MOVING TOWARDS EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE AT THE STUDENTS' SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY (SSMU)

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OVERVIEW

The SSMU has made a commitment to social justice and equity as stated in the Constitution: "The Society commits to demonstrating leadership in the matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection."[1] To truly and adequately demonstrate leadership in matters of human rights and social justice, and to act as an ally to groups facing oppression and marginalization at McGill, the SSMU must provide spaces for the voices of these groups to be heard.

This research is intended to provide several potential avenues through which the SSMU can develop more equitable and representative governance structures. It is recommended that the Legislative Council form a committee in order to further explore which methods, or which combination thereof, will be most effective. It is stressed that this committee should consist of members of underrepresented identity groups, as well a non-voting advisory member(s), such as a past or present executive, in order to provide expertise and insight on various governance structures. This committee should be formed through an open call out through communication channels such as social media and listservs as well as targeted outreach to existing organizations that may have interested members, such as the Black Students' Network (BSN) and the Indigenous Students' Alliance (ISA), as listed in the Appendix. There should be no set maximum number of participants, however the SSMU will work to ensure that the size remains manageable and consult with any groups who are not represented on the committee.

The potential methods include:
1. Reserved Seats on the Legislative Council;
2. Equity Seats on the Board of Directors;
3. Improved Accessibility of Legislative Council Positions;
4. Equity Training;
5. Revised Clubs and Services Structure;
6. Non-Academic Discipline.

These methods are proposed with the goal of increasing the presence of marginalized voices within the SSMU. Those identities that it is recommended the SSMU prioritize those identify as any of the following: international/first generation Canadian students, students who identify as Indigenous, students who identify as LGBTQ2S, students who identify as a Person of Colour, students who identify as women, students with different abilities, or those who are part-time students, mature students, commuter students, students with dependents, students from low income backgrounds.

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[1] Preamble of the SSMU Constitution, 2016-04-28

1. RESERVED SEATS

Reserved seats on the SSMU Legislative Council would help to ensure greater representation of marginalized identities. By ensuring the institutionalization of these voices, the SSMU can better work to ensure that decisions are representative of the student body. Based upon this research, it is recommended that those groups identified above are given reserved seats. However, the committee is encouraged to recognize that many student unions do not have seats for each of these groups and some have shared seats (e.g. mature students and students with dependents together). Further consultation should occur to determine which of these groups warrant a reserved seat with the McGill context and how many total seats will be added to the Legislative Council.

One student society which uses the reserved seats model is the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) in Melbourne, Australia. This council has voting seats which are reserved for representatives elected by each of the following groups: queer students, Indigenous students, international students, graduate students, students with disabilities, and students of colour. Along with these seats, the council has fifteen voting seats held by general members, at least eight of which must be women.[2] The UMSU council also includes non-voting seats for Officers, the President of the International Students Department, the President of the Graduate Student Association and the Campus Co-Coordinators of the Burnley Student Department and the Victorian College of the Arts Department. These Officers include: President, General Secretary, Education (Academic Affairs) Officer, Education (Public Affairs) Officer, Welfare Officer, Women's Officer, Creative Arts Officer, Activities Officer, Queer Officer, Environment Officer, Media Officers, Clubs & Societies Officer, Indigenous Officer, Disabilities Officer, and People of Colour Officer. These Officers all head associated committees to which they are accountable, and which coordinate all campaigns, activities and actions for that Department.

The UMSU has included other regulations which promote equitable representation. This includes the stipulation that the Officer seats may be held jointly by more than person.[3] However, if more than one person holds the position of Queer Officer, at least one of them must be a woman or trans, and for the Women's Officer, at least one person one must be a woman of colour. If any other position is held by more than one person, then at least one must be a woman.

The University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) is governed by a Board of Directors roughly equivalent to the SSMU Legislative Council. The Board consists of 21 elected Directors including five Lead Directors, eleven Directors-at-Large, one Director of International Student Relations, four Constituency Organization (Advocacy Group) Representatives and one Native Students Union Representative.[4] The four Constituency Organization (Advocacy Group) Representatives are elected by the Students of Colour

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[2] UMSU Constitution 2016-05-24, 15.
[3] UMSU Constitution 2016-05-24, 16.
[4] https://uvss.ca/about/board/

Collective, UVic Pride, The Third Space (an organization for women, non-binary and genderfluid persons[5]) and the Society for Students with a Disability. In this case, the elected representatives on the Board of Directors who represent certain identities are accountable to the organizations they represent.

The Oxford University Students' Union (OUSU) uses both a Trustee Board and Council. The OUSU equivalent of the SSMU Executives are their Sabbatical Trustees, including a President and Vice Presidents of: Access and Academic Affairs, Charities and Communities, Graduates, Welfare and Equal Opportunities, and Women.[6] However, sitting on both the Trustee Board and Council are also Part-Time Executives including, among others: Environment & Ethics Officer, Health & Welfare Officer, LGBTQ Officer, Disabled Students' Officer, Black & Minority Ethnic Students & Anti-Racism Officer, Women's Campaign Officer, Graduate Women's Officer, International Students' Officer, Graduate International Students' Officer and Mature Students' Officer.[7] Each Officer is required to report to one of the Sabbatical Trustees as well as other various campus organizations specific to their role in order to develop campaigns and actions relevant to their position.

It is recommended that the SSMU consider creating reserved seats for the groups named above, while taking steps to ensure representation of women, trans, and non-binary identifying people through systems such as that used by UMSU. Recognizing that these changes would seriously impact the number of seats at Council, a potential solution is moving to a sliding scale for seat distribution among Faculty representatives. At the Queen's University Alma Mater Society (AMS) this sliding scale involves each faculty receiving two representatives to the Assembly, which is the highest legislative body for the AMS, along with additional potential representatives based on the percentage of total AMS membership within each Faculty. No seats are added for Faculties representing between 0-2.99% of the membership, while a maximum of seven seats are added for Faculties representing more than 45%.[8] Table 1 contains a breakdown of the sliding scale used by the AMS.

Table 1

% of AMS Members in Faculty	Additional Representatives
More than 45%	7
35.00-44.99%	6
25.00-34.99%	5
15.00-24.99%	4
10.00-14.99%	3

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[5] https://uvicthirdspace.com/
[6] Oxford University Student Union By-Laws 2016, 13.
[7] The Oxford University Student Union PTE (Part-Time Executive) Handbook.
[8] The Constitution of the Alma Mater Society of Queen's University, 13.

6.00-9.99%	2
3.00-5.99%	1
0-2.99%	0

The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) also uses a sliding scale to determine the number of Constituency Seats on their Board of Directors. One scale applies to Division 1 and Division 2 Directors, who represent Colleges, Faculties and Transitional Year Programs. This scale is given in Table 2. Another scale applies to representatives from the University of Toronto–Mississauga Students' Union to UTSU, and is given in Table 3.[9] In contrast to the AMS, the UTSU uses the number of students registered rather than a percentage, with the maximum number of seats for Divisions 1 and 2 set at 5 and for UTMSU representatives set at 8.

Table 2

Number of students registered in Constituency	Number of Seats
25-1,999	1
2,000-3,999	2
4,000-8,999	3
9,000-15,999	4
16,000-24,999	5

Table 3

Number of students registered in Constituency	Number of Seats
25-499	1
500-999	2
1,000-1,999	3
2,000-2,999	4
3,000-4,999	5
5,000-8,999	6
9,000-14,999	7
15,000-22,999	8

[9] UTSU Bylaws, 19.

2. EQUITY SEATS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The purpose of including equity seats on the Board of Directors is similarly to ensure a diversity of representation at this level, in order to further promote the SSMU's commitment to equity in decision-making. In addition to reserved seats on the Legislative Council, it follows that as the SSMU's highest level of decision making the Board of Directors should include reserved seats to provide for voices focused on equity concerns. The Board of Directors while a decision making body plays a less political role than the Legislative Council and instead has a role more based in operational, legal and financial matters. Due to the fact this all impacts students, it is crucial just as on the Legislative Council to have diverse representation.

These seats could be filled by requiring a number of the representatives sitting in the reserved seats on Legislative Council volunteer to sit on the Board of Directors. There are legal qualifications set out by Quebec law as to who can sit on this Board of Directors, such as the requirement one be a Canadian citizen with no criminal record, which may impact which students elected to reserve seats could sit on the Board of Directors.

3. INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL POSITIONS

There is a need for increased accessibility of Legislative Council positions, which may be addressed through honoraria offered to SSMU Councillors. This would help to ensure that financial barriers do not prevent participation in decision-making or further limit the representation of marginalized groups, many members of which experience systemic socio-economic barriers.[10] These financial barriers can make it difficult for students to commit to a campaigning for and holding a councillor position, particularly if they must also dedicate time to studying, working, commuting, caring for family members, and/or other tasks. Potentially sources of this funding could be a restructuring of the Equity Fund or the Access Bursary Fund in order to ensure there sufficient resources.

The St. Francis Xavier Students' Union is one student union in Canada that offers honoraria to all members of Council. This amount is determined yearly during the budgeting process. The honorarium is also used to keep members of Council accountable

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[10] Jenson, Jane. "Backgrounder: Thinking About Marginalization: What, Who and Why?" Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2000. Web. 28 Aug. 2016.

and can be reduced or forfeited if a Council member does not fulfill their duties.[11] The University of Melbourne Student Union specifies in their Constitution that elected Officers are not employees but rather are remunerated through this honorarium. In the case of positions held jointly, as is allowed for some positions within UMSU, each of the recipients receives 60% of the honorarium which would have been provided had the position been held by one person.[12]

4. EQUITY TRAINING

Many institutions require workplace training around equity issues such as racism and sexism. McGill itself has a department which offers such education, the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office.[13] It is recommended that, since reserved and/or equity based seats would still not be in the majority in the Legislative Council or Board of Directors, that all members of both bodies receive training in order to ensure a basic understanding of equity principles and realities. This will assist in reducing the double burden of advocacy for those holding reserved seats, who in many cases must speak not only from their own lived experiences but are also often expected to educate others on equity concepts such as white privilege, systemic barriers and ongoing colonialism. In order to support this equity training it is recommend there is an increase to the resources given to Equity Commissioners including staff hours and a restructuring of the Equity Fee to allow for staff hours, programming funds and a fund which groups can apply to in order to support adequate training.

5. REVISED CLUBS AND SERVICES STRUCTURE

The current SSMU clubs and services structure is faced with several issues, including high levels of bureaucracy and a lack of resources to match interest. Many of these clubs are identity based, such as the McGill Chinese Students' Society, and provide a support role for their members. The current system has made it necessary to limit the total number of clubs that can operate within SSMU, in turn potentially limiting the range of identities that can find peer support and development.

These issues could be alleviated in part through the reorganization of SSMU Services into umbrella networks for relevant student groups. For example, a new "Racialized Students' Support Network" might oversee the existing Black Students' Network and McGill Chinese Students' Society as affiliated groups. Funding would be

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[11] By-Laws of the St. FX Students' Union.
[12] UMSU Constitution 2016-05-24, 17.
[13] https://www.mcgill.ca/equity_diversity/staff-and-faculty/training-and-events/training

distributed to this parent service for disbursement, a model similar to the Fine Arts Council (FAC) of the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS). This would reduce administrative processing times and provide greater autonomy and oversight to students, in turn allowing the SSMU to support a wider range of identity-based groups on factors such as gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, and more.

The Ryerson Students' Union uses a similar structure for their Equity Service Centres[14]. Their structure includes overall services which include: The Centre for Women & Trans People, The Good Food Centre, Racialized Students' Collective, RyeACCESS, RyePRIDE, and the Trans Collective. Each of these Equity Service Centres then offer their own resources, campaigns and events. This allows for centralised resources and issue specific programming.

Change of this scope would require specific consultation with existing identity-based clubs and services to determine if such a structure would meet their needs. In addition, this restructuring would likely implicate non-identity based groups, such as recreational or leisure clubs. Therefore, it is recommended that the committee consult closely with the Vice-President (Student Life) and existing student groups when considering potential changes.

6. NON-ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

This final recommendation addresses the need for more equitable governance at McGill as a whole, and would require significant changes to the SSMU's role in the lives of its members. The recommendation to consider non-academic discipline is based on the need for an understanding and recognition of equity and intersectionality in addressing instances of harm in the university community. If the SSMU gained control of non-academic discipline it would allow the SSMU to ensure that misconduct was viewed through a social justice and intersectional means. In these systems, the student association takes on a partial disciplinary role from the university with such procedural considerations in mind. By fostering a community where accountability to marginalized student experiences is at the forefront, the SSMU could better develop relationships of trust with these members.[15]

One example of this is the Non-Academic Misconduct system at the AMS of Queen's University, where the association is responsible for enforcing the Non-Academic section of

[14] http://rsuonline.ca/Equity-Service-Centers
[15] Herreros, F., and H. Criado. "The State and the Development of Social Trust." *International Political Science Review* 29.1 (2008): 53-71. Web.

the Student Code of Conduct. General offences that fall under the jurisdiction of the AMS include:

1. public disturbances;
2. illegal possession and/or consumption of alcohol;
3. theft;
4. vandalism;
5. trespassing;
6. assault; and
7. fraud.

Sanctions issued by the AMS have included fines, community service hours, letters of apology, bans from AMS operated services, required substance misuse workshops, and educational sanctions. However, the AMS is not responsible for cases of blatant discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, serious assaults of a non-sexual nature, or murder, as other organizations are better equipped to handle these issues.

At McGill University, a sexual violence policy is not yet in place, and many students have raised concerns about existing harassment and disciplinary policies. While further legal research would need to be done to establish whether or the SSMU could enforce a policy of this magnitude, it demonstrates that the University does not always supply adequate discipline for students. Therefore, it is worth considering the role that the SSMU could play in addressing instances of community harm that impact their all of their members, but which may disproportionately affect marginalized students. The SSMU may be able to provide institutional support in areas where the university administration has not provided effective policies or resources, in order to ensure that the principles of equity are upheld in supporting students and promoting a healthier campus environment.

Appendix A – Consultation Groups

<u>University Offices</u>
- Campus Life & Engagement (CL&E)
  - Off Campus and Commuter Student Support Program
- First Peoples House (FPH)
- International Student Services (ISS)
- Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)
- McGill Office of Religious & Spiritual Life (MORSL)
- Scholarships & Student Aid Office (SSAO)
- Enrolment Services

<u>SSMU Services</u>
- Black Students' Network (BSN)
- Union for Gender Empowerment (UGE)
- Queer McGill (QM)
- Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society (SACOMSS)

<u>SSMU Clubs</u>
- Arab Students Association
- Association for Baha'i Studies
- Bangladeshi Student's Association
- Caribbean Students' Society
- Chabad at McGill
- McGill University Chinese Students and Scholars Association
- Egyptian Students Association
- Hong Kong Student Network
- Indian Students Association
- Japanese Student Association
- Korean Students' Society
- Lebanese Student Association
- Malaysian and Singaporean Students' Association
- McGill African Students Society
- McGill Armenian Students Association
- McGill Association of North American Born Asians
- McGill Brazilian Student Association
- McGill Chinese Students' Society
- McGill Hellenic Student Association
- Hillel McGill
- McGill International Students' Network

- McGill Iranian Student Association
- McGill Ismaili Student Association
- McGill Koreans' Educational and Cultural Association
- McGill Mauritian Students Association
- McGill Mexican Student's Association
- McGill Romanian Students' Society
- McGill Russian Speaking Students' Association
- McGill Sikh Students' Association
- McGill Taiwanese Students' Association
- McGill Thaqalayn Muslim Students' Association
- McGill Ukrainian Students' Association
- McGill University Filipino Asian Students Association
- McGill University's Multiracially Open Students Association
- McGill Vietnamese Students Association
- Muslim Students' Association
- Pakistani Students Association
- Spanish and Latin American Students' Association of McGill University
- Israel on Campus
- Syrian Students' Association
- Tamil Students' Association of McGill
- Turkish Students Society of McGill University

Other Campus & Community Groups
- Indigenous Student Alliance (ISA)
- Feminist Collective of McGill Law
- Women of Colour Collective of McGill Law
- Aboriginal Law Students Association
- Arts Undergraduate Society Equity Committee
- Science Undergraduate Society Equity Committee
- Engineering Undergraduate Society Equity Committee
- MUNACA Social Justice Committee
- AMUSE Equity Committee
- Quebec Public Interest Research Group-McGill
- Indigenous Women & Two Spirit Harm Reduction Coalition
- Le Delit

Appendix B - Potential Enrolment-Based Seats (Comparative Overview)[16]

Faculty	# of McGill Students	% of Total Population	Queen's System without base 2 seats	Queen's System (2+extra based on %)	U of T scale	Current McGill System
Environment	2067	5.169050715	1	3	1	1
Arts (Includes Social Work)	8668	21.67650295	4	6	3	5 (4 Arts, 1 SW)
Arts and Science	631	1.577973392	0	2	1	1
Continuing Studies	4946	12.36871061	3	3	0	0
Dentistry	262	0.655196559	0	2	1	1
Education	2707	6.769530859	2	4	2	1
Engineering	4661	11.6559968	3	5	3	3
Law	905	2.263178954	0	2	1	1
Medicine (Includes Nursing)	5529	13.82664799	3	5	3	3 (Medicine, Nursing, & PT/OT)
Management	3075	7.689806942	2	4	2	2
Music	883	2.208162449	0	2	1	1
Religion	92	0.2300690207	0	2	0	0
Science	5562	13.90917275	3	5	3	3
Total Seats			**21**	**45**	**21**	**23**

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[16]Based on Fall 2015 Statistics https://www.mcgill.ca/es/registration-statistics