TO:	Senate
QUESTION FROM:	Senator Sobat
RESPONSE FROM:	Senator Ollivier Dyens, Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)
SUBJECT:	Question and Response Regarding Student Diversity Initiatives
MEETING DATE:	April 20, 2017

PREAMBLE:

Whereas, the draft Academic Strategic Plan 2017-2022 includes an objective to expand diversity and enhance accessibility for students from underrepresented groups, including significantly increasing enrolment for Indigenous students, expanding financial aid, and improving physical accessibility and cultural inclusivity;[1]

Whereas, a number of McGill units are involved in efforts to improve access, support, and retention for marginalized students, including but not limited to the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office, Enrolment Services, Student Services, Student Housing and Hospitality Services, and the academic Faculties;

Whereas, Enrolment Services has conducted an initial survey regarding the diversity and demographics of the entering undergraduate class of 2016;

Whereas, the 2016 Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) report to Senate includes data on student categories including degree, basis of admission, and country of origin, as well as several initiatives intended to improve diversity in recruitment and admissions;[2]

Whereas, the SEM report does not include data from the new survey nor other means of evaluating the cited projects;

Whereas, student research has found that successful programming to improve access and retention for marginalized groups must address barriers found throughout the full student lifecycle, including but not limited to recruitment, admissions, student development, reflection, and graduation;[3]

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[1] https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6._d16-37_open_discussion_-_strategic_academic_plan_2017-2022.pdf
[2] https://www.mcgill.ca/senate/files/senate/6._d16-43_sem_report_to_senate.pdf
[3] http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Fostering-Post-Secondary-Success-March-2017.pdf,
http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Striving-to-Place-The-First-Generation-Student-Experience-at-McGill.pdf

Whereas, specific initiatives may include comprehensive data tracking and assessment; outreach to local communities; dedicated financial aid; cohort-based admissions; and peer mentorship initiatives;

Whereas, the success of such initiatives necessarily requires collaboration and coordination between multiple units.

QUESTION:

1. Does the administration centrally track or collect data on programs to increase access, retention, and success for marginalized student groups?

2. Does the administration strategically coordinate such initiatives at the senior level? If so, where is this led from?

3. Can a structure be developed for better collaboration and coordination of such program between different units (e.g. a student diversity strategy and/or steering committee)?

RESPONSE

Dear Senator Sobat,

Thank you for this important question. Starting in 2016, we have asked incoming undergraduate students and students who have not accepted our offer of admission to voluntarily fill out a survey that includes demographic and diversity questions. The survey was created in collaboration wih SSMU (under then President Kareem Ibrahim) SEDE and OSD. The data thus collected is useful but incomplete. This being said, we are seriously looking at how many students from minority groups attend McGill and successfully complete their McGill education. It is however early in the process, and more diversity data will need to be collected in the coming years to have a better picture of the situation. However, we routinely gather and review retention and graduation data for all undergraduate students.

The Provost and the Principal have made increased accessibility to McGill a priority and this will be reflected in the new Strategic Enrolment Plan now being drafted (which will need to be approved by Senate). The plan will ensure coordination and collaboration between different units and different programs (e.g. recruitment and financial aid). However, please note that accessibility is a complex issue that is not limited to recruitment, financial aid, admission standards, or structured student support and retention programs, but also includes social perception, the image of the university, feeling welcome on campus, and support from one's personal family, social and cultural networks. Most importantly, accessibility must include retention and graduation rates. Our goal is to not only bring in more students from minority groups on campus, but to ensure their personal, social, psychological wellbeing and their academic success. To that end, we are working on a project that will focus on the difficult transition points that students face (from

recruitment to graduation and beyond), focusing also on the challenges faced by students from minority groups.

Further, in his draft Academic Plan, the Provost has committed resources to increase accessibility and diversity:

> ***Expand diversity*** McGill University believes that social, economic, and intellectual diversity among our student body and workforce is a matter both of fairness and of enriching the advancement of our academic mission. Opportunities for intellectual, academic, and professional growth flourish in communities that reflect a diverse set of social identities and experiences.
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> We will also enhance accessibility for students from underrepresented groups, especially Indigenous students, with the goal of increasing Indigenous student enrolment to 1000 University-wide by developing pathway programs in partnership with Indigenous communities. In pursuit of accessibility, we will aim to increase student aid from all sources to 30% of total net tuition revenues. Beyond financial assistance, we will also take measures that enhance physical accessibility and cultural inclusivity in support of student success.

Ollivier Dyens
Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)