Some of the general issues raised in MRFA Executive visits to departments during the last half of the fall semester are listed below. The first ones include the response of the MRFA Executive. Then there is a group of issues that will be referred to the Negotiating Committee and, finally, several that the Executive are still working on.

Please contact any member of the Executive if you would like to discuss one of these issues further, or if you feel there is something we have missed. There will also be an opportunity to discuss these issues, particularly the scheduling system, at the January General Meeting (3 to 5 pm on Tuesday, January 25 in the Jenkins Theatre).

Course Scheduling System

We heard many complaints regarding irregular course schedules that are disadvantageous to both faculty and students and of problems such as sections of optional courses being cancelled because they were scheduled at poor times and multiple sections of a course scheduled at the same time instead of being distributed across the timetable. Concerns were expressed regarding scheduling constraints and the level of technical expertise required to work with the Infosilem software.

Then in early December, the Chairs' Assembly requested that the Association initiate a policy grievance. Specific violations of the Collective Agreement were cited, in addition to the deep-seated frustration with the scheduling system that we had already heard.

The MRFA Executive Board considered these matters at its meeting of December 17, 2010 and voted unanimously to file a policy grievance against the implementation of the Infosilem system and the Academic Scheduling Policy (POL 516-1).

Scheduling of Final Exams

Not knowing the final exam schedule when students register is a problem for students and for faculty, especially part-time faculty with other commitments. In previous discussions of this issue, we have heard that in order for the final exam schedule to be generated prior to registration, it must be linked to the course schedule and this would mean that it would not be possible to schedule all sections of a course at the same time for a common exam and that it would be difficult to schedule three-hour exams. The Executive will raise this issue with administration.

Reducing Hours of Instruction in Courses

Some departments with courses that have more than three hours of instruction were concerned that they might be reduced to three hours. It was felt that hours of instruction are part of the reason that Mount Royal is ranked highly in student satisfaction measures. The hours of instruction are the same as at other universities and reducing them would adversely affect the quality of education. What can MRFA do in this regard?

Faculty can do something in this regard. They can resist being the originator of curriculum change proposals to reduce hours of instruction. If they feel required to do it, they should exercise their right to determine whether the change is substantive or editorial. Substantive changes go through APPC and GFC where the impact on the quality of education and student satisfaction can be debated. This is the proper process for changes that have both academic and budgetary implications.

Workload for independent study project courses

The definition of SICH in Article 1.24 of the Collective Agreement states that credit for other forms of teaching such as directed study shall be assigned by the Chair in consultation with

the members of the academic unit and is subject to the approval of the Dean. Faculty should use this provision to establish appropriate workload credit.

Fixed Term Part-time Appointments

There were several questions about these appointments:

How many appointments will there be?
Article 4.11.1 states that there will be 25 across the University. This could be changed in the next agreement, which will come into effect on July 1, 2012.

What should part-time faculty interested in such an appointment in the future do?
The current eligibility criteria are listed in Article 4.11.2. The requirements to have normally taught 384 SICH or more in previous academic years and to be on Step 4 or higher of the part-time grid are in place because these appointments are intended for part-time faculty members who have been teaching a full load for many years.

If an appointment is terminated (under Article 4.11.11), will another appointment be made?
Yes, the number of appointments will be kept at 25. The process for making additional appointments would have to be determined.

Is service an expectation of these appointments?
There are no service requirements in the Collective Agreement and none have been required by the Provost and Vice-President, Academic. However, the Collective Agreement does not attempt to exhaustively prescribe our duties as faculty members and expectations can be placed upon us that are not included in it.

Should the part-time seniority list (Article 4.8.8) be kept confidential?

This was discussed at a Chairs' Assembly. The definition of accumulated experience is public and the seniority list is compiled from it using public information on courses taught, so there are no privacy concerns. However, there might not be a single list – for example, there could be seniority lists for individual courses or for groups of similar courses. Alternatively, there might be a single seniority list that is used only after the reappointment criteria have been applied and after part-time faculty eligible for reappointment have been allocated workload (Article 4.9.2.1 states that accumulated experience is a factor only when all other qualifications are deemed equal). In addition, there are complications in allocating workload arising from sections being cancelled and from new sections being added. Part-time faculty with questions about their workload allocation should discuss them with their Chair.

What are the implications of accumulated experience for retired full-time faculty returning to teach part-time?

Departments are required by Article 4.8.2 to develop a definition of "accumulated experience at Mount Royal that is both satisfactory and relevant". This is to be approved by the Dean and be used in allocation of workload for reappointed part-time faculty when all other qualifications are deemed equal.

The agreement stipulates that reappointments and the subsequent workload allocation occur before initial appointments (Article 4.9.5). Thus, a retired full-time faculty member wishing to teach part-time, would first need to be appointed under the initial part-time appointment provisions. Accumulated experience is not used directly in initial appointments, although the full-time teaching experience would be a qualification considered in the appointment.

Once appointed, the full-time experience would be used in determining initial step placement on the part-time hourly rate schedule (Article 13.3.5) and the member would be eligible to apply for reappointment and be placed on the part-time seniority list.

Mid-term Tenure System II Evaluation

Should a tenurable faculty member appointed effective August 15, 2009 who received one year of credit towards the probationary period have a mid-term tenure evaluation this year (instead of an annual evaluation)?

The Collective Agreement in effect on the date of commencement of appointment stated that when one or two years of credit are granted towards the probationary period there will be no mid-term tenure evaluation. This has now been changed to require a mid-term tenure evaluation when one year of credit is granted towards the probationary period.

The member is not required to have a mid-term tenure evaluation, because tenure recommendations and decisions must be based on the criteria in effect on the date of commencement of appointment, but could choose to have one so that there would be a Dean's evaluation in the tenure dossier. The Dean advises whether progress towards tenure is satisfactory in the mid-term evaluation, but is involved in the annual evaluation only when recommended by the Tenure and Promotion Committee because of concerns with the member's performance.

Tenure System II Forms

The Memorandum of Understanding on page 114 of the Collective Agreement stipulates that either Tenure System I forms or new forms developed by UTPC be used. Using FTC Form 103 is awkward because the form contains the general criteria for Tenure System I, and it is the Tenure System II general criteria in Article 10.2 that must be used in the evaluation. We expect that new forms will be developed in time for the annual tenure evaluations conducted in May.

Promotion to the Rank of Professor

The work summarized in Item F on page 95 of the Collective Agreement that is required to implement promotion is behind schedule. However, the work is underway, with the intent that the first applications be considered next fall. There may be changes to the external referee process, but any such changes would be negotiated into the Collective Agreement.

Issues to be referred to the Negotiating Committee

Title for Part-time Faculty

It was felt that part-time faculty deserved a title like their full-time counterparts. This will be carried over from the last round in the re-opener.

Parental Leave

The possibility of a grid step for service and/or scholarship contributed to the University during the leave is an improvement, but there are still concerns around the provisions of parental and maternity leaves. This will be deferred to the next round of negotiations because only non-monetary items can be considered in the re-opener.

Grid step for service and/or scholarship on a leave of absence with or without pay

This should be raised in the next round of negotiations.

Request for Guidelines on Overload Teaching

The Collective Agreement allows part-time faculty members, including those on continuing and fixed-term part-time appointments, and full-time faculty members to accept part-time instructional contracts as overload. Although not a right, overloads are an expectation of some faculty.

Full-time Faculty Teaching Labs

Questions were raised about workload credit for full-time faculty teaching labs. The hourly rate of pay for part-time laboratory instruction is 45% of the lecture/tutorial rate and there is a new full-time laboratory instructor category of employee in the Collective Agreement. Full-time faculty get full workload credit for labs because they are not listed under other forms of teaching in the definition of SICH in Article 1.24: "any officially scheduled 50-minute class requiring the instructor to be present and teaching, without assistance, a group of students. Credit for other forms of teaching, including but not limited to practica, open laboratories, studios, directed study, computer-assisted instruction, team-teaching, rehearsals and productions shall be assigned by the Chair in consultation with the members of the academic unit, and is subject to the approval of the Dean."

Issues still being worked on

Daycare

The accessibility and cost of MRU Child Care are concerns and it was felt that the MRFA has a role to play in advocating on these issues.

Hosting of Annual Report on the Research Services Website

This was felt to be inappropriate because the Associate Vice-President, Research has no role in evaluating research.

Part-time Representation on the MRFA Executive

It was suggested that part-time representation on the Executive should be increased from the current single member. The Executive will examine this in the context of the general question of representation and hopes to prepare a discussion paper for the Annual General Meeting on Friday, May 13 (please put it in your calendar!) on a representative council that would advise the Executive.

Statement on Diversity

It was felt that an institutional statement on diversity is needed, and that diversity should be more explicitly addressed in tenure and promotion processes. The Executive will work on this in conjunction with our Diversity Committee and the Negotiating Committee.

Lack of emergency response plan and communication on concerning behaviours

The University is doing some work on this and we will be discussing it with them.

Need Banner prerequisite checking

Need to do an RFP for the benefits carrier

Need support for developing scholarship plans – template or examples