



SSMU Sustainability Survey Analysis

Presented by the Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee

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Introduction

Brief Overview

In September 2014, the Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee was created by SSMU Legislative Council. The purpose of the committee was to consult students on campus, research comparable student societies, and make an actionable recommendation for the future institutionalize of SSMU sustainability by the end of the 2014-2015 school year. Since its establishment, the committee commissioned Julien Benoit, the Political Attache and Researcher who reported on SSMU's current sustainability status in comparison with other universities. The committee has also surveyed more than 400 McGill students on sustainability at SSMU. This report is an analysis of said survey and will lead to the final proposal SSMU Legislative Council will receive in the next month that will be an actionable recommendation for SSMU on sustainability.

Timeline

- **April 11, 2013** - SSMU adopted a Sustainability Policy which outlined various procedures and goals, many of which have not been met or followed.
- **September 11, 2014** - Creation of Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee
- **November, 2014** - Julien Benoit publishes Report on Sustainable Development at the SSMU outlining where SSMU has failed to follow the Sustainability Policy as well as options to help follow through on adopted policy. Examples that are given include changing SSMU's structure by adding a VP Sustainability or permanent staff member for sustainability followed through by changing the structure of SSMU.
- **November 2, 2014 - February 23rd, 2015** - SSMU Sustainability surveys distributed. Multiple changes made to the surveys throughout the time period to increase accessibility but same general concepts kept (final copy showed below). The survey was handed out in person at various places in SSMU (e.g. Midnight Kitchen, SSMU cafeteria), sent out to over 15 listservs, and posted on facebook. It was incentivised with gift cards to the Nest Cafe.

Definition of Sustainability

Sustainability, and specifically sustainable development, has a very wide range of meanings. However, in the survey, report, and other areas, the committee used the definition common in other SSMU sustainability assessments and policies. It is from the Brundtland report and is defined as "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

SSMU Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee Consultation

Student ID Number: _____

Circle your Faculty/School

Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Science
Faculty of Education
Faculty of Law
Faculty of Medicine
Faculty of Religious Studies
Other

Faculty of Arts
Faculty of Dentistry
Faculty of Engineering
Desautels Faculty of Management
Schulich School of Music
Faculty of Science

Check/Circle any previous experiences with sustainability on campus: (For other, please state what it is)

Coursework (in Environment, Geography, etc)

Involvement with a sustainable group on campus

Involvement with a sustainable campaign

Employment with a sustainable organization

No experience with sustainability on campus

Other:

Rate how SSMU currently performs in terms of Sustainability? (1 = very bad) (5 = very well) (Leave blank if you are unsure)

1 2 3 4 5

Why did you rate SSMU that way on Sustainability?

How do you think SSMU should prioritize sustainability? (1 = low priority) (5 = high priority)

1 2 3 4 5

Do you want SSMU to budget for Sustainability Staff? (circle one)

Yes No

What support and resources should SSMU sustainability staff provide to students as a part of their responsibilities?

(circle your top three)

- access to funding
- access to space
- SSMU researching issues related to sustainability
- facilitating networking for sustainability initiatives and interested students
- historical knowledge of sustainable efforts at McGill
- knowledge of McGill and SSMU policies that support sustainability work
- sustainability workshops (topics such as: green energy, living sustainably in a city, etc)
- mobilization of support for grassroots sustainability campaigns
- representation of student sustainability interests to McGill administration
- promotion of sustainability events and projects
- annual sustainability assessments
- goal-setting and long term planning
- connecting students to sustainability research opportunities at the university

Please add any other comments or questions

Write your email if you would like to be entered in the gift card raffle

Survey Results and Analysis

Question 1: What is your student ID number?

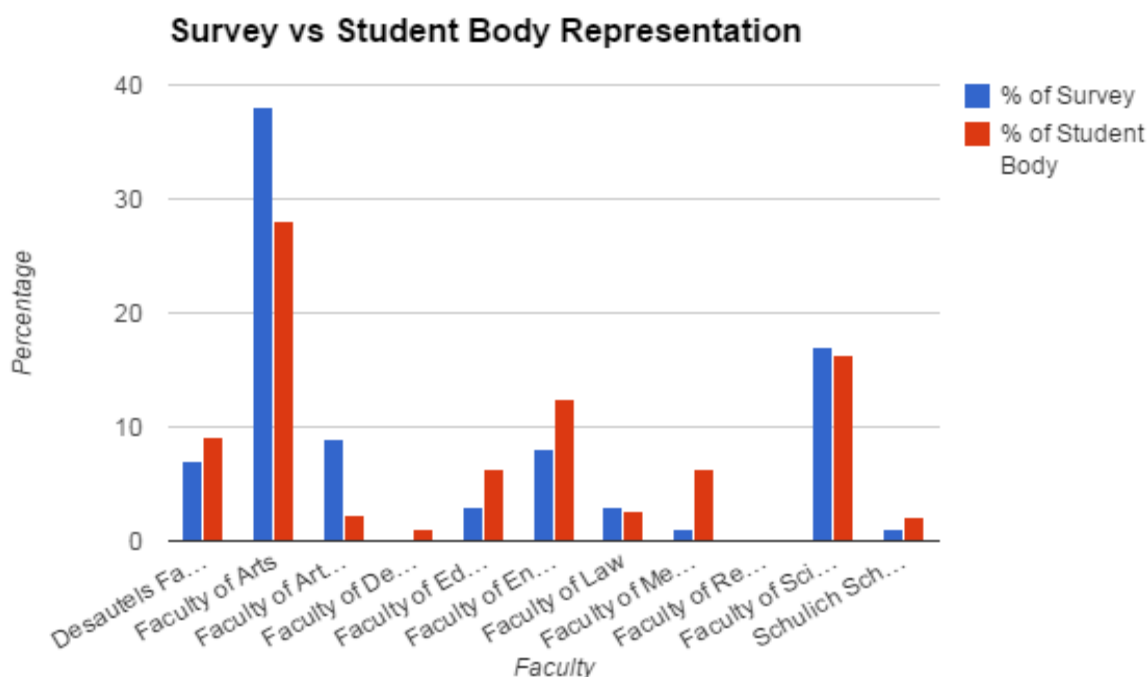
Each respondent was asked for their ID number to ensure anonymity of the students as well as keeping it to only one survey per person.

Question 2: Select your faculty/school

The committee wanted to survey an accurate representation of the McGill student body. This was done by submitting to numerous faculties' listservs and surveying students in certain buildings that had an initial low response rate. The final percentages of the survey were compared with the McGill student body of Fall 2014 (graph shown below). All undergraduate faculties were included except for the Faculty of Continuing Studies since those students are represented in MACES (McGill Association of Continuing Education Students). The committee surveyed a total of 401 undergraduate students while the total undergraduate body in Fall 2014 was 27,035*.

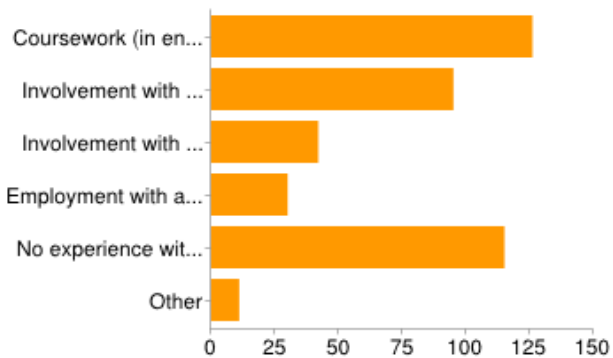
The numbers are relatively close except for a small disparity in the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Arts and Science. This can be explained by the fact that many majors in these faculties are more sustainability based and thus these students may have had more interest in taking the survey online or attending sustainable events where the survey was handed out. (The lack of medicine students can be attributed to the laziness of the sustainability research commissioner not walking up to McMed.)

http://www.mcgill.ca/es/files/es/fall_2014_-_total_ft_and_pt_enrolments_by_faculty_by_degree_and_by_gender.pdf



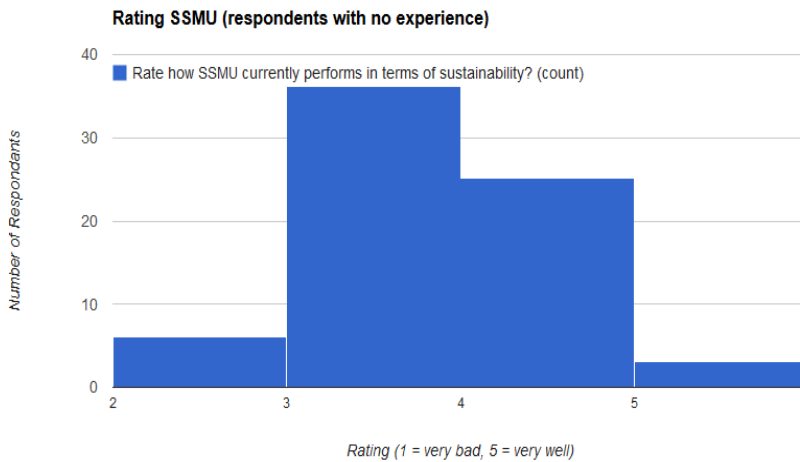
Question 3: Check any previous experience with sustainability on campus

The respondents were offered six options of involvement with sustainability on campus and could check as many as applied. More than a quarter (31%) of participants had no experience with sustainability on campus. However, it must be remembered that the question asked specifically for on campus activity and this is not a reflection of unknown personal values or off-campus sustainability experience. A short comparison of the participants with experience and without experience is shown down below for questions 4, 5, and 6.



Coursework (in environment, geography, etc)	126	31%
Involvement with a sustainable group on campus	95	24%
Involvement with a sustainable campaign	42	10%
Employment with a sustainable organization	30	7%
No experience with sustainability on campus	115	29%
Other	11	3%

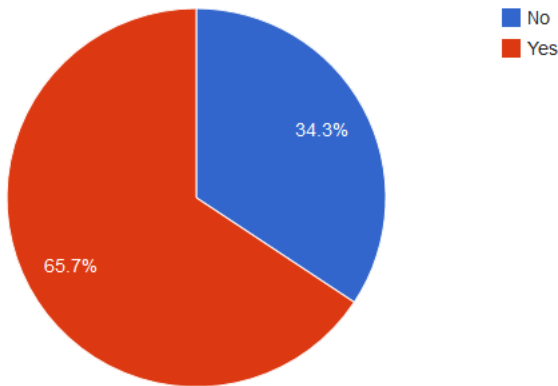
Question 4



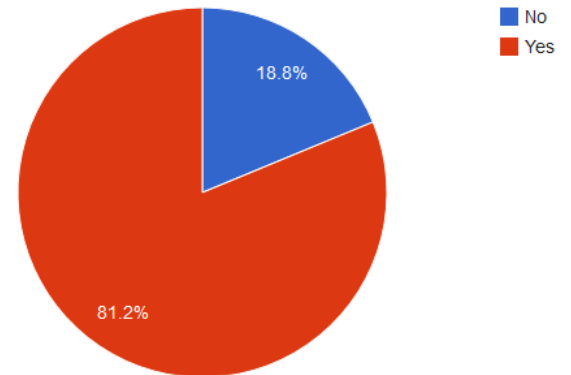
Question 5

Question 6

Should SSMU Budget (respondants with no experience)



Budget for Staff (respondents with experience)



Question 4: Rate how SSMU currently performs in terms of sustainability

The majority of respondents said SSMU performed average (40%) with very few responses at the two extremes or very bad and very well. However, when asked why the participants choose the rating, there were many comments stating on their lack of knowledge (see 1 below). There were also multiple comments stating that while SSMU is engaging in some sustainable initiatives, there is always room for improvements (see 2 below). Furthermore, there was lots of stated confusion over the recycling and composting program here at SSMU (see 3 below). Finally some miscellaneous comments about the rating (see 4 below).

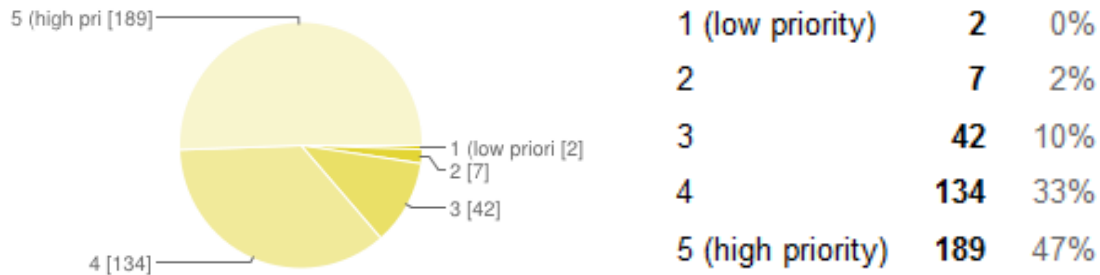


1. "I honestly don't think I know enough about SSMU to have a an opinion that would aid in your survey" -- "...Anyway, I just don't really know." -- "I am so ignorant in this regard"
2. "...much room for improvement. -- "still a lot of work and improvement" -- "...always room for improvement!"
3. "I've only ever seen a composting bin in one of the residences." -- "no compost, no gardens" -- "There's compost!" -- "I am hard pressed to find a garbage can and recycling bin in the same room...the recycling options are often...too limited" -- "few composts, high energy use"

4. “...the elevator is so slow that hardly anyone ever uses it (good strategy!)” -- “Midnight kitchen is a great example of sustainability, but the toilets on the first floor...they flush for like 30 seconds and sometimes for no reason, that should be fixed”

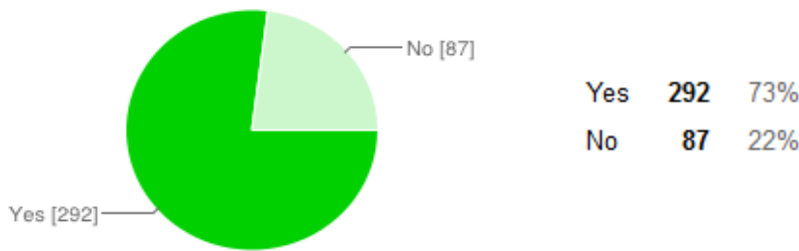
Question 5: How do you think SSMU should prioritize sustainability?

The overwhelming majority of the ratings is in the 4-5 range, showing that the respondents prioritize sustainability highly.



Question 6: Do you want SSMU to budget for Sustainability Staff?

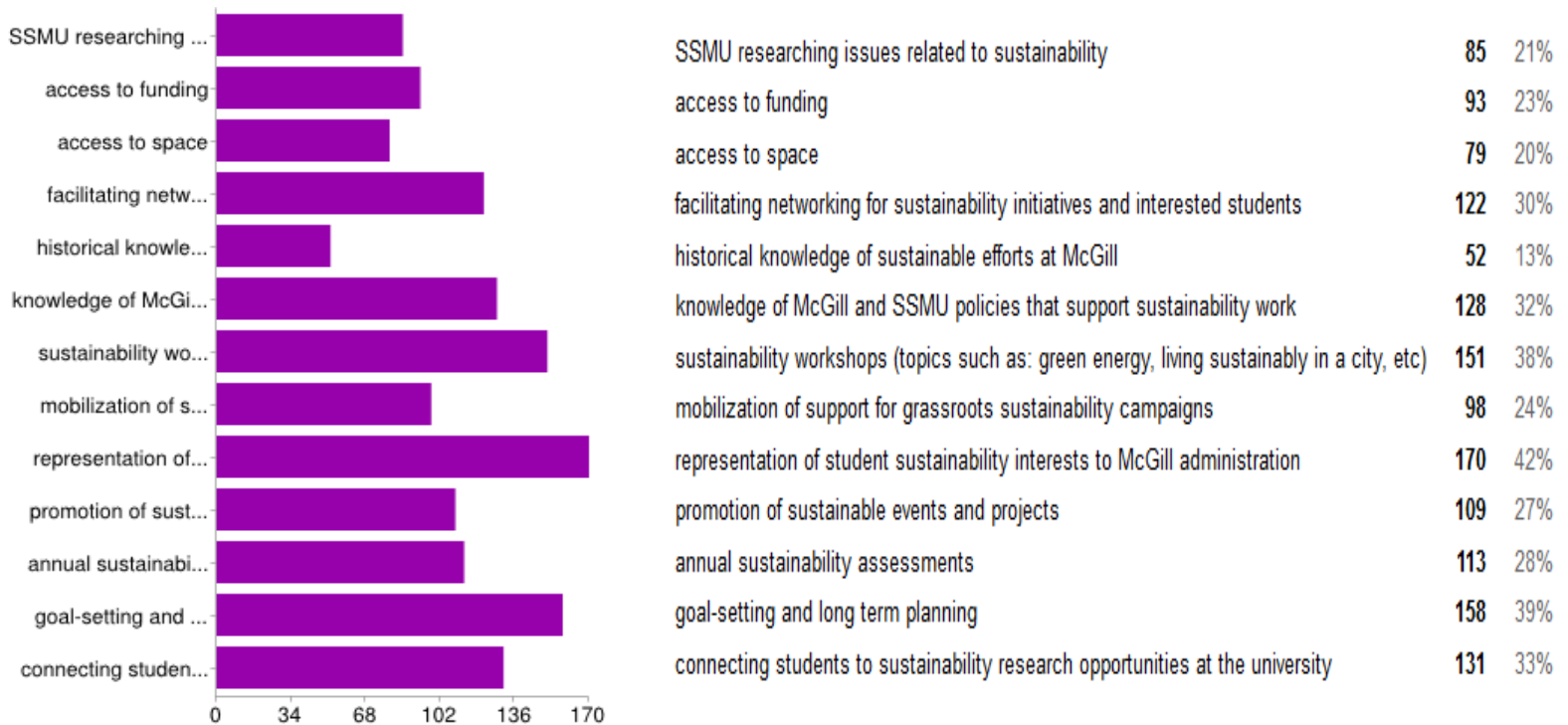
Again, a huge majority (73%) said yes, so not only do respondents believe sustainability is a high priority but also that SSMU should invest money in it.



Question 7: What support and resources should SSMU Sustainability Staff provided to students as a part of their responsibilities?

This question goes back the report by Julien Benoit where he outlined three different ways to restructure SSMU to better include sustainability: VP Sustainability, Full Time Sustainability Staff Member, Office of Sustainability for SSMU (show chart). These structures were based on research done on other student associations at Canadian universities, such as Concordia and Dalhousie. The committee then picked out key resources from each of these position as well as from SSMU and had participants choose their top three. The percentages in the chart

below display the percent of respondents who choose this option while the actually numbers correspond to the total number of votes received.



Break Down of Resources:

VP Sustainability:

1. mobilization of support for grassroots sustainability campaigns (98 votes)
2. representation of student sustainability interests to McGill administration (170 votes)
3. facilitating networking for sustainability initiatives and interested students (122 votes)

***total votes: 390**

Full Time Staff:

1. SSMU researching issues related to sustainability (85 votes)
2. historical knowledge of sustainable efforts at McGill (52 votes)
3. goal-setting and long term planning (158 votes)

***total votes 295**

Both positions would also accomplish:

1. knowledge of McGill and SSMU policies that support sustainability work (128 votes)
 - a. (a bit more towards full time?)
2. sustainability workshops (topics such as: green energy, living sustainably in a city, etc) (151 votes)
3. annual sustainability assessments (113 votes)
4. connecting students to sustainability research opportunities at the university (131 votes)
5. promotion of sustainable events and projects (109 votes)
6. access to funding (93 votes)
7. access to space (79 votes)

Question 8: Additional Comments

In the comment section, there were many concerns stated, especially for additional bureaucracy.

*Bureaucracy concerns: "budget for staff depending on what they would do/effectiveness" -- "if the sustainability program itself operates ineffectually then it will be more difficult for me to support it taking up room within the SSMU budget" -- "I don't think SSMU should budget for *additional* Sustainability Staff; I think that the current positions should be utilized to their full extent"*

Additional Concerns: "...challenge is making campaigns, workshops, etc that people who dont care about the environment can get involved with and educated by" -- "lot of different bases to be covered, so I'd recommend multiple positions, even if they all have relatively small mandates." -- "Sustainability staff should not be provided as each person needs to account for this major issue in their everyday routine. A staff member could be more specialized in that matter, but employing somebody solely for developing sustainability strategies seems superflous. Sustainability is not only about reducing our impact on the environment but also make good use of resources, including human resources." -- "...effort should be put into branching out and getting more students involved."

Conclusion

This report shows that undergraduate students have a high concern for sustainability and want SSMU to set aside money for it. The next step is sending out a formal plebiscite question and from those results, making an actionable recommendation for SSMU.