

MINUTES of the Mount Royal Faculty Association
Meeting date: January 5, 2011

Call to order: An Executive Board meeting of the MRFA, was held in Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta on January 5, 2010. The meeting convened at 11:00am, President Gerry Cross presiding, and Rod Corbett secretary.

Members in attendance:

Gerry Cross
David Hyttenrauch
Cari Merkley
Kelly Hewson
Qasim Syed
David Sabiston
Gerard Lucyshyn
Rod Corbett
Qasim Syed

Meeting with the SAMRU Executive

Robert, Meghan and Ana present from the Students Association

1. Goals for Post Secondary Education

The MRFA and SAMRU Executive agreed to develop a provisional list of long range goals for Alberta PSE that we could then take forward to ACIFA other associations.

Need to advocate for more staple funding

- ASEC has been talking about a rainy day fund for PSE for when recession hits
 - We would, likely, not find any contention on this
 - So the idea then would be that instead of projecting 0% increase in grants for the next 4 years they could draw on this fund to provide consistent funding.
 - The most obtainable would be an inflation based fund, but if inflation is down institutions would get nothing. It would be better to look at growth. However, an inflation model for post secondary could be used.

Increasing the participation rate in post-secondary education in Alberta

- Diversifying away from natural resources requires education yet our participation rate is the lowest in Canada. This is a goal for any political party to increase this at least to the national average.

Government Perceptions

- The government claims that of the things post secondary institutions want, quality/affordability/accessibility, any gains in one goal comes at the cost of the other two. It would be beneficial to draft some language around this to argue that these cannot be separated. This would be tough sell though.
- The government considers Healthcare to be a right and Education to be a choice. While this is debatable, they base their allocations decisions on this principle.

Lobbying

- Should we go after the electorate instead of the government?
 - If we assume there is to be an election in March 2012 and we are ready to go next fall then we could be working with ACIFA on strategies to gain access to the media etc.
 - This, then, needs to be added to our list: we need more than a common set of goals *and* we need a communications strategy.

ACIFA

- ACIFA is intending to invite all representatives of ACIFA, CAFA and ASEC, all Board chairs and Presidents of Faculty and Students Associations to do this same exercise that the MRFA and SAMRU are working on. Tentatively the date for this is August 26th
- SAMRU to assist David with contacting and getting ASEC involved.
 - ASEC is doing budget approval in Feb and will set aside funds to send members to this meeting

Recognition Development

- We could work with students and faculty to create an award and determine the criteria to celebrate excellence amongst ourselves

Tuition/Student Finances

- We need to speak to this in some way: there has to be some goal related to tuition
- Tuition fee regulation
 - This currently caps tuition at inflation increases. Students have asked for this to be put into legislation.
- Could we work on increasing scholarships and grants?
 - The government argues that they will not put more money into something that is already undersubscribed
- Loans
 - Students are currently not dropping courses when they are doing poorly to maintain their full time course load for their loan (this needs to be fixed)
 - Students cannot actually live off of their student loans (they are expected to save certain amount and have parental contributions)
 - It is also difficult for students to manage the lump sum loan payment effectively so that it lasts the year.
- Completion Rate
 - Why is our completion rate so low and what can we do to improve it? Voters need to demand this.
- Service Agreement
 - Oil and gas companies will pay tuition for student if they work for them for 5 years (approx.) there is discussion of this coming to Alberta
- Transition support
 - Improving support in the transition from high school to post secondary

Sub-committee on Alberta PSE Goals

Members: Gerry, David, Robert, and another member of the Students' Association

Purpose: To meet and draft a tentative set of long range goals for PSE in Alberta and to identify the main areas in which we think further work is required. This will feed into our discussions at ACIFA and the students could likely do something similar

2. Student Concerns about class Scheduling System

Purpose of Infosilem

- Optimizing space and optimizing students' schedules
- If it is not working for students either then we need to improve or replace it.

Negative Impact on Students

- Infosilem has made it more difficult for students to schedule life/work around abnormal class combinations/schedules produced by it.

Discussion

- Scheduling Committee
 - Sending things to the scheduling committee does not result in positive change. The committee is likely restricted by the policy.
- GFC
 - The policy end of it regarding the constraints drives the inputs and it does not work. This needs to be changed through the policy
- Is it worthwhile to explore new software?
 - We would get a lot of pushback if we suggested new software, new training and full record transfer. But it is still a possibility we have to consider.
 - Based on the product description and other user testimonials it does seem flexible.
 - We should check in with institutions that it works for and see how they make it work.

Process Moving Forward

- Gerry will bring this up with Robin
 - The system is not working for students
 - Clearly part of the problem is the policy
 - We need to schedule a discussion for GFC to voice its opinions and perhaps make some motions to revise it.
 - There could be motions from the students directing the university to take certain action
- SAMRU
 - The Students' Association will raise this issue at Students Council
 - The SA will gather / compile a list on issues with the system from the student's viewpoint
 - The SA will ask their colleagues at Brock how the system works for them
- Step 2 Resolution Sought:
 - A survey of difficulties will be part of the Step 2 grievance resolution. There must be put in place a process that we are comfortable will

- collect/examine all the problems and propose solutions.
- The Step 2 resolution process will have additional people put on the Scheduling Committee to audit the system and come up with recommendations for improvement. This should include possibly switching software though not necessarily as that would be difficult and disruptive.

Other Student Concerns: Classes/Programs/Scheduling

Concerns and Difficulties with New Programs

- Students feel that they are being used as guinea pigs in the first years of new programs being offered (e.g. having to take all substantial/difficult courses in one term not knowing when they will be available next)
- Would it be good to have a year long schedule?
 - Yes this would be very useful because students work quite a bit and schedules need to be coordinated with employers in advance.

Online Course Registration

- The form online that is meant to assist people with this registration process is difficult to use
 - Once decisions are made about whether to go to Google or Microsoft then this issue will be looked at but it is not a priority right now.

Three Hour Classes

- SAMRU is hearing that students dislike these courses due to a lack of mental breaks (particularly when they have classes scheduled around them).

Exam Scheduling

- Students often have there exams at completely different times of day than there classes were scheduled for. This makes work and trip scheduling difficult for them
- Standardizing exam times may be difficult:
 - Some courses have 14-15 sections which start at many different times in the day: you have to reach a compromise and have it in the Gym.
 - For these we could have the final exam scheduled and known when the person registers for the course
- Moving Forward
 - We need to deal with the scheduling system now and in the meantime work on getting the exam schedule out sooner. (end of Sept after drop/add no need to wait for Nov)

Approval of minutes: Motion was made by Gerry Cross, and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2010 meeting. **Motion carried.**

Agenda

Added Grievance update

Officers' reports:

President

- Senior Grievance Officers Workshop (deferred)
- Grievance Update (Closed Session)

Unfinished business:

Department Visit Action Items

- This has to be completed so it can be included in the Monthly Report tomorrow.
- Any suggestions or specific thoughts around report to be sent to Gerry
- The completed items will go out in the December Report tomorrow all other items will be worked on further.
- Add to report on Department Visits that “further concerns or questions can be sent to Gerry”

New business:

CAUT Academic Freedom Fund (deferred)

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

Secretary
Mount Royal Faculty Association

Date of approval