

Student Sustainability Workshop: Power Mapping and the University

BLURB: If we want to build a more sustainable McGill, we need to understand how the system itself works. This workshop will unpack the different places that power lies in the university, and go through an organizational chart to map out decision makers and influencers in the university.

Goals:

- Explore where power lies in the university
- Empower participants to embrace their power and think beyond hard lines of reporting
- Familiarize participants with the structure of the university

Time: 1.5 hours

Materials (see templates at the end of workshop outline):

- Posters
 - Why Understand how the University Works? (blank)
 - Students, Staff, Faculty, Administration matrix (blank) (template attached)
 - Organogram (optional – you can also draw it as you go)
 - *Note: Consult with MOOS and others for the most recent version!*

INTRO (10 min)

- Land acknowledgment
 - *We would like to acknowledge that we are currently on the traditional territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Ga-niyen-gé-haa-ga) (which means "Mohawk" in the Mohawk language), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. We recognize and respect the Kanien'keha:ka (Ga-niyen-gé-haa-ga) as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. It's important to remember the ways that history, and especially the history of colonialism, impacts how we are building a sustainable society today.*
- Have participants go around and say their name, preferred gender pronoun if they would like, a bit about what they are involved in, and (if you have few enough participants that it's not super long) a question they have coming into this workshop
 - *Your preferred gender pronoun is the word you would like to be referred to when you are out of the room. For example, "Lily went to the store, SHE bought some bread." You can phrase your preference by saying, "I prefer him-his pronouns" or "I go by he"*
 - *Your question might be about an initiative you're trying to get off the ground, a discussion you've been wanting to have about power in the university, or something you specifically want to learn more about*
 - *Facilitator note: Remember these (jot them down if you'd like) and come back to individual questions during the conversation*
- Introduce yourself and the context of this workshop
 - *E.g. "My name is Lily, and I'm the Student Engagement Facilitator at the McGill Office of Sustainability, or MOOS. This workshop is geared towards sustainability leaders to build capacity and raise discussions around leadership. Thanks so much for coming!"*

- Workshop norms:
 - *This workshop is discussion based; you are strongly encouraged to participate. If you find yourself talking a lot, take a step back to allow more space for other people. If you aren't sharing as much, challenge yourself to contribute.*
 - Point to where the bathrooms are, and tell participants they can go at any time
 - Briefly go over the goals, agenda and timeframe of the workshop

ENERGIZER (10 min)

EXPLAIN: This is an exercise from Theatre of the Oppressed, a form of theatre that is used to highlight social and political change and turns the audience – you – into “spect-actors”

- Have participants break up into pairs, and then call for a volunteer to model the exercise with you. Person A begins by assuming in a position that asserts power over Person B. Person B then goes into a position that asserts *more* power, or challenges the power, of Person A. Have participants take turns and move around each other when forming their images, and experiment with different kinds of power. The exercise often initially brings up images of violence or aggression, but eventually gets more creative through humor, delegitimization, collaboration, or other ways of breaking the paradigm.
- Do a quick debrief with participants, getting 1-2 responses for each question:
 - **What did you notice about doing this exercise?**
 - **Was it easy to assert power?**
 - **What were some of the more unexpected or creative ways of asserting power?**

EXPLAIN: As we will see in this workshop, there are many different kinds of power, which can be found in different pockets of the university. It's not always about achieving the highest hierarchical position, but about understanding the system and thinking creatively!

SYSTEMS THINKING (5 min)

This is an opening conversation to root sustainability in systems thinking. You can let it flow wherever it goes – it's a pretty softball opening that participants should click with pretty quickly.

- Open a conversation:
 - **Why is it important to understand how the university works?**
 - **What does this have to do with sustainability?**
 - Write down responses on your “WHY UNDERSTAND HOW THE UNIVERSITY WORKS?” poster
- Some answers may include:
 - If we want to change the system, we need to understand it!
 - Bringing about sustainability is about a culture shift, not just siloed initiatives
 - People in different places may have power or information that we can use
 - Working with a network means it's more likely to survive if someone leaves
 - Connectivity is important for more collaboration and respect to grow in our community

EXPLAIN: A sustainable solution is one that changes the way a system functions. In order to change the system, we need to be able to understand how it has existed thus far.

WHO HOLDS POWER IN THE UNIVERSITY? (20 min)

This exercise lays the groundwork for thinking about how to leverage information in the organogram. Depending on your audience there might be holes about information (McGill is, after all, siloed). Feel free to add or encourage other information from your participants!

- Open a conversation (5 min):
 - **Who holds power in the university?**
 - Let the conversation naturally lead to admin, students, professors / deans, and (may or may not come up) staff
 - Briefly explore the diversity in each of these identities
 - **Who do we include in each identity?**
 - Administration: The principal? P7? Senate and the Board?
 - Students: Elected? Undergraduates?
 - Staff: Unions? Clerical?
 - Academic: Deans? Profs? Tenure?
 - **What are ways that intersecting identities can influence this power?**
 - Credibility through formal (e.g. research grants) or informal (e.g. charisma) channels
 - Holding privileged vs. marginalized identities
 - Years spent working at the university
 - Ability to leverage public attention through the media
 - Access to information (e.g. secretaries)

EXPLAIN: The exercise of laying out who holds power at different levels of the university is never black and white, and always dynamic depending on the context. Nevertheless, we are going to try to map out the general kinds of power we can expect to find within this general breakdown (students, staff, deans/faculty and admin).

- Reveal a **blank copy of the “POWER MATRIX,” poster** and fill out the chart from left to right.
 - Facilitator note:
 - Don’t feel the need to hit all of the points on the next page, but rather as a reference for you as the conversation unfolds.
 - Feel free to use keywords as you fill out the matrix to stand in for the full explanation of your conversation (e.g. “risk-taking” instead of “as clients of the university, students can take on more risk than other actors (won’t be fired)”)

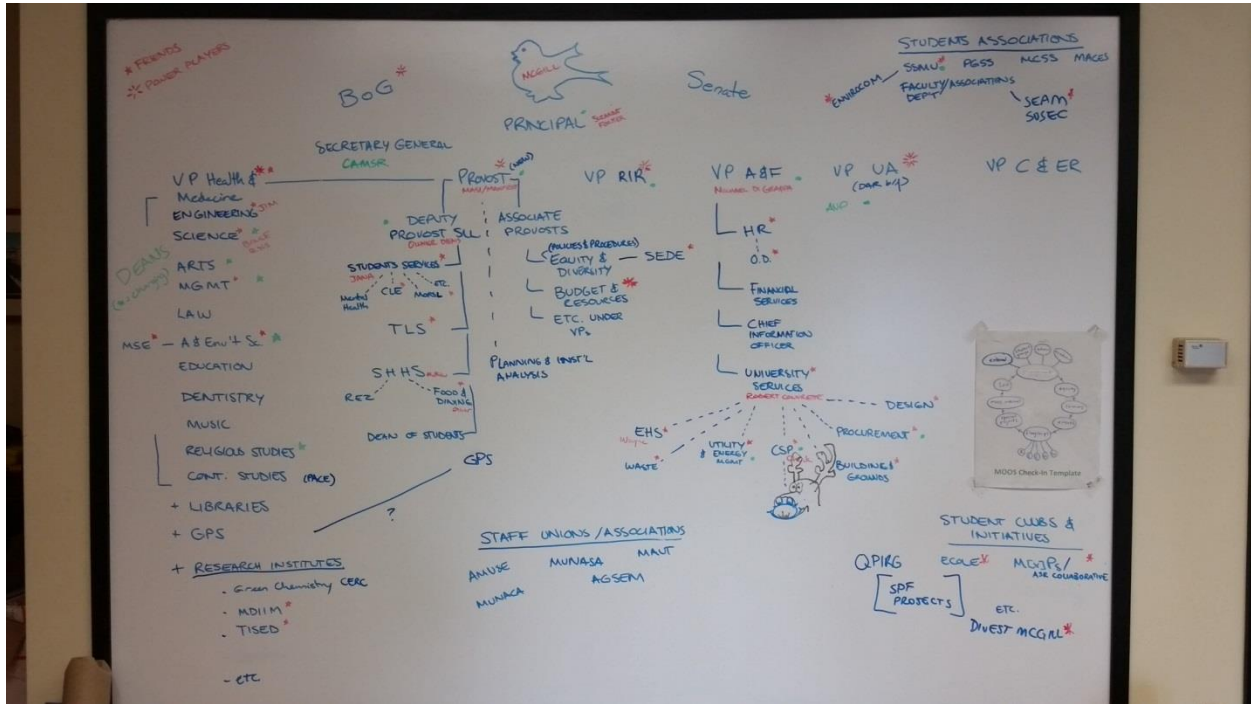
POWER MATRIX

	Students	Staff	Deans / Faculty	Administration
Power	<p><i>Access to resources (through professors and mentors, funding, space)</i></p> <p><i>As clients of the university, students can take on more risk than other actors (won't be fired)</i></p> <p><i>Enormous amount of energy and creativity</i></p> <p><i>Freedom to drop one initiative and pick up another (creates more opportunities for interdisciplinary experiences)</i></p> <p><i>Legacy of student initiatives</i></p> <p><i>Political power of student unions, faculty / departments, independent groups</i></p>	<p><i>Receive set amount of funding to achieve mandates</i></p> <p><i>Control behind-the-scenes operations (finances, pedagogy, cleaning, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Keep things running smoothly, invisibly</i></p> <p><i>Invisibility leads to less micromanaging, in some cases</i></p> <p><i>Institutionalization of work, long-term expectations of work commitment</i></p> <p><i>Representation / bargaining power through unions</i></p>	<p><i>Deans get relatively large control of their faculties, seen as separate turf</i></p> <p><i>Set the defining questions and frameworks of academic discussion</i></p> <p><i>Esteem from being part of elite research institution</i></p> <p><i>Expertise in their field (knowledge power)</i></p> <p><i>Define norms of academic experience (classroom dynamics, setting expectations)</i></p> <p><i>Institutionalization of work, long-term expectations of work commitment</i></p>	<p><i>Carry ultimate decision-making power</i></p> <p><i>Sets direction for university as a whole through policies, priorities</i></p> <p><i>Influences budget decisions</i></p> <p><i>Protecting reputation over an enormous and decentralized university</i></p> <p><i>Wield enormous power over parts of a university they don't normally see</i></p> <p><i>Fully backed by McGill reputation, has attention of societal stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Institutionalization of work, long-term expectations of work commitment</i></p>
Challenges to power	<p><i>Demanding academic schedules</i></p> <p><i>Transiency of student body, loss of institutional memory</i></p> <p><i>Lack of legitimacy because of age, experience</i></p> <p><i>Administrative distrust of students from the legacy of previous students</i></p>	<p><i>Invisibility leads to less recognition</i></p> <p><i>Precarious job security, especially at a time of budget cuts</i></p> <p><i>For unionized staff, often less recognition and institutional value</i></p> <p><i>Seen as less relevant than academic staff</i></p> <p><i>Siloed by department or skill</i></p>	<p><i>Under enormous pressure to publish and get tenure</i></p> <p><i>No pedagogical training to deal with daily teaching experience</i></p> <p><i>Siloed by academic theme</i></p> <p><i>Limited grant funding to conduct own research</i></p> <p><i>Precarious job security without tenure</i></p>	<p><i>Responsible for McGill reputation and sustainability without being able to control most of the university</i></p> <p><i>Hard to see things on the ground</i></p> <p><i>Cautious to take risks</i></p>
Perception of power	<p><i>Often unaware of student power in the scope of larger system</i></p> <p><i>Battling understanding of the role of students (in society, in university)</i></p>	<p><i>Aware of position within the established university hierarchy</i></p>	<p><i>Deans are strongly aware of it, as they exert a lot of decision making power</i></p> <p><i>Profs less likely to feel any kind of flexibility</i></p>	<p><i>Highly aware of it, as it's so formally explicit and reinforced</i></p>

EXPLAIN: We could spend a whole workshop on this matrix alone, but we also want to apply this to the actual humans behind these identities. As we go into the organizational chart of McGill, keep these powers and challenges in mind while thinking about who you want to influence to ensure the success of your initiative

THE ORGANOGRAM (30 min)

This is the big deal of the workshop! Here’s an example of an organogram from April 2015:



Facilitation notes:

- It is strongly recommended to draw out the organogram beforehand so you don’t have to deal with awkward spacing in the middle of the conversation.
- Chances are you will forget something, or someone in the crowd might know more than you – encourage input, but don’t get sucked into too much detail!
- Remember to refer back to the overall categories (student, staff, prof, admin). The division of axes drawn above (P7 on top, Deans on the left, students and unions in separate webs (NOT always on the bottom!!)) seems to visually work well.
- Consider the use of colors to indicate things, depending on your goal (e.g. key people, offices with whom we have relationships, etc.)

EXPLAIN: We’re going to be unpacking the organogram, or organizational chart, of McGill University. This is a tool that we’ve traditionally given to people who work at MOOS, but are now spreading to more people in the sustainability community. We’ve found that projects are most likely to succeed and become institutionalized in the long term when they are connected to a variety of stakeholders across the university. Keep your own initiatives in mind as we dive into this chart!

- *Some disclaimers before diving in:*
 - *This structure is constantly in flux, and we may not be entirely accurate in the way we present it. This speaks to the changing nature of what we often like to think as a stable, stagnant institution. Feel free to contribute more information!*
 - *Maps are drawn differently depending on who's doing the drawing, and this is definitely a MOOS-centric map. The best way to learn more parts of the chart is by asking other people for connections and clarity from their point of view.*
- Present the organogram!
- Questions after the organogram
 - **What is it like to see the system laid out like this?**
 - **What are places that you want to connect with for your own initiative?**

CONCLUSION (10 min)

- Have participants go around in a circle or turn to a partner and answer the question, **“What are you taking away from this workshop? A thought? A question? A next step?”**
- Remind folks that MOOS is always here to connect you to the people you would like to meet (or the people who know the people you would like to meet), and feel free to drop by our office for a chat.
- Thank folks for coming, and invite them to sign up for the MOOS listserv or take your email to keep in touch! Ask for feedback and reflections, whenever they pop up, by getting in touch with you.

POSTERS

Why Understand how the
University Works?

Power Matrix

	Students	Staff	Deans	Admin
Power				
Challenges to power				
Perception of power				