Approved at the MRFA General Meeting on 25 October 2013

Advocacy Goals

1) The MRFA will advocate for the additional funding that was promised by the provincial government for the third and fourth years of Mount Royal University's degree programs.

Supporting arguments:

- in 2008, Mount Royal College admitted students to five new degree programs – Arts, Science, Business, Communications and Justice Studies
- when those students reached third year, they represented new students because prior to this Mount Royal had been primarily a two-year college offering diploma and university transfer programs
- planning for the degrees was based on a promise by the provincial government to provide additional funding of $16.5 to $18 million in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 for the third and fourth years
- but then the government did not provide the promised funding because the global financial crisis decreased its revenues
- this forced Mount Royal to reduce the number of students admitted into these degrees
- the initially larger number admitted created a bulge of students moving through the degrees, for which the government provided one-time funding
- the number of students is still being reduced to adjust back down to the number the university is funded for
- this creates inefficiencies such as third and fourth year classes that are smaller than planned
- there is demand from prospective students for the places that were cut
- restoring the funding would allow MRU to use its buildings, including the new library, more fully
- fewer parents would have to send their children out of province for university
- Why should other provinces fund PSE for Alberta students and why should Alberta parents have to pay more to send their children out of province?

2) The MRFA will advocate for continuation of the provincial government's 2013-2014 initiative to freeze tuition and to add the amount of a cost of living tuition increase to operating grants.

Supporting arguments:

- would allow tuition and ancillary fees to be gradually reduced as a proportion of PSE operating revenues
- tuition fees have been frozen in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2003-2004
- according to a study released this fall by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Alberta is the second most expensive province in Canada, at $7,093 per year, when both tuition and ancillary fees are considered; Newfoundland and Labrador is the cheapest at $2,872 per year
- this would partially restore government funding to past levels – the percentage of operating revenues from government in Alberta was 86.5% in 1981, and in 2011 it was 66.3%; in Newfoundland and Labrador, it was 87.3% in 1981 and 78.3% in 2011

3) The MRFA will advocate for per capita FLE funding from the provincial government sufficient to ensure that no qualified Alberta applicant is turned away.

Supporting arguments:

- in Fall 2012 (the 2013 figures are still being compiled), MRU turned away 2,846 qualified applicants, 1,617 of whom did not get a first year seat in any program at any Campus Alberta institution
- Alberta's participation rate in post-secondary education is only 17%, the lowest in Canada; the highest is 28% in Newfoundland and Labrador
- not meeting the demand for PSE causes admission averages to rise

- adequate funding for PSE is an investment in the province's future required to diversify the economy

4) The MRFA will advocate for increased government revenues so that the volatility and instability of funding for post-secondary education can be eliminated.

Supporting arguments:

- successful societies invest in education and infrastructure
- Alberta is drifting and does not seem to have the collective capacity to make strategic decisions
- the flat-tax regime has starved the Alberta government of revenues to the point where income taxes no longer even cover the cost of health care
- government operations should be funded from the economic activity generated by resource extraction, not from declining natural resource revenues
- a depleting asset should be replaced with another, so oil and gas royalties should be invested (Norway's population is not much greater than Alberta's and its version of the Heritage Fund is now worth around $750 billion)
- a recent report by the Canada West Foundation concludes that Albertans must have a serious discussion about investing their resource revenues or risk setting future generations up for failure; the report also says that Albertans and their governments tend to value short-term interests over long-term interests, making it difficult to accept the idea of sacrificing now to benefit in the future
- there is an urgent need to secure funding through mechanisms such as increasing corporate taxes (currently at 10%, Alberta along with NB and BC, is the lowest in Canada), moving to a progressive provincial income tax (the current system places an inordinate burden on lower and middle income families, and studies report that a progressive tax system would reduce their income taxes), and increasing and meeting Alberta's target for oil and gas royalties (in 2012-13, the Alberta government's target was only 10%, whereas the Lougheed government set a target of 35% – Bower, Harrison and Flanagan 2013)

5) The MRFA will advocate for the quality of post-secondary education.

Supporting arguments:

- examples of the excellence of our programs, the contributions of our faculty in teaching and research, and the achievements of our students
- examples of how increases in class size force faculty to change their practice and how this can reduce the quality of education
- the general public does not understand how labour intensive education is