



## Report of the Vice-President (University Affairs) to Legislative Council

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

*The work in this report is a summary of all areas of the University Affairs Portfolio. All activities are the product of the hard work of many people including, but not limited to, other Executives, Senators and student staff.*

**Important Highlights:** Smoking on Campus, Medical Notes Policy, DPSLL Unit Review, and Employment Equity

### University & Academic Affairs

#### McGill 101: Advocacy & Senator Info Session

- Hosted an information session for students interested in learning more about McGill's administrative structure in order to encourage folks to run for a Senator position.
- Those in attendance seemed to feel it was very useful and underscored something I already suspected: most people have no idea what I do!

#### Smoking on Campus Working Group

- Town hall was held on Feb 9<sup>th</sup> and received helpful feedback. All consultation has shown thus far that second-hand smoke is a significant concern on campus; in particular it poses an accessibility concern for students suffering from asthma or migraines. As well, resources for students wishing to quit have been emphasized as a priority. It has been suggested that a decision on a smoke-free campus may be better made after reviewing the success of the other initiatives once implemented.
- More focus groups (with ~free pizza~) targeting smokers are necessary, as the current consultation efforts have lacked sufficient input from smokers.

#### Fall Reading Break

- Meeting with Enrollment Services and other stakeholders upcoming. There is a concern over funding as holding exams on a Saturday costs approximately \$35,000 and there is currently no clear source for these funds.
- Plan is to bring the current proposal to Committee on Enrollment and Student Affairs (CESA) and from there to Senate this semester.

#### Medical Notes Policy

- A discussion was initiated at ESAAC and SSAP regarding current practices of accepting documentation for academic accommodation.



- Recommendations to change existing policy included the standardization of medical notes to 1) ensure standardized outcomes across Faculties and 2) ensure that students are not forced to disclose the details of their circumstances
- As well the question has been raised of *if* students should be required to present medical documentation. Issues with the current practice include students who are in crisis and (physically or mentally) ill being forced to wait in line-ups at McGill and Montreal clinics in order to receive documentation. Generally this practice does not result in treatment or intervention and only exacerbates their condition and furthermore places an enormous (and arguably unnecessary) burden on already overburdened services. Furthermore the process of obtaining documentation can be inaccessible (due to the early times at which clinics fill up and additional upfront costs) to students who need it most. As well, studies show that even a mild cold can have significant impacts on academic performance.
- There also seems to be a misconception that deferring an assignment or final exam is somehow advantageous or desirable for the majority of students (when in fact it is often far more difficult to recall course material at a much later date)
- In “the real world” employees are given a set number of sick days per year because it is expected that people sometimes get sick.
- There was also a recent article on a [human rights case](#) filed by a York University student who won her right to not disclose her diagnosis in order to receive accommodations. Can you tell I am passionate about this issue???

#### Office of the Deputy Provost of Student Life & Learning (DPSLL) Cyclical Unit Review

- The Office of the DPSLL is undergoing a cyclical unit review (same process that Student Services underwent last semester). This process is meant to assess the structure and organization of the Office of the DPSLL and make recommendations to improve it.
- Unfortunately this process was very poorly communicated to students and student associations.
  - E.g. the schedule included interviews with AUS, MCSS, etc and these student associations were never contacted by the administration
  - As a result the onus was placed on SSMU and PGSS to haphazardly recruit students hours before the interview in order to ensure student representation (thank you to Student Senators for attending the interviews on such last minute notice!)
- If you have feedback and would like to submit a written document to be considered by the review committee please email it to me at [ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca) (this could be as simple as a short paragraph or a formal letter). **Please communicate this to your Faculty**



**Associations.** I am more than happy to speak with anyone who has questions/concerns over this process.

- Units that are subsumed under Student Life & Learning include the following:
  - Teaching & Learning Services (TL&S)
  - Student Services (e.g. Mental Health Service, Office for Students with Disabilities, International Student Services)
  - Student Housing & Hospitality Services (ie Food Service on campus, Residences)
  - Office of the Dean of Students
  - Enrollment Services (e.g. Service Point)
  - Athletics & Recreation

## Senate

### Senate

- Open discussion on Employment Equity will be taking place at the February Senate meeting. [Senate meeting documents](#) should be released publicly soon. I highly recommend reading the documents prepared for the upcoming discussion and/or reading SSMU's [recently released research report](#) (look at that alliteration!)

### Senate Caucus

- Senate Caucus now publishes weekly reports that can be found on the SSMU website
- Senators are also working on drafting a number of documents to support current proposals and advocate for changes relating to:
  - Student Services “Wellness” Strategy
  - Medical Notes Policy
  - DPSLL Unit Review

### Senate & University Committees

- End-of-semester committee reports binder is almost finalized and will be released publicly on our website and via social media once finished

## Memorandum of Agreement Negotiations

- The University has refused to agree to any of our demands. (SQ)



## Library Relations

- LIFC is currently soliciting proposals. If you have any ideas on how to improve our libraries I encourage you to fill out a proposal form or contact [lifc@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:lifc@ssmu.mcgill.ca) and meet with a member of the committee to discuss your idea!
- We have ~\$650,000 in funds~ to allocate (talk about exciting opportunities!!)

## Faculty Relations

### McGill Academic Round Table (MART)

- Meeting planned for next week to discuss results from the student experience survey and how to improve student representation in a decentralized University structure

### **University & Academic Affairs Goals to Complete in Winter 2016**

- Make recommendations to improve the Office of Student Life & Learning through the Cyclical Unit Review process
- Fall Reading Break proposal brought to Senate for approval
- Renew MoA with McGill
- University Student Assessment Policy revisions approved by Senate
- End-of-year thematic report from Senate Caucus
- Recruit University & Senate Committee representatives before final exams
- Submit a question to every Senate meeting
- Clarify SSMU's stance on unpaid internships in relation to experiential learning opportunities

## Advocacy & Research

### Policy-Work

#### Sexual Assault Policy (SAP)

- Final draft of the policy is just about finished!! Should be released publicly soon
- Will be meeting with the Dean of Students and Associate Provost of Policies, Procedures and Equity to discuss any possible revisions
- Afterwards we will be presenting it to members of the McGill community in order to seek endorsements with the goal of passing it at the April Senate meeting



### Sexual Violence Protocol Meeting

- Was unable to attend due to meeting conflict. Meeting was meant to discuss ways to make existing policies (e.g. Safe Disclosure Policy) more accessible to survivors by better communicating how to access them within the McGill community

## **Research Projects**

### Employment Equity

- SSMU University affairs released the following [press release](#). The full report titled [Equity in the Hiring of Academic Staff: An Investigation](#) demonstrates that McGill is lagging far behind its peer institutions and details a number of serious concerns raised by members of our community from “designated groups”.
- I’m pleased to report that it appears the recently appointed Associate Provost of Policies, Procedures and Equity, Angela Campbell, has taken steps towards addressing these community concerns including through increasing training for staff that serve on hiring committees.
- SSMU also hosted a panel event on *Diversity in Academia* with professors from the “designated groups” on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to the professors that participated and shared their experiences! You can read their insightful comments in the [Daily](#) or [Tribune](#)’s coverage on this issue (s/o to Senator Kpeglo-Hennessey for making the front page of the Trib).
  - *“The more I talk about these issues, the more I’m silenced, and the more I get a reputation as the ‘angry Asian woman with a chip on her shoulder.’”* – Zoua Vang
  - *“We say things like ‘diversity is good’ but I’m not sure to what extent the University really believes that we are not excellent if we are not diverse,”* –Adelle Blackett.

### Alternative History Timeline

- SQ

## **Committees**

### University Affairs Committee

- The University Affairs Committee selected two research proposals to fund!
  - One project focuses on first generation students at McGill and another will look at barriers faced by students of colour.
- The Committee also reviewed SSMU’s MoA negotiables and was assigned research tasks to prepare for the next negotiation meeting.



### Policy Advocacy & Resource Committee (PARC)

- Job has been posted on SmartRecruiters. Will be reviewing applications over next week or so before commencing interviews.

#### **Advocacy & Research Goals to Complete in Winter 2016**

- Bring the Sexual Assault Policy to Senate for approval
- Raise concerns with current protocols and procedures for addressing sexual violence
- ~~Release the SSMU's report on Equitable Hiring at McGill~~
- Create a hub for applied student research on campus
- Oversee the completion of SSMU's first Student Research Competition
- Host SSMU's research projects in one central place online
- Train the SSMU PARC Coordinator

## **Mental Health & Well-Being**

### **Student Services**

- Student Services Unit Review team submitted their report that details recommendations to improve Student Services at McGill. There is a lunch scheduled next week to present these recommendations to student leaders and detail the action being taken in response to them. **I encourage all Faculty Association to send a representative** as these recommendations will have massive effects on service provisions (including a centralized triage process, an electronic medical record, case management system, etc.) and are planned to be implemented as early as Fall 2016.

### Meetings with Unit Directors

- Scheduled meetings with Directors of all the Units in Student Services. The meetings have proven quite useful in developing potential partnerships, learning about services offered to students and encouraging units to apply for the Student Services Innovation Fund.

### **SSMU Mental Health Initiatives**



*Includes updates on the implementation of SSMU's Mental Health 5 Year Plan*

### Mental Health Committee

- Outreach Working Group:
  - Partnering with the Lucas Fiorella Friendship Bench Foundation to install a yellow bench outside our building that would serve as a physical reminder of mental health and suicide awareness.
  - Increasing social media presence through regular Facebook posts and our new Instagram account @ssmumentalhealth. [SSMU Mental Health](#) has 550+ likes.
  - Outreach through tabling initiatives and distributing SSMU mental health awareness week buttons and “swag” provided by Healthy McGill
  - Developing a “resource map” to help students navigate the multitude of support services available on campus
  - Potential future projects: mental illness workshop series, purchase of stress balls and blue T-shirts for tabling, a student-written “mental health magazine”
- Advocacy Working Group:
  - Submitted mental health-related research request to the Academic Research Commissioner
  - One member of the committee prepared a ~beautiful~ flowchart that combines information on accommodation procedures hosted in multiple locations within the McGill website.
  - Preparation for the Mental Health Open Forum
  - Compiling a “mental health” toolkit to distribute to professors including slides that can be added to lectures and blurbs to add to syllabi as well as a guide to creating a space that is supportive of mental health
  - Produced comical graphics to encourage help-seeking behaviour, proactive healthy habits and promotion of McGill Mental Health Hub

### Mental Health Open Forum

- Forum has been scheduled for March 11<sup>th</sup>. SSMU is inviting all major stakeholders in our community including administrators, faculty, student and staff to attend in order to address the urgent issues surrounding mental health on our campus. Currently we are planning on hosting a panel to interrogate the concept of a healthy learning environment, hold small group discussions guided by questions and specific scenarios, as well as a Q&A with directors of front-line services.
- Background readings will also be sent to all registered participants!
- If you would like to volunteer to help organize the forum please contact [mentalhealth@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@ssmu.mcgill.ca)



### Mental Health Space

- Outreach committee will likely be initiating consultation efforts to seek input on the arrangement and possible features included within the space. Renovations are likely to begin in the summer.

### Happy Lights Lending Program

- Mental Health Services has confirmed they will fund 50% of the cost to purchase 5 more lamps to reduce the waitlist. Waiting to meet with VP Finance & Operations to determine SSMU's capacity to purchase more lamps.

### Mental Health Fee Levy

- After discussion with the Mental Health Coordinators, we have decided that it is appropriate to reconsider running a SSMU Mental Health fee. Last year the fee levy was removed from our 5-Year Plan as the Committee did not see a clear purpose for the fee
- Since then SSMU Mental Health initiatives have expanded significantly including the establishment of the Happy Lights Lending program, the planned creation of a mental health space and the enormous expansion of outreach and awareness initiatives.
- As well, the cost of these initiatives is relatively minor but the impacts of preventative and proactive education cannot be understated.

#### **Mental Health & Well-Being Goals to Complete in Winter 2016**

- Host SSMU Mental Health Open Forum
- Advocate for a University-wide mental health strategy that recognizes
- Establish a Mental Health Network including Healthy McGill and student groups focusing on mental health education
- ~~Increase social media presence and outreach on campus~~
- Install a friendship bench outside our building
- Coordinate a mental illness workshop series
- Share an "accommodation flowchart" through social media during midterm and final exam seasons





## Equity

### General

- Recommended SSPN members participate in a skill-based Bystander Intervention workshop in anticipation of Faculty Olympics (connected workshop organizer with VP Internal)
- As well, encouraged SSPN to include consent education for all participants of Faculty Olympics

### Indigenous Affairs

- Feedback has been solicited to guide the development of a SSMU Indigenous Solidarity Policy
- “Indigeneity & Allyship” campaign planned for third week in March in coordination with First People’s House’s conference titled [Resurgence, Reconciliation, and Revitalization: Diverse Indigenous Perspectives](#)
  - Hope to focus on what it means to be an ally and how universities should be responding to the Truth & Reconciliation Report

### Accessibility

- We will be sending out a survey to solicit suggestions to be included in SSMU’s Accessibility policy and invite students to participate in the policy writing. It is expected to be completed by the end of February and ready to bring to Council in March.

### Employment Equity

- See above for details under the *University & Academic Affairs* and *Advocacy & Research* sections of report.

#### Equity Goals to Complete in Winter 2016

- Present Accessibility Policy to SSMU Council
- Present Indigenous Solidarity Policy to SSMU Council
- Host Indigeneity & Allyship campaign
- Organize educational panel events on current equity-related topics
- Host a successful speaker series event in collaboration with SSMU External Affairs



## **SSMU-Wide**

### **Outreach & Communications**

- Progress is slowly being made on the UA website.
- Brochures on “University Administration & Governance” are now available in the SSMU Office (and people have been taking them!)
- Press release on Employment Equity reached thousands over Facebook and was shared by multiple people!
- Preparing University Affairs listserv. If you would like to be added to the mailing list email René Iwo at [uasecgen@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:uasecgen@ssmu.mcgill.ca)

### Elections Review Committee

- Absent from Feb 6th meeting as I was out of town and unavailable to attend via Skype.

### Health & Dental Review Committee

- Have been attending meetings of the Health & Dental Review Committee to advise on the addition of psychological coverage to our plan
- The cost of coverage for psychotherapy from a registered professional will be approximately \$18-30 more per year
- The committee will be releasing a survey soon to gauge student priorities in terms of their insurance coverage
- The committee is working with ASEQ who manages the opt-outable dental plan provided to all undergraduates and the opt-outable health plan provided to Canadian students only
- The committee will also be discussing issues with the health coverage provided to international students through Blue Cross that is managed by McGill. Currently there do not appear to be sufficient mechanisms to adjust coverage based on student priorities unlike SSMU's Health & Dental plan.

### Miscellaneous

- Recruitment of student staff has begun and will be ongoing



**SSMU Goals to Complete in Winter 2016**

- Complete hiring of student staff before end of term to ensure good transition
- Creation of SSMU University Affairs website
- Send updates to everyone involved in University Affairs portfolio through semi-regular listserv
- Improve mechanisms of student feedback to adjust international student health coverage
- Advocate for SSMU to better support the mental health of its Executives, staff, and student representatives

**Mention Soleil:**

I want to give a public shout-out to my amazing team of student Senators! From hosting town halls and information sessions, to consistently asking critical questions at Senate, to showing up to countless and never-ending meetings with all levels of the administration – thank you! Senators, are, at the end of the day entirely volunteers and they commit so many hours out of their weeks to constantly push for McGill to do more for its students. I am so grateful to be part of such a brilliant, engaged and committed team!



Respectfully Submitted,

Chloe Rourke, Vice-President (University Affairs)