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## REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

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# INTRODUCTION

The university's statement on the Government of Quebec's proposed Charter of Secular Values (Bill 60) has met with positive support from our community. My thanks to members of the Board of Governors for their assistance and support. Concordia was the first Quebec university to present its position before the National Assembly committee on Jan. 23. Benoit-Antoine Bacon, provost and vice-president of Academic Affairs, and Roger Côté, vice-president of Services, attended the hearing to present Concordia's position, which was developed in consultation with the university committee. I will provide an update at the Board meeting.

Many of you will have seen that *La Presse* published an article erroneously claiming that graduation rates at Concordia plummeted to below 50 per cent. The assumption was based on a misinterpretation of the data provided to the newspaper. On January 7, *La Presse* published a new article in which Concordia's graduate rates were properly represented. *La Presse* also published a Q&A with Benoit-Antoine Bacon, provost and vice-president of Academic Affairs; a letter from Concordia Chancellor L. Jacques Ménard, clarifying the facts and supporting our performance; and a formal apology from Éric Trottier, vice-président à l'information et éditeur adjoint, of *La Presse* for the original article.

Members of our senior team have met staff of the Ministère d'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie (MESRST) on financial planning. We have confirmation that the \$13.1 million budget cuts are permanent, with discussions underway as to how this can be addressed. Running a deficit is discouraged and in incurring a deficit we limit ourselves to accessing other funds that could be used for operating purposes. Meetings are ongoing with MESRST representatives regarding their proposed reinvestment in the university sector, including what terms and conditions will be attached. I anticipate a further meeting on the reinvestment of funds on February 17.

There are two other consultations planned, one involving new initiatives by the Government of Quebec in the area of pensions wherein the government has decided to move forward with certain aspects of the D'Amour Report, particularly in the cost sharing components of pension plans. The other consultation is in the realm of overall financing for university programs. This flows from one of the study groups set up following the education summit. The report in this area is expected in June 2014.

## TEACHING, RESEARCH, INNOVATION

A note on demographic data and enrolment, prompted in part by a recent piece by *The Gazette's* Karen Seidman entitled "University enrolment is up despite dire predictions." The article is based on an assertion from Herb O'Heron, a special advisor to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, who argues that increased participation rates and immigration are compensating for declining demographics, steadying university enrolments. How relevant is this for Concordia?

Regarding demographics, the Government of Quebec predicts a significant decline in the traditional university-age population. Census data, for instance, shows a "baby bust" soon to hit CEGEPS, with declining birth rates resulting in declining enrolment. Most recent reports project a decline on the order of 12-13 per cent, bottoming out in 2019. There is also the expectation that Quebec's overall rate of population growth will slow, perhaps dramatically, over the next several decades.

A good news view or mitigating factor is demographic-based enrolment projections haven't been very accurate over the past half decade. The gap between actual and projected CEGEP enrolment over the past five years has been increasingly large: this year, there's a difference of more than 20 per cent between what was expected back in 2006 and what actually occurred. Our own CEGEP-source enrolments have gone up by about 23 per cent over the same period. Herb O'Heron seems to be right that participation rates are increasing. Simply put, more students are choosing to attend university. The general trend toward greater population density in urban areas growing in Quebec also favors a downtown university like ours. This means Montreal has better enrolment prospects than universities in small cities or suburban or rural areas, even where overall population growth stagnates. In sum, we are entering a period in which our attention to enrolment issues will be more vigilant than ever.

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Two projects received funding through the Digging into Data Challenge. Alan Bale (Classics, Modern Languages and Linguistics) is the Canadian lead on "Cleaning, Organizing and Uniting Linguistic Databases (the COULD project)", a project in collaboration with Harvard University. Charles Acland (Communication Studies) is the Canadian lead on "Arclight: analytics for the study of 20th century media", a project in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Digging into Data receives support from 10 international funding organizations, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI).

Hoi Dick Ng, Department of Mechanical Engineering, has begun a four-year collaborative project with the Los Alamos National Laboratory (a division of the U.S. Department of Energy) The project will focus on the optimization, verification, and validation of a software package related to general scientific and fluid engineering applications.

Mamoun Medraj, Department of Mechanical Engineering, has been awarded a Collaborative Research Grant from NSERC for his project with General Motors Canada. He is working on the development of novel Fe-based permanent magnets for high temperature applications.

Alain Beaudet, president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) toured the PERFORM Centre on November 15. The scientific director of the CIHR Institute of Genetics, Paul Lasko, visited the centre on December 18. Susan Windham-Bannister (president and CEO, Massachusetts Life Sciences Center) and U.S. consular officials visited on November 22, 2013. We were also pleased to have Dr. Lawrence Rosenberg, the new CEO of the Jewish General Hospital, visit the PERFORM Centre on January 30.

On November 27, Kevin Little, CAO of PERFORM, represented Concordia at the annual general meeting of Research Canada (a national alliance of all major industry, academic, and health care provider stakeholders “dedicated to advancing health research through collaborative advocacy”).

Ketra Schmitt, director of the Individualized Program, hosted a roundtable on November 6 to explore new interdisciplinary approaches to the research and teaching of synthetic biology. The event's keynote speaker was Britt Wray, a filmmaker and radio documentary producer, who completed Concordia's graduate diploma in Communication Studies in 2010.

Nineteen students from all four Faculties will receive Graduate Student Mobility Awards. The awards range from \$400 to \$4,000 and will send students to study in places such as Iceland, Japan and Argentina.

# ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS (AAR)

## ALUMNI RELATIONS

- AAR held alumni events in five Canadian and U.S. cities, as well as Qatar, in November and December. Backpack-to-Briefcase workshops helped sharpen students' non-academic skills. Young alumni took in cooking classes at La Guilde Culinaire and a tour of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. More than 300 international students attended the 2013 International Students Holiday Party on December 19.
- Two Concordians made *Maclean's* annual ranking of the 50 most important people in Canada. In an article published in the magazine's December 2 issue, Gerry McCaughey, BComm 81 and chief executive officer of CIBC, and Stephen Bronfman, Attd 89 and executive chairman of Claridge Inc., were recognized for their leadership and contributions to the country.

## ANNUAL GIVING

- Annual Giving appealed to more than 20,000 key individuals in a direct mail campaign in December. Additionally, more than 73,000 donors and prospective donors received holiday-themed reminders and thank-you emails that included a video.
- Annual gifts received during the month of December totalled \$237,356, bringing the 2013-2014 Annual Giving Campaign to \$1,067,044, as of the end of the calendar year.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- On December 10, Leith Sharp, director, Executive Education for Sustainability Leadership at the Center for Health and the Global Environment from Harvard University's School of Public Health, led a special orientation session with members of the university's Sustainable Communities Partnership Steering Committee. The session centered on sustainability in higher education and strategic transformational change. Sharp has spent 20 years driving sustainability into the core business of higher education.

## FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

- Design continues for the R. Howard Webster Library transformation project. The three-year construction portion will be presented to the Board for approval in fall 2014.
- Plans are also underway for the renovation of the fifth and sixth floors of the Faubourg Building.
- Construction is underway to create 250 seats for silent study as well as 14 study rooms in the Grey Nuns Chapel, slated to open in the fall of 2014.

- Construction is also ongoing for the H-110 Alumni Auditorium in the Henry F. Hall building for completion by spring 2014.
- Construction continues until January 2014 for the Grey Nuns Residence East project (\$15.36 million). The opening is planned for spring 2014, with cost forecast remaining within approved budget.

## OTHER GOOD NEWS

- The 33rd annual John Molson MBA International Case Competition—regarded as the most prestigious on the case circuit—was held from January 5 – 10. Former Governor General Michaëlle Jean (and current UNESCO Special Envoy For Haiti) presented this year’s live case. The student teams were asked to act as private enterprises responding to a request for proposals from the Government of Haiti for the production, distribution and commercialization of electricity in the small Caribbean nation. Congratulations to the Concordia team as well as the organizers and coaches who made this important event a success.
- MFA in Studio Arts student Colleen Heslin is the national winner of the RBC Canadian Painting Competition. Heslin won the \$25,000 purchase prize for her piece *Almost young and wild and free*, a vibrant mixed media creation that blends painting with textile art. Also nominated for the prize were MFA in Studio Arts students Brendan Flanagan and Nathaniel Hurtubise, and alumna Laura Findlay, BFA 11.
- Concordia’s Centre for Teaching and Learning Services Centre teamed up with the student-run Sustainability Action Fund to co-organize events as part of the Second Annual Teaching and Learning Festival. The Power of Curriculum: Sustainability — Learning — Innovation will provide faculty members with a blend of traditional and innovative ways to integrate sustainability content into their courses. The three-day conference featured a public keynote address on February 5 by award-winning author Thomas Homer-Dixon. He is the author of the bestselling and award-winning books *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity and the Renewal of Civilization*; *The Ingenuity Gap*; and *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*.



