McGILL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT
2015-2016

PRESENTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE
159TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2016

McGILL UNIVERSITY
MONTREAL, QUEBEC
REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

With the arrival of September, many people are in “back to school” mode. McGill campuses are suddenly hubs of activity as new students begin their university experience, while others are returning from the summer break or perhaps to continue a lifelong journey of learning.

Much has taken place since our last Annual General Meeting, including a shift of the meeting from spring to fall, which allows us to be timelier with financial reporting while coinciding with the launch of the new school year. This being said, past challenges with respect to a difficult financial environment for the entire higher education network in Quebec have not subsided. While both the federal and provincial governments have gone on record that higher education funding is a priority, there has been little impact so far, and as such McGill has to do more with fewer resources.

As a result, the role and leadership of McGill's global community of more than 250,000 alumni, along with parents, friends and supporters, is more important than ever. Alumni remain an invaluable resource in helping McGill achieve its strategic objectives and can play a vital role in helping the University enrich the student experience, offering an education that will prepare students to thrive in all their future endeavours. McGill has also been diligently working to win research grants such as the recently awarded $84-million Canada First Research Excellence Fund contribution toward the “Healthy Brains for Healthy Lives” program.

In conjunction with a strategic review undertaken by University Advancement, the McGill Alumni Association continues to refocus its efforts in line with the University’s priorities, keeping an open dialogue with Principal Suzanne Fortier, offering input to strategic priorities such as the future of the Royal Victoria Hospital site and development of McGill’s International Strategy, as well as helping to champion the inaugural version of McGill24, the University’s 24-hour giving day program.

Over the past year, the MAA articulated a tactical plan for the Board. This plan serves as a roadmap for each of the committees and councils within the MAA, including the Executive Committee, the Nominating and Governance Committee, the Honours and Awards Committee, the McGill Alumni Leadership Advisory Council and the McGill Alumni-Student Engagement Council. The plan also helps to align the efforts of the many constituent groups and alumni branches located across the globe.

One highlight of the past year has been the Alumni Association’s contribution to the selection of honorary doctorate candidates. Traditionally, the MAA has put forward a single nomination every year. This past year, in recognition of the MAA’s rigorous nomination review process, as well as our efforts to engage accomplished and deserving alumni with the University, Principal Fortier
requested that we quadruple the number of nominations, all of which were ultimately approved by the University's Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee, as well as Senate.

I take this opportunity to thank Gabrielle Korn, Managing Director, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, together with all of the members of her team, for their tireless efforts to drive forward the agenda of University Advancement and McGill. The revitalized and disciplined approach Gabrielle has instituted since her arrival two years ago has delivered an abundance of initiatives, while keeping the volunteer members of the Board focused on responding to needs of today, as well as building for tomorrow. I wish to also thank my fellow Board members for your enthusiastic and faithful support.

Finally, I thank everyone for the wonderful opportunity to have served as President of the MAA these past two years. The experience of meeting with brilliant students, dedicated staff and devoted volunteers has been incredible. I began with a desire to leave to my successors an even better place than I inherited, and to build on the legacy of my alma mater. What a privilege to have served McGill!

Alan Desnoyers, BCom’85
REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

McGill’s Alumni Relations and Annual Giving unit is dedicated to nurturing lifelong engagement among alumni, parents and friends; offering effective events that highlight McGill’s areas of research strength while connecting alumni to each other and to the University; building support for McGill’s areas of greatest need through a robust annual giving program; and raising awareness of McGill’s generous legacy of support among students and young alumni. With a global network of more than 250,000 alumni living in over 180 countries, 2015-2016 was another year of burgeoning activity and service improvements.

Through the efforts of dynamic volunteers and a creative staff, we held more than 465 events worldwide, attracting over 14,325 attendees. Local, national and international events remain an important pillar in our engagement efforts, and run the gamut from expert panels, to recognition events, student send-offs, young alumni networking events, and more.

Volunteers continued to be the lifeblood of the Alumni Association, advancing McGill’s mission and serving as the University’s ambassadors in a myriad of ways: by participating on alumni Boards, committees and branches; by attending student recruitment events and raising McGill’s profile through social media; by mentoring young alumni and sharing their expertise as advisors, and much more.

Virtual connections between alumni and alma mater continued to strengthen: nearly 100,000 graduates joined or followed the Alumni Association’s groups, pages and accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The freshly relaunched McGill Alumni Website (alumni.mcgill.ca) breathed new life into a variety of programs and services through its visually appealing design, and its simplified and intuitive navigation system. The addition of McGillConnect.ca, designed to facilitate alumni-to-alumni connections and alumni-to-student mentoring opportunities, attracted over 4,100 McGill participants within weeks of its launch. The implementation of a chat software platform for real-time online events likewise proved extremely popular for a range of programs, including virtual student send-offs and a peer-to-peer best-practices brainstorming event for branch and regional volunteers.

Our strong campus partnerships continue to help us connect with students before they graduate, creating a seamless transition from their student experience to their new lives as McGill alumni. Growing collaborations in areas such as yield and recruitment, mentoring and internships, career programming and entrepreneurial endeavours were just some of the ways we worked to establish lifelong relationships with our students. This year, the McGill Alumni Association’s Student Sponsorship Program provided $16,700 in sponsorship dollars to 36 student group beneficiaries for projects and initiatives of an academic, cultural or athletic nature, contributing to the Alumni Association’s profile on campus.
Affinity programs, including educational travel, banking and insurance packages, continued to offer alumni competitive or discounted rates on a variety of exclusive services that, in return, provided McGill with revenues in support of alumni programming priorities. A host of on- and off-campus services likewise benefited the alumni community, the most popular of which remained access to McGill’s Libraries.

Annual Giving is the foundation of McGill’s fundraising efforts. Through a robust range of initiatives that appealed to alumni, parents and friends of all ages and stages of giving, including many innovative Seeds of Change crowdfunding projects, and this year’s highly successful McGill24 Day of Giving, Annual Giving expanded McGill’s base of support while cultivating the transformative philanthropists of the future.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all members of my hardworking Alumni Relations and Annual Giving team. Among our many achievements this year, we were also the proud recipients of two awards from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education: a Silver Award in Alumni Relations Programming for all Constituencies for “Parents Tent 2015” and a Bronze Award in Social Media Alumni and Advancement Programs for the “McGill Red and White Bucket List.”

Finally, as my entrée to McGill in 2014 coincided with his term in office, I extend my thanks and deep appreciation to outgoing President of the McGill Alumni Association, Alan Desnoyers. The positive partnership that continues to flourish between the Alumni Association and McGill is a testament to Alan’s loyalty and dedication to his alma mater. With the stalwart collaboration of all Directors of the Board, I have had the immense pleasure of working alongside Alan, continuing the positive forward momentum of the Alumni Association, and its global contributions to McGill.

Respectfully submitted,

Gabrielle Korn
Executive Director, McGill Alumni Association &
Managing Director, Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, McGill University