**From:** Marc Richard   
**Sent:** Friday, February 18, 2011 5:25 PM  
**Cc:** Marc Richard  
**Subject:** Senate Meeting Report, 2011-02-16

Colleagues,

The following is a summary of the Senate meeting which took place on Wednesday, February 16, 2011

The meeting began with Dean Manfredi presenting a resolution on the death of Professor Adrian Hsia.

Senate adopted the minutes of the last Senate meeting (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-01-19SenateMinutes.pdf>), the report of the Steering Committee (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16ReportoftheSenateSteeringCommittee.pdf>) and the agenda (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16SenateAgenda.pdf>).

Further to item 2.1 of the January minutes (which covered the introduction of a more concise format for some elements of the minutes) and item 1 of the February Steering Report (in which Steering noted the importance of recording the main points of the open-ended discussion items at Senate), Senator Saroyan expressed concern that the new succinct format would not reflect the substance and intensity of the discussion on various topics; she requested that the Secretariat revert to the previous approach for writing the minutes.  Principal Munroe-Blum invited Secretary-General Strople to speak to the issue.  The Secretary-General indicated that he was willing to take the matter under advisement, and requested feedback on the format and content of the minutes so that the Secretariat would have guidance on what to include, but without going back to the previous approach.  He would particularly like to receive concrete examples drawn from previous minutes showing what is missing from specific items, so that general principles can be extrapolated from them.

Senator Cuello endorsed Senator Saroyan's views, arguing that interesting discussions take place in Senate and that the minutes are the historical record of those discussions.  Senator Robaire likewise concurred, saying that the minutes are a good aide-mémoire through which Senators can find out what transpired at any meetings they have missed.  Senator Gillon asked whether the minutes are intended simply to capture the decisions of Senate or whether their purpose is to record the debates which take place at Senate meetings.  Secretary-General Strople answered that they are meant to be somewhere in the middle: a record of the meeting but not a procès-verbal.  A student Senator asked whether the proceedings of Senate might be recorded.  Secretary-General Strople answered that the meetings of Senate are already audio-recorded, and speculated that one avenue might be to archive these recordings and make them available to Senators who were absent from a given meeting.  Senator Saroyan suggested that the minutes should give an indication of how long particular issues were debated and how many people argued for and against these items.

In her remarks from the Chair, Principal Munroe-Blum thanked everyone who has signed up for the staff-student mentorship program, and discussed her recent trip to India to promote McGill.  Regarding the new self-funded MBA program, she announced that the program has jumped up 38 spots in a global ranking of such programs and now occupies the 57th position internationally.  About half a million dollars has been set aside to provide financial aid to the students in this program, and over 80% of them receive some kind of financial assistance from McGill.  The Administration is still in discussions with the government about the self-funded nature of the program.  The Principal also reported that she and Dean Levin (as well as CREPUQ and the rectors of Quebec's other medical schools) have been very active on the issue of Bill 127 ("An Act to improve the management of the health and social services network"), whose provisions affect the boards of directors of health service agencies and institutions (including teaching hospitals).

In the period for formal questions, Senators Janda and Lawson each asked questions pertaining to the Strategic Reframing Initiative (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16QuestionregardingtheStrategicReframingInitiative.pdf> and <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16QuestionregardingtheStrategicReframingInitiative2.pdf>).  Provost Masi responded to the combined questions, with Principal Munroe-Blum providing additional elements of information.

The Provost began by noting that an initial Senate discussion of the SRI took place in November, and that the Principal will report to Senate on the topic in March.  The SRI is a collaborative project of the senior Administration, a management tool which will help McGill survive in a difficult climate of financial constraints and in an extremely competitive environment.  The initiative revolves around five working groups and involves about seventy members of the McGill community.  It is an administrative process, but any outcomes with governance implications will of course come before the appropriate governance bodies, i.e. the Board, Senate, or both.  The Provost underlined that the SRI is a McGill process, not a wholesale importation of the model used by the McKinsey and Company consulting firm.  It is intended to provide insights into McGill's processes, and to help McGill overcome handicaps and build on its strengths in difficult financial times.  Various measures have been taken to keep the McGill community informed of the process, and such measures will continue to be taken as the Administration moves from planning to implementation; they include the presentations made in recent weeks by the Provost at faculty councils (or their equivalents).  Principal Munroe-Blum added that McGill has no contract with McKinsey; McGill is doing its own analysis, using three methodological inputs from McKinsey.

Senator Janda remarked that, if the McGill community is going to be asked to abandon the business-as-usual approach, it should be engaged in the SRI process as soon as possible.  Senator Abaki reminded the Administration of its commitment to consider student concerns, and said that he would like to see students brought into the process.  Senator Caplan remarked that the SRI's Performance Enhancement group has tremendous implications for what McGill people do.  Provost Masi responded that McGill's resource base has to support its aspirations.  Much has been learned from the SRI process, but no decisions have been taken; the Administration is still in the process of gathering  the facts.

The next and final question, posed by Senator Abaki, concerned course offerings and capacities (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16QuestionregardingCourseOfferingsandCapacities.pdf>).  Deputy Provost Mendelson prefaced his response by noting that, while the number of students at McGill has gone up over the years, the number of tenure-track professors has also increased.  He commented that large courses are not inherently bad, and that steps have been taken to improve the pedagogy in such courses (e.g. lecture recordings and clickers).  The recently-introduced coordinated class scheduling system has reduced scheduling conflicts.  There is no evidence that there are not enough course offerings; indeed, there may be too many small courses.  Reducing the number of courses or programs with very small enrolments could release resources which could be used for larger (though still small) courses.

Senator Deguise commented that it was important to retain the small size of high-level seminar courses.  Senator Abaki said that the students wish to be part of the solution and proposed that a focus group be established to look at the issue.  In response to the Deputy Provost's earlier reference to the fact that classes are deliberately overbooked to compensate for the attrition that will typically occur, Senator Robaire asked whether the Administration had an explicit policy on percentage overbookings.  Deputy Provost Mendelson replied that there was an explicit practice, and that it was in the 7% range.

The Deputy Provost next presented the annual report of Student Life and Learning, including a PowerPoint presentation on the early results from the McGill Student Diversity Survey (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-40AnnualReportofStudentLifeandLearning.pdf>).  In the discussion which followed, Senator Richard asked if the responses pertaining to perceived discrimination on the basis of language could be attributed to the question of whether or not faculty members have enough resources at their disposal to grade in a timely manner papers that have been submitted in French.  Deputy Provost Mendelson answered that, except for a few comments, the survey had not captured many specifics; this is an issue that will need to be broken down.  Senator Wade remarked that it was important to distinguish between real and perceived discrimination, and that this could perhaps be done through comparisons with other universities.  The Deputy Provost disagreed, stating that the perception of discrimination is in itself an important issue, and that what was needed was follow-up research to determine the basis of these perceptions.  Senator Deguise asked how actual discrimination could be distinguished from perceived discrimination.  Deputy Provost Mendelson responded that perceived discrimination is self-reported, whereas actual discrimination would be identified by third-party witnesses, or by triangulation (i.e. reports from multiple individuals that a particular person was engaged in discriminatory behaviour).

Principal Munroe-Blum presented for information the draft report of the Principal’s Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-41PrincipalsTaskForce.pdf>).  A preliminary version of the Administrative response to the report will be brought to Senate once it has been drafted, possibly late next fall.  Members of the McGill community who are not able to attend the Principal's upcoming Town Hall meetings on the subject are invited to provide feedback by the end of May via the Task Force's website.

The next agenda item was a PowerPoint presentation by Provost Masi on Achieving Strategic Academic Priorities 2012-2016 (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-42AchievingStrategicAcademicPriorities.pdf>).  The draft report will come before Senate in May and the final report sometime in the fall.  In the discussion which followed, Senator Janda remarked that, while he understands the need for performance indicators, we should not fall prey to them and we should be aware of the dangers of targeting what we think are strategic research areas at the expense of other research.

Owing to fact that the Senate meeting was running short on time, the discussion on Technological Innovation in Pedagogy planned in the agenda (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-43TechnologicalInnovationinPedagogy.pdf>) was deferred to a later meeting.

Senate adopted the proposed University Student Assessment Policy (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-44StudentAssessmentPolicy.pdf>), whose text has been revised in light of last month's consultation with Senate and following input from Legal Services.

Senate approved the 426th report of the Academic Policy Committee (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-45426thAPCReport.pdf>).  This included a recommendation to the Board that the name of the Centre for Continuing Education be changed to School of Continuing Studies (SCS)  / École d’éducation permanente (EEP).  Senator Robaire asked whether the Dean of Continuing Education could make a presentation to Senate at some future date on the implications of the various changes which were part of the motion just adopted.  Dean Potter indicated that she would be glad to do so.

The next item considered by Senate was the report of the Senate Nominating Committee (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-46ReportoftheSenateNominatingCommittee.pdf>), which was adopted.  The report's first section concerned new terms of reference (TOR) for the Committee on the Rights of Senate (CRS).  Provost Masi expressed the view that the revised TOR which had been proposed by the CRS in its August 2010 report amounted to an expansion of the Committee's powers.  The Senate Nominating Committee, which deliberated the subject over five of its recent meetings, had noted that the mandate of the CRS derives from Section XIX of the Senate Standing Rules of Procedure.  Nominating was persuaded that the CRS needed to remain a standing committee, but felt that its TOR should be aligned with the Standing Rules of Procedure.  The TOR being submitted to Senate today for its consideration were drafted by Dean Manfredi with input from members of the Nominating Committee, and were then further reviewed and discussed by Nominating.

Provost Masi noted that a proposal for an amendment was received this morning from Senator Richard, and that the Provost was accepting this proposed amendment as a friendly one.  The amendment involves changing the phrase "is established to enforce the rights of Senate" to "is established to investigate and report on complaints of breach of the rights of Senate".  Senator Richard explained the rationale for the amendment, saying that it was meant to reflect the fact that the CRS actually has no enforcement authority; rather, it investigates and reports and can make recommendations.  The amended motion was voted on and adopted.

Subsequent to its adoption, Senator Wade addressed some of the statements found in the covering page of the motion, saying that these placed the CRS in a bad light.  He pointed out that the CRS had, in fact, been through the same review process which all the other committees of Senate had undergone in recent years.  In conducting the review of its TOR which former Secretary-General Pelletier had requested, the CRS had noted that its existing TOR were vague on the issue of what constituted a breach of the rights of Senate, as well as on the procedures to be followed when investigating a possible breach.  Senator Wade added that the CRS had not been lax in carrying out its review: the initial version of its report was ready in May 2009, but the Committee was asked to hold off presenting it to Senate at that time because of the pending arrival in the fall of Secretary-General Strople.  Senator Wade also questioned whether Senate could approve the proposed TOR at today's meeting, since they had not been submitted to the Senate Steering Committee.  Provost Masi responded that he would be glad to change the points raised by Senator Wade, but drew attention to the fact that Steering does not vet such documents; the Senate Nominating Committee is the avenue through which they come to Senate.  Principal Munroe-Blum thanked Senator Wade for bringing forward this information, assured him that there had been no intention to slight the review work done by the CRS, and stated her appreciation for the engagement of the CRS members on this issue.

The final item of business was the presentation by Secretary-General Strople and Associate Provost Lydia White of the annual report of the Policy on Safe Disclosure (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/senate/2011-02-16D10-47PolicyonSafeDisclosure.pdf>).  Associate Provost White noted that the policy has so far never been used.  The working group mandated to conduct the policy's third-year review recommends that a further review be done in three years and that, in the meantime, efforts should be made to ensure that the University community is aware of the existence of the policy because its non-use may imply that it is perhaps not sufficiently well known.  Senator Robaire suggested two other possible explanations: that no situations of the type covered by the policy happen at McGill, or that the policy is not seen to provide enough safety to convince people to make a disclosure.  Associate Provost White agreed that this second possibility would need to be looked at if the policy ends up not being used in the next three years, but that in the meantime communicating the policy's existence more effectively has to be a priority.

The next Senate meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2011.  If you have any questions, please get in touch with us.

Regards,

Your librarian Senate reps,

Jodie Hebert

Joan Hobbins

Marc Richard