industry relationships published significantly more and in higher-impact journals than those who did not have any industrial relationship<sup>5</sup>.
4. Papers generated by university–industry research collaborations are cited more frequently than multi- or single university papers<sup>6</sup>.

At McGill our academic reward systems have not kept pace with these trends. Activities related to innovation and entrepreneurship are not systematically recognized or rewarded at McGill and the Innovation Steering Committee (ISC) has established that incentives to faculty members in terms of merit, tenure and career advancement are not aligned with the goal of accelerating research that may have commercial or societal impact.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Competitiveness and Innovative Capacity of the United States](#) (U.S. Department of Commerce and the National Economic Council).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/18/6542.long#ref-8>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> American Association of University Professors (2014) Recommended Principles to Guide Academy-Industry Relationships (American Association of University Professors Foundation, University of Illinois Press, Washington, DC).

<sup>5</sup> Zinner DE, Bolcic-Jankovic D, Clarridge B, Blumenthal D, Campbell EG (2009) Participation of academic scientists in relationships with industry. *Health Aff (Millwood)* 28(6):1814–1825.

<sup>6</sup> Hicks D, Hamilton K. (1999) Does university-industry collaboration adversely affect university research? *Issues Sci Technol* 15(4):74–75.

As part of our continuing efforts to cultivate an environment that promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, and the transfer of knowledge, the Innovation Steering Committee has developed a set of recommendations that will help to align McGill's internal policies and procedures with this recognized priority.

## Recommendations

### Tenure dossiers

- Develop new guidelines for completing the “Research” portion of tenure and promotion dossiers to include activities directly supporting or resulting in technical, commercial or social innovation or entrepreneurship that drives socio-economic value creation. Provide prompts for these activities, along with appropriate examples. Definitions for innovation and entrepreneurship activities are provided below (see [Appendix A](#)).
- Develop new guidelines for completing the “Service” portion of the tenure and promotion dossiers, including prompts on activities directly supporting or resulting in innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Update guidelines for completing the “Teaching” portion of the tenure and promotion dossiers to include prompts on activities that support innovation and entrepreneurship among students.
- Adapt the form that is used to solicit external letters for tenure and/or promotion to include prompts about activities directly supporting or resulting in innovation and entrepreneurship.

### Merit

- Certain Faculties have already begun to recognize activities directly supporting or resulting in innovation and entrepreneurship during faculty merit evaluations. This adaptation of merit criteria should be encouraged (but not prescribed) in all the Faculties.

### Leaves

- Develop a leave mechanism to provide faculty members with the flexibility to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities when these arise. Specifically, we recommend allowing sabbatical periods to be used to pursue innovation and entrepreneurship activities (e.g. technology/prototype development, start-up creation, or the launch of a social venture). Further, we suggest that leaves for these purposes be deductible against future sabbatical leave entitlements.

### Teaching release

- Develop a mechanism to allow faculty members to allocate time to innovation and entrepreneurship activities by obtaining teaching releases, conditional upon the ability of

the Faculty to fund the release and identify appropriate resources to fill the individual's teaching duties.

### **Recognition**

- Develop a mechanism to recognize McGill's most innovative faculty members to reinforce a culture that is supportive of innovation and entrepreneurship at McGill.

## Endorsement

These recommendations are endorsed by the members of the Innovation Steering Committee:

First	Last	Department/Unit	Role
Phil	Barker	Neurology and Neurosurgery	Chair
Lea	Cameron	VPRIR	Project Lead
Mark	Andrews	Chemistry	Member
Michele	Beaulieu	VPRIR	Member
Timothy	Geary	Parasitology	Member
Philippe	Gros	Biochemistry	Member
Peter	Grutter	Physics	Member
David	Lametti	Law	Member
Bruce	Lennox	Chemistry	Member
Steve	Maguire	Management	Member
Antonia	Maioni	Political Science	Member
Isabelle	Péan	VPRIR	Member
Nikolas	Provatas	Physics	Member
Greg	Vit	Management	Member
Jean-Francois	Nadeau	VPRIR	Member

## Appendix A – Definitions

The Innovation Steering Committee strives for consistency in its recommendations. The definitions provided below are identical to those proposed in the ISC's March 2014 document entitled "Innovation Steering Committee Recommendations on Entrepreneurship Training".

### Innovation:

The process of translating an idea or invention into an activity, good, or service that creates societal value.

### Entrepreneur:

An individual that exercises initiative by organizing a venture that leverages an idea, activity, good, or service; as the key decision maker, the entrepreneur decides what to implement and how to do it.

### Entrepreneurship:

The construction, pursuit and realization of an opportunity to innovate requiring resources beyond the entrepreneur's immediate control and resulting in economic or social change.

### Entrepreneurship training:

Any academic activity which may be undertaken (for-credit or not-for-credit, classroom learning or experiential learning) aimed at increasing the likelihood that its target audience will engage in and be successful at innovation and entrepreneurship. When used in the context of McGill University this concept is always understood to include social innovation and entrepreneurship; and, sometimes, training in essentials of management and/or fundamentals of business in addition to training in entrepreneurship per se.