

# **President's Report to McMaster University's Board of Governors March 2, 2023**

## **Spotlight on Operational Excellence**

Operational Excellence is critical to enabling research and teaching excellence at McMaster by providing the best possible administrative support to our faculty, staff and students.

A key institutional priority, McMaster's goal with respect to Operational Excellence is "to enable the administrative operations of the University to most effectively support the institutional vision and aspirations of our community of researchers, scholars, teachers and learners." This means renewing our administrative processes across all areas of the University by adopting best practices, modernizing and streamlining our existing processes, and enhancing services. At the same time, we are supporting inclusive excellence and well-being, and advancing sustainability, environmental stewardship and accessibility on our campus.

Over the past two years, [we have made significant progress in the area of Operational Excellence](#) including the development of key operational policies, strategies and processes such as:

- The development of comprehensive COVID-19 safety protocols and implementation of the MacCheck vaccine verification system.
- The introduction of live chat software to facilitate online student service inquiries for both prospective and current students.
- The creation of a new governance structure for Human Resources to better integrate planning and align HR operations with McMaster's strategic priorities.
- The launch of McMaster's first university-wide sustainability strategy designed to advance McMaster's Net Zero Carbon Roadmap.

I would like to highlight further advances in this important priority area.

## **Renewal of Administrative processes**

### **The development of McMaster's Administration Strategy**

Saher Fazilat, Vice-President, Operations and Finance, is in the process of finalizing a refreshed operations and finance strategy that includes updated vision, mission and values statements.

The strategy will emphasize coordination and cooperation across all administrative and ancillary support services, recognizing that as a decentralized university, we need to share best practices and work together to achieve operational excellence. This strategy will provide a common direction and purpose for those who work in the Operations and Finance division and provide clarity to institutional stakeholders, including faculty, students and staff, about the role of Operations and Finance staff, how they do their work, the benefits of their services, and how

they are working collaboratively toward Operational Excellence. It will also identify the ways in which the Operations and Finance division will work to modernize and streamline systems and processes across McMaster and enable administrative areas of the university to be creative, innovative, and responsive to changing circumstances.

The development of this strategy has been informed by broad consultation with staff from within Operations and Finance, as well as through extensive discussion with academic counterparts across Faculties and areas to ensure their needs are understood.

I look forward to sharing the plan with Board members when it is finalized this spring.

### **Hire to Pay Task Force**

A key initiative in advancing Operational Excellence is the “Hire to Pay Task Force.” Co-sponsored by Saher Fazilat and Provost, Susan Tighe, this group is tasked with identifying improvements to administrative processes across the university to ensure the accurate and timely processing of hiring and payroll for all Faculties, departments, and Human Resources Services.

The Hire to Pay Task Force brings together representatives from across departments, Faculties, and support units, including Human Resources, Financial Affairs and University Technology Services (UTS), to review Hire to Pay and related processes, which include tools, resources, supports, technology, and data. The goal of this task force is to identify processing issues and/or opportunities that impact staff, Faculties, departments, and support services. It will also make short and long-term recommendations to resolve existing processing complexity, as well as streamline processes and prevent errors.

The creation of the Task Force is an important step forward in developing innovative solutions to long-standing issues related to hiring and payroll across the University.

### **Pro-active use of UniForum data**

Administrative areas across McMaster are also proactively using insights from UniForum to improve our processes and services. As Board members may know, [UniForum@McMaster](#) is a program that provides McMaster with data on how support services are delivered across the university and whether they are delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible. Universities from across Canada and the world participate in the UniForum program, submitting data on the same key services to allow institutions to compare their performance and benchmark their outcomes.

UniForum data has helped inform McMaster decision-making since 2017. Now, we are planning to work more closely with leaders from across the University to explore how to use UniForum data to find new ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide.

I’m pleased to report that [results from the past five years](#) have shown that not only has satisfaction with McMaster services gone up in every measured service, but satisfaction scores

across many operational functions at the University are among the highest of the Canadian universities that submit data.

## **Sustainability**

### **Funding from Parks Canada**

McMaster and other members of the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System, including the Royal Botanical Gardens, recently received \$3.5 million from Parks Canada to support several projects aimed at restoring and protecting the wetlands, plants, and wildlife in the 2,200-hectare corridor that makes up the EcoPark System located, in part, on McMaster's campus. Projects include:

- **Private Landowner Engagement** – Many property owners along Wilson St. and Lower Lions Club Road have significant natural areas at the back of their properties within the Cootes-Dundas Valley Corridor. This project will engage landowners, on how their natural lands can be ecologically stewarded and improved while creating cooperative relationships with the landowners.
- **Cootes Drive Wetland Remediation** – This project aims to improve habitat in McMaster's west campus by enhancing and remediating existing degraded wetlands, removing invasive species, planting native species, creating new habitats, and improving connectivity for pollinators, fish and birds through increase in habitat and buffers along this land corridor.
- **Indigenous Relationship Building** – This initiative invites Indigenous communities and Knowledge Holders to share valuable insight about the land in the Cootes–Dundas Valley EcoCorridor and participate in its stewardship. The project will lead to the creation of a knowledge database and include extensive engagement and partnership with Indigenous communities.

I am pleased to see McMaster researchers receive funding for these and other projects that are addressing pressing ecological challenges and are transforming our campus into a living laboratory for sustainability.

### **Small Modular Reactor Feasibility Study**

As Board members know, McMaster is recognized globally for our excellence in nuclear research and innovation. For more than 60 years, we have safely operated the McMaster Nuclear Reactor, and made critical advances in nuclear energy, materials and medicine – including medical isotopes used to treat a variety of cancers. Most recently, McMaster has also been developing training and education programs for the next generation of nuclear professionals that will design, build, operate and regulate Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technology in Canada.

SMRs are a new class of nuclear reactor, which are a fraction of the size of traditional power reactors, and provide low-carbon, safe and reliable energy generated by nuclear fission. Countries around the world, including Canada, are exploring the feasibility of constructing

SMRs as a crucial piece of power generation to significantly reduce carbon emissions and meet zero carbon targets

In order to advance net zero carbon goals at McMaster and in alignment with McMaster's contribution to the federal government's [Small Modular Reactor \(SMR\) Action plan](#), the university is conducting a feasibility study to investigate the potential of hosting an SMR at McMaster.

This feasibility study will look at a host of factors including possible site locations and will involve consultations with key stakeholders, including representatives from Indigenous communities. From March 14 –16, the University will welcome leaders from the [Indigenous Advisory Committee for Canada's SMR Action Plan](#) as part of this consultation process.

The feasibility study is expected to be completed this summer, and will provide data and analysis that will be used to determine if McMaster is an appropriate SMR host site. This approach is consistent with McMaster's strong commitment to evidence-based decision-making and our responsibility to find climate change solutions.

Information about McMaster's important contributions to nuclear research and education and the SMR feasibility study is part of a research-focused supplement on Canada's innovation leaders that is being distributed at the beginning of March by the rankings organization Research InfoSource. This report is being distributed in a number of publications, including the National Post.

I look forward to updating Board members once the feasibility study is complete.

### **Campus Master Plan**

The University Master Plan is a vision for the future development of our campus and locations over the next decade and will provide a framework that will shape our buildings, outdoor spaces, infrastructure and the experience of being at McMaster. Many people from within the university and our broader community have participated in the Master Plan process. These consultations have helped to develop a bold and innovative vision for the future of our sites.

Over the past year, McMaster engaged with students, faculty, staff, partners and community members to gather feedback on what should be included in the University Master Plan. This consultation helped the focus the Plan around five themes including re-imagining key entrances to campus; safe and sustainable transportation; the importance of broader sustainability advancements; more housing options and green spaces; and the creation of spaces to innovate and collaborate.

In addition to an online survey, an event to invite feedback on the themes was held on January 11 in the McMaster University Student Centre where almost 500 students, staff, faculty and community members participated. A total of 1,100 voices participated in this final phase of public engagement, confirming that the plan's major themes are on the right track.

As the plan nears completion, it will be shaped by the Steering Committee members and reviewed by McMaster leaders, and then presented to the Board of Governors this spring. When it launches, the plan will act as a guide for the development of the buildings, outdoor spaces and infrastructure of our campus and locations for the next decade and form the experience of being at McMaster University well into the future.

## **Transformative IT Structure**

### **Information Security Roadmap**

In 2021, McMaster IT Governance endorsed the University's three-year [Information Security Roadmap](#). This plan was designed to strengthen McMaster's information security and build our resilience against ever-evolving cybersecurity threats, and it continues to be essential in ensuring that McMaster's data, systems, and information remain confidential, available and secure.

Over the past year, the University has made significant progress in building an information security culture by raising awareness among faculty, staff, and students about the importance of information security and their role in protecting university data. In addition, new tools, processes and technologies, including multi-factor authentication for Microsoft 365 and improved network security were introduced to enhance the security of McMaster's systems and data. New policies and standards were also developed and implemented to ensure that the University's information security practices are aligned with industry best-practices and comply with relevant regulations and laws.

Looking ahead, the University will continue to focus on enhancing our information security program by implementing the next phase of the roadmap in 2023. This will involve further strengthening of existing security measures and introducing new approaches to prevent, detect, and respond to cyber security threats. Additionally, the University will continue to build an information security culture and implement new policies and standards to ensure that McMaster's data, systems, and information remain confidential and secure.

### **Campus Relationship Management (CRM) Project**

Launched in 2022, the Current Student CRM Digital Transformation Project is another key strategic IT deliverable aimed at transforming and strengthening Operational Excellence and transforming the student experience at McMaster.

A joint initiative between University Technology Services (UTS) and Student Affairs, this project will introduce a new digital platform technology that provides a more holistic online student experience. The technology will provide better access to the information, resources, and support students need – from enrollment through to graduation. This technology will also enhance the University's analytics capabilities to help us track performance and student success metrics. This will enable McMaster to continuously improve our support offerings to better serve our students and the broader community.

This project is nearing the end of the discovery, planning, and community engagement phases, with delivery and implementation targeted to take place over the next few semesters.

Multiple CRM projects and activities have already been completed and others are also underway. For example, McMaster Continuing Education implemented a fully integrated CRM in 2021, which included tools for enhanced marketing and learner support. In addition, the Faculties of Engineering, Humanities, Science, Social Science and some Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) programs have partnered with the university's marketing project to utilize CRM for recruiting prospective international students. The work on discovery, requirements gathering, and solution design for HR is also expected to start in May. By implementing CRM for employees, Human Resources Services will substantially reduce waiting times, optimize service delivery, and provide a uniform "client" service experience.

This project is one of the many ways in which the University is working to improve automation and digital transformation to reimagine processes and support student success.

### **Human Resources – Cultivating human potential**

#### **McMaster appoints new director of human rights and accessibility**

I'm pleased to report that lawyer and McMaster graduate Patricia Suleiman has been appointed the Director of Human Rights and Accessibility in McMaster's Equity and Inclusion Office.

Patricia comes to McMaster from Humber College, where she was the manager of Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion. Her experience includes managing human rights investigations, early interventions, mediations, workplace restoration, and human rights-related policies and procedures. In addition to having substantial knowledge and work experience with sexual violence policy, sexual violence response and integrating equity, diversity and inclusion principles into her work, Patricia is a trained workplace mediator.

The Director of Human Rights and Accessibility is a critical role in providing expertise and guidance on the development and implementation of equitable policies and processes across McMaster, and I look forward to Patricia's valuable insights and contributions in this area.

#### **McMaster's new Flexible Work Guidelines**

As part of the University's commitment to implementing innovative new employee engagement practices, and supporting the well-being of our employees, McMaster has launched a set of [Flexible Work Guidelines](#).

Designed to assist managers and employees in navigating flexible work arrangements, the guidelines establish a standard process for employees and managers to propose and approve a flexible work arrangement, and ensure consistency as these arrangements are made across Faculties and departments.

The guidelines were developed by the Workplace and Employee Experience Committee, which included members from across units and types of work experience. The committee conducted extensive consultations with employees and leadership from across the university and looked at best practices across the sector. Many staff have been working flexibly for some time, and the committee listened to what was working well and identified where there were opportunities and concerns.

The [flexible work webpage](#) includes examples of different flexible work options, a step-by-step proposal process including templates and samples, and many additional resources to help staff and supervisors successfully establish and maintain these arrangements. It also provides an interactive opportunity for employees to share their experiences with flexible work at McMaster. Staff and supervisors are encouraged to review the many helpful tools and templates available.

These guidelines are an excellent example of the innovative ways in which McMaster is promoting employee engagement, enhancing talent attraction and retention, and ultimately advancing our strategic priorities.

### **Launch of the Inclusive Leadership Series**

To ensure McMaster's people managers continue to receive innovative leadership training opportunities, the University has launched the [Inclusive Excellence Leadership Program](#).

Developed by the Equity and Inclusion Office in partnership with Human Resources Services, and McMaster Continuing Education, this program is a professional development series designed to provide both academic and non-academic people managers with the tools they need to integrate EDI priorities into their leadership practice.

The program focuses on training leaders to become aware of their own biases and preferences, to see diverse talent as a source of competitive advantage, actively seek out and consider different views and perspectives to inform their decision-making, and to cultivate and inspire diverse teams. The program seeks to empower and equip people managers with the best practices and resources essential to building a culture of inclusivity, and provide opportunities for people managers to become more knowledgeable about inclusive leadership practices.

This program supports McMaster's ongoing commitment to developing a range of professional development programs, leadership training, and opportunities that promote inclusive learning and employee growth.

## **CAMPUS UPDATES**

### **INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE**

[Conversation and Connection: The impact of the Black and Racialized Staff Employee Resource Group](#)



The Black and Racialized Staff Employee Resource Group (BIRS), a network supporting the well-being, development and advancement of McMaster staff members who identify as Black, Indigenous and racialized. Established in April 2021 out of a working group within the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC), BIRS also works to amplify the voices and needs of these staff members at an institutional level.

BIRS provides support to their members through personal development sessions, access to leadership training and hallway chats — biweekly informal gatherings where members can engage in conversations on a wide range of topics.

#### [“Building powerful connections:” Black Student Success Centre marks one-year anniversary](#)

One year ago, the Black Student Success Centre (BSSC) – the first physical space at McMaster dedicated to supporting and championing the success of Black students – opened its doors. The centre provides a range of services, from mental health supports to mentorship and financial aid to support the academic, personal and professional needs of students. A need for a community gathering space for Black students was identified in the five-point action plan developed after the release of the University's review of the Black student-athlete experience in October 2020.

#### [Maintaining the momentum: Black History Month at McMaster launches with a memorable kick-off event](#)

February was Black History Month – a time to celebrate the contributions and achievements of Black and African diasporic peoples. The Black History Month Planning Committee, in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion Office and other partners throughout McMaster, held a range of virtual and in-person events throughout the month, including a kick-off event featuring music, moving speeches and the Black Expo: Maintaining the Momentum

#### [McMaster Engineering's equity, diversity and inclusion scholarship winners are poised for impact](#)

McMaster students Robert Ngunjiri and Serena Stoddart have both experienced feelings of being out of place. Now, they are scholarship winners who have discovered a home and a launchpad for impact at McMaster Engineering.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

#### [External progress review shows MacPherson Institute's efforts having positive impacts on teaching and learning at McMaster](#)

According to the recent progress review of the MacPherson Institute, “significant and impactful changes” have been made to respond to recommendations from the 2018 External Review of Teaching and Learning and feedback from the McMaster community. A clear mission and mandate, streamlined program offerings, the shift to a Faculty Liaison model of service, and other adjustments have had a positive impact on how teaching and learning support is provided to instructors, students and staff at McMaster.



### [Search begins for Wilson College director and endowed chair](#)

A search for an academic director and an endowed chair for McMaster's new Wilson College of Leadership and Civic Engagement is now underway. Both tenured positions begin with a five-year term, projected to start on July 1, 2023. Wilson College, which was established in September 2022 following a \$50-million gift from Lynton "Red" Wilson, will be Canada's most comprehensive leadership college, developing future leaders who will be equipped to address the country's complex challenges. Its programming, administered through the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, will feature a unique curriculum that emphasizes experiential learning, interdisciplinary work, civic engagement and research collaborations.

### [McMaster students named finalists for McCall MacBain scholarship](#)

McMaster students Abby Buller and Jessie Meanwell are finalists for the first global cohort of McCall MacBain Scholars at McGill University. The scholarships enable students to pursue a fully funded master's or professional degree while participating in a leadership development program. Buller and Meanwell are among 87 finalists chosen from across Canada and around the world after a first round of regional interviews. They will attend the final round of interviews in Montréal from March 8 to 12, meeting with leaders from academia, business, government, and the social sector.

### [Preparing students for the business world: DeGroote wins prestigious case competition](#)

Last month, a team of four McMaster MBA students won the John Molson International MBA International Case Competition. McMaster's team competed against 36 teams from 17 countries. Judged by more than 300 business executives, the competition was an opportunity for participants to take their MBA education beyond the classroom. The experience pushes students to practice the critical thinking, problem solving, time management and presentation skills they will draw on in the next phase of their careers.

## **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP**

### [McMaster researchers receive \\$61M from CIHR to advance health research](#)

Seven McMaster-led research projects have received a total of \$61 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to advance medical research, training and innovation. The announcement was made at McMaster by Filomena Tassi, MP for Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas and minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, as part of CIHR's Clinical Trials funding initiative. The Clinical Trials Fund is designed to enhance Canada's clinical trials ecosystem from discovery to implementation.

### [New inhaled COVID-19 vaccine receives more than \\$8M for next stage of human trials](#)

Researchers at McMaster University are receiving more than \$8 million in funding from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR), enabling them to proceed with Phase 2 human trials for a next-generation, aerosol-borne COVID-19 vaccine. Pre-clinical trials have shown the

inhaled aerosol vaccine is far more effective at inducing protective immune responses than traditional injections, partly because it targets the lungs and upper airways where viruses first enter the body, providing long-lasting protection against respiratory infections.

#### [Driving change: Rethinking mobility to build the transportation system of the future](#)

McMaster researcher Ali Emadi, a global expert on vehicle electrification and smart mobility, is determined to build a more inclusive transportation system that is safer, more equitable, more reliable and more sustainable. His research group has partnered with Cubic Transportation Systems (CTS), an industry leader in transportation technology and innovation, to create the Centre of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence and Smart Mobility, where a diverse team of scientists, engineers and students are building the transportation system of the future.

*\*Ali Emadi will be presenting to the Board of Governors at the March 2, 2023 meeting.*

#### [In the world of cybersecurity, humanities research plays an integral role](#)

A McMaster researcher is bringing a human lens to the perception and mitigation of cyber security risks, which involves looking at digital safety in a whole new way. “We’ve only been looking at the issue through a technology lens – and that’s important,” says Andrea Zeffiro, an assistant professor in the Faculty of Humanities’ department of communication studies and media arts but we’re missing the human factor about how people are being targeted or disproportionately impacted by data breaches and other forms of cyber-crime.”

#### [Was Pablo Neruda poisoned? New analysis shows covert assassination remains a possibility in Chilean poet-politicians mysterious death](#)

Evolutionary geneticists and forensic experts who have spent years analyzing the remains of Chilean poet and Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda have added important new information to the case regarding a possible covert assassination. The scientists, including McMaster researcher Debi Poinar, evolutionary geneticist Hendrik Poinar and other members of the McMaster Ancient DNA laboratory, along with their collaborators in Denmark, have presented their findings to a Chilean tribunal, concluding with a final presentation to the judge overseeing the hearings.

#### [Power plant” McMaster teams up with energy industry leaders to tackle sustainable agriculture](#)

McMaster researcher and chemical engineering professor Todd Hoare has teamed up with Suncor, a Canadian integrated energy company, to create a new type of “soft” chemical spray that allows plants to fight their own battles. Hoping to revolutionize the way the agricultural industry cares for its crops, this partnership seeks to reduce the negative environmental impacts of harmful chemical sprays while promoting an approach that emphasizes sustainability and good health.

**ENGAGING LOCAL, NATIONAL, INDIGENOUS AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES**

**OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

### [Search for McMaster Vice-President, University Advancement is underway](#)

The Vice-President (University Advancement) provides overall leadership and direction in the areas of development and fundraising, and is responsible for cultivating and soliciting a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects, advancing fundraising and broader revenue-generation activities across the institution, and leading and overseeing the planning and launch of McMaster's next fundraising campaign. Board members Jennifer Rowe, Justin Boye, Susan Galloway and Jasmine Dhaliwal are on the selection committee. The committee is being supported by Julia Robarts and Colleen Keenan of Ogders Berndtson and is aiming to identify a successful candidate to start in the role of Vice-President (University Advancement) this spring.

### [Outstanding employees and leaders recognized by TMG Peer-to-Peer Awards](#)

The TMG Peer-to-Peer Recognition Program recognizes employees for outstanding work while demonstrating and reinforcing McMaster's core leadership capabilities. Four employees from McMaster's management group (TMG) are the recipients of this year's awards. Zrinka Granic, Andrianna Kabitsis, Katie Millar and Mary Taws were nominated by colleagues and selected by the awards committee. They received their awards at the TMG Forum on Feb. 9, 2023.

## **AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

### [McMaster alumni named to the Order of Ontario](#)

Two McMaster graduates, Teresa Cascioli, B. Com '83, LLD '19, and Kevin Smith, BA '86, have been recognized with the Order of Ontario, the province's highest civilian honour for outstanding achievements. The Order of Ontario recognizes exceptional leaders from all walks of life and diverse fields of endeavour whose impact and lasting legacy have played an important role in building a stronger province, country and world.

### [McMaster graduate student part of winning team at international innovation challenge](#)

Sarah Arsalan, a graduate student in Kinesiology, and her team have placed first in the Universitas 21 and PwC Innovation Challenge, a prestigious global competition that brings together university students from around the world to tackle some of society's biggest challenges. This year, participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which they think governments should support the private sector in addressing environmental and societal concerns.

### [Six McMaster graduates named to Order of Canada](#)

Six McMaster graduates, including actor and producer Eugene Levy, are among the 99 Canadian leaders to be appointed to the Order of Canada. One of the country's highest honours, the Order of Canada recognizes the extraordinary contributions of Canadians from all sectors of society.

### [Zhou Xing wins prestigious immunology award for research into mucosal vaccines](#)

The Canadian Society for Immunology (CSI) has announced McMaster University's Zhou Xing as the 2023 recipient of its prestigious Hardy Cinader Award, the highest honour bestowed by the CSI. Xing, a professor of medicine and a member of the McMaster Immunology Research Centre and the Michael G. DeGroote Institute for Infectious Disease Research, is being honoured for his renowned immunology research program, which focuses on respiratory mucosal immunity, infectious diseases, and vaccine development. He is also part of the team that developed McMaster's inhaled COVID-19 vaccine.

#### [Graduate students, faculty earn McMaster top-tier research ranking](#)

McMaster University continues to rank among Canada's top research universities in the annual ranking published by Research Infosource. With a total sponsored research income of \$374.6 million — a 6 per-cent increase from last year — McMaster maintains its third-place position for Research University of the Year among medical/doctoral schools, determined by research income and intensity, as well as the number, intensity and impact of publications in leading journals.

#### **IN MEMORIAM**

#### [Remembering McMaster Chancellor Emeritus John Panabaker](#)

McMaster Chancellor Emeritus and two-time McMaster graduate, John Panabaker, passed away on Feb. 5 at the age of 94. Panabaker earned his BA in 1950 and his MA in 1954. He rose steadily through the ranks at Mutual Life ultimately becoming chairman of the board in 1985. A significant aspect of Panabaker's legacy is his extensive volunteer and community leadership. He served 12 years as a member of the Board of Governors, including two years as chair. He was also chair of the Administrative Board of the McMaster Museum of Art and was the University's chancellor from 1986 to 1992.

Dr. Panabaker was a steadfast, thoughtful and articulate McMaster leader from his days as a student to his time as chair of the Board of Governors, then as chancellor and beyond. His relationship with our University endured for more than three quarters of a century. The impact of his volunteer efforts and philanthropy will extend at least that long again.