



**Mount Royal Faculty Association  
Department Communicators Meeting Notes  
January 11, 2013**

**Summary:**

Communicators are requested to:

- [Liaise](#) with the Communications Committee. This network is meant to promote a two way flow of information and we hope to hear more of what is going on in departments and to get feedback from our members on MRFA services.
  - Attend/encourage colleagues to attend the General and Special meetings on **January 29**, 12:00 - 2:00pm, and the Contract Academic Staff event, Food for Thought: Sessional Dialogues with the MRFA, on **January 30**. If you are unable to attend an MRFA meeting, we request that you ask a colleague in your department to attend in your stead.
  - Report at department meetings when possible/necessary
  - Ensure you are doing your best to get relevant information out to contract faculty
  - Ensure you are staying informed of MRFA business. Executive Board and Negotiations Reports are available in the notes from this meeting (see below).
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**1. Introduction**

- Kit Dobson, the Communications Officer of the Association, is responsible for organizing the Department Communicators and is the Chair of the Communications Committee
- This year, there was a fair amount of turnover in communicators. This is a good thing. This role is a good way to get a strong sense of the Faculty Association

**2. Responsibilities of Communicators**

a) General Meetings

- Winter 2013 MRFA Meeting Schedule
  - Tuesday January 29, 12:00 – 2:00pm in Jenkins Theatre
  - Friday March 1, 10:00am – 12:00pm in Jenkins Theatre
  - Wednesday April 3, 4:00 – 6:00pm in Jenkins Theatre
  - AGM: Friday May 10, 9:00 - 2:00, in Jenkins Theatre
- As a Department Communicator you should be able to communicate MRFA business to your colleagues. In order to do this, it is helpful to attend general meetings. *If you are unable to attend a general meeting, we request that you ask a colleague in your department to attend in your stead.*
  - This insures quorum and representation across campus.
  - This is particularly important in departments that are less involved.
  - We are hoping that we will get quorum at all of our general meetings.

b) Liaise with Communications Committee

- The list of department communicators and their liaison assignments is [attached](#)
  - *Communicators report directly to a member from the Communications Committee*
  - If there is something happening in your Department or an issue comes up, you can seek help from the CA or you can report it to the MRFA through your liaison on the committee. The door is always open to communicate with Gerry and other members of MRFA's Executive Board.

c) Communicate with all members



- As an Association we consistently try to improve our communications with all members; however, this is particularly challenging in relation to our Part-time, Contract Academic Staff, members. There are approximately 897 faculty in the University and 475 of them are sessional faculty.
  - We want you to be visible in your departments as someone who can be contacted to answer questions.
  - *It has proven very useful for Communicators to report at department meetings*
- Brenda Lang, Part-time Member Representative
  - Brenda Represents Contract faculty: the term “part-time” will no longer be used.
  - *We ask all Communicators to ensure you are doing your best to get relevant information out to contract faculty who are much harder to communicate with as they are on campus less frequently.*
  - We are having an event on January 30 for all Contract faculty.
    - Food for Thought: Sessional Dialogues with the MRFA*
      - All part-time, Contract academic staff, are invited to this event.
      - There will be drinks, food and door prizes. Members of the Executive Board will be attending and there will be a brief information session for attendees.
      - We usually see 40 of the same folks attending these sessions and we want to get more others involved in the MRFA.
- Sometimes contract faculty think they are not full members of the association, but they and full time are all members of the association
- *General and Special meetings on January 29, 12:00 - 2:00pm.*
  - The first portion of that meeting is a special meeting to elect a new treasurer. Contract Faculty are eligible to run for this position.
  - Valerie Kinnear is the outgoing Treasurer as she is now the Associate Dean of Bissett.
  - We need 70 members to attend to meet quorum for the special meeting.

### **3. Executive Board Report, MRFA President, Gerry Cross**

#### General Meetings.

- The third general meeting in the fall did not have quorum. Quorum for general meetings is 50 and the quorum for special meetings is 70. The first half hour on January 29 is a special meeting with quorum of 70. Even if there is one candidate we still need a yes or no vote. If we do not have quorum we will not have a treasurer.
- In order to be a Department Communicator you really need to know what is going on at the general meetings. You are encouraged to attend and to encourage your colleagues to attend.

#### Outcome of Department Visits

- Part of the agenda package is a summary of the department visits
- This summary is comprised of reports submitted to the Executive from department meetings. This summary is incomplete as there were department meetings in December and January.
- A Complete version will be sent out when available and some select topics will be discussed at the January General Meeting

#### Contract faculty

- Most budget cuts will come out, in the end, as less work for contract faculty. There has been a reduction of total teaching hours.
- The number of full and part time faculty members is almost equal, but the



overall number of faculty in the association has not changed much.

- A large portion of the Contract Faculty are clinical instructors in nursing

#### Impact Statements

- Gerry will present costing for a couple of the departments who submitted impact statements
- These statements included the educational impact of reducing hours and the other part which Gerry is doing is a cost/benefit analysis

#### Budgeting

- There will be a report at the general meeting: BAC will be meeting before Jan 29.
- We read in the newspaper that the Alberta economy is booming but the government does not have money to run its public services. No Income tax, flat sales tax, limited revenues from oil royalties. The oil companies have the money, more than they know what to do with, because our government does not tax them enough and, therefore, we do not have the money. The rhetoric is that we need a low tax environment to attract people to Alberta. However, these people do not bring their public services with them and we do not charge them enough to provide those services. We are in a position of relying on oil and gas revenues and now we are selling bitumen from the oil sands for \$30-34 below the world price due to inability to transport it out of the province.
- There was a huge problem with the budget process last year, but David has made some major improvements this year. The administration is doing the best job they can given the limited resources.

#### Discussion:

- The conservatory needing an extra \$6 million for their budget which came out of the University's operating budget. People are concerned that we are funding this non credit building while taking away from our teaching.
  - There were figures in the package from the public session of the last board meeting that projected 7.5 million dollars needed for capital costs. This was just a projection because at this time the contracts had not yet come in. Since then the tenders have come in: now the administration will have an accurate costing of what the construction will be but that has not been reported yet. Moreover, conservatory buildings are unusual because they require so much soundproofing so it seems that there was some underestimating at a certain point in the process which resulted in the unexpected deficit.
  - The funds from MRU did not come from the operating budget, they came from capital funds. Such funds have also been used in the past for the science wing expansion and labs for phys-ed. As a University, we have converted operating surpluses into capital funds and this is a huge mistake. These surpluses came from three years of 6% increases to operating funds. Converting operating to capital funds causes the problem that the budget has non cash lines: earned capital contributions and amortization. If all of our capital money came from the government then these lines would balance but when we put operating surpluses in earned capital contributions it increases the amortization. So we end up cutting real operating money to in effect pay and make up for this difference. There were also some planes purchased which increases our amortization without increasing our earned capital contributions. The end result is cuts to teaching, such as reducing instructional hours.
  - We have to stop doing this and the administration agrees in principle. However, the administration argues that we must continue this practice



to ensure that we get the new buildings we want.

- This should be an ongoing conversation: it is not in our interests to convert money to be spent on academic programs to be spent on buildings.
  - The government is also more willing to give money to capital projects than academic programs
- New faculty members are getting frustrated with the perception that we are radically different and want to change things. The faculty seems divided into two groups, and something should be done to minimize this. This division is frustrating and is starting to cause problems. We are all faculty and want the University to be as great as it can be.
    - Do you think the MRFA is contributing to this issue?
      - The different tenure systems has affected this division
      - The division is noticeable in MRFA meetings, and the MRFA can work to decrease this. There are a variety of different division lines among faculty but the MRFA is where those divisions can be removed: we are all members in good standing.
    - We have been having [Presidents' discussion series](#). Yesterday we had one on academic governance. There are two more scheduled for this year. The next one in late February is on donor agreements. The session in March is on the issue of divisions among faculty: TS/TSS, Old/New, contract/FT faculty.
    - Donor Agreements:
      - There have been a number of comments on the private donations being made.
      - At Carlton University a private donor made a substantial donation to establish a graduate program that would train political aids. Part of the agreement was that there would be a Board of Directors for the program. The University would appoint two and the private donor would appoint two and those four would appoint the fifth which is the Chair. This Board would have a say in faculty hiring and in curriculum. The four members chose Preston Manning as the chair of the committee. This is problematic because such a board will not make unbiased decisions which affect the academic environment.
      - This is an issue of agreements put in place with private donors contributing to operating funds and the provisions that need to be in place to maintain the academic integrity of the university.
      - The other side of this topic is how far we go in revenue generation: if the government does not give us enough money then we really need to try to generate other revenue. More and more Universities are contracting out building a high rise student residence with commercial on the first floor from which the University gets revenue. We need to develop principles before we move forward on anything like this.
    - Faculty Divisions
      - The session in March is on the issue of divisions among faculty: TS/TSS, Old/New, contract/FT faculty.
      - There are a variety of divisions and the more divided we are the harder it is to negotiate as an Association and to have solidarity among the membership.
  - When will the instructional hours issue be put to rest?



- This will likely carry on into next year.
- Right now the government is increasing operating grants by 2% for the next three years. When you look at the cost structure of the university this 2% means essentially a 2.5-3% deficit. So, for the next 2-3 years this will likely remain on the table as a possible budget cut
- Scheduling.
  - The policy grievance is hovering: there has not been much progress. This has been going on for the last two years.
  - One member of the Executive has a course scheduled at an odd time and the capacity for the class is 30 and there are 16 people in it. If that course was scheduled M-W-F it would be full.
    - Having low enrollment increases the cost per student in this case by almost 100%. So, scheduling is adding to the budget problem
  - Gerry has come up with a lot of things that we need answers for but they are all technical questions. We are now working on having the software engineers from the company do an implementation audit. At this time, Gerry will be able to ask these people the questions and the result of this will likely be some significant improvements in the schedules that the software produces.

#### **4. Negotiations Report**

- The new copies of the CA are still being edited.
  - The change in terminology from part-time to contract faculty is a huge amount of work which is delaying distribution of the new Agreement.
  - All of the green sheets are posted [online](#) so if you want to see any changes that have been made you can refer to that
- Outcome of Negotiations:
  - We got the contract through mediated settlement
  - Salary:
    - 3 and 2% staggered over two years.
    - 2% effective and retro to July 1 and another 1% in Jan
  - The grievance process
    - There were 5 steps. Step 4 has been removed and incorporated into the other steps
- Ongoing Negotiations:
  - The most significant things were not agreed to
  - We wanted an article on academic freedom in the Agreement as it is currently just in policy
  - We have been trying to revise the copyright article in the Agreement for the past five years with a series of joint committees making recommendations to negotiations. Now, we have another committee that is to make a recommendation to the negotiating teams in the spring. There will be a ratification vote on this by the end of May 2013.
  - There is work being done on financial exigency which will be going to negotiations next year.
  - There is another MoU too have the task force on leaves and the academic year develop a full sabbatical system and report to the Negotiating Committees in the next round of negotiations.
- The reason we got a settlement
  - MRSA went to mediation and did not get an improvement on their terms: the MRFA did. Our negotiating committee had communicated to the board's team that we were prepared to go to arbitration because we had external data to support our case. The University did not want to go to



arbitration.

- The mediator, Gary Furlong, who provides training for interest focused bargaining, was very good at identifying common interests and bringing the two sides closer together.

Discussion:

- Support staff did get a pay increase did they not?
  - They did get an increase but it was the same as the board's final offer in bargaining. They went to mediation to get more but did not.
- Salary increases in relation to budget issues.
  - It has been said that if the faculty had not insisted on the salary increases the budget situation would not be as bad as it is. The job of the MRFA Negotiating Committee is to negotiate a collective agreement. In the last contract we had 0% and 0% increases. In the second year of our 0%, other post secondary institutions received 2-2.5% increases. For 2013-14 others had already settled for 2%.
    - This was the external data our negotiating committee was using. Their job is to represent faculty not to build the budget of the administration. The Negotiating Committee did their job.
    - Grant MacEwan had a \$14 million surplus last year where MRU had \$24,000. There are huge differences between the institutions, but this is still indicative of some underlying problem.