

## **NOTES of the Mount Royal Faculty Association**

**Meeting date: January 30, 2012**

**Call to order:** A General Meeting of the MRFA, was held in Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta on January 30, 2012. The meeting convened at 4:07pm, President Gerry Cross presiding.

### **Members in attendance:**

See attached attendance sheets

### **Agenda**

Approved

**Approval of Minutes:** Motion was made by Gerry Cross, and seconded to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2011 General Meeting. **Motion carried.**

Motion was made by Gerry Cross, and seconded to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2011 General Meeting. **Motion carried.**

### **Officers' Reports**

#### **President**

##### **1. Grievance Report**

- Two Step 2 Grievances. In both cases there was no violation of the Collective agreement; however, in both cases, the members had a chance to have their concerns heard. One of the cases had a positive outcome.
- One case involved a department's change of practice in assigning overloads.
  - The department decided not to assign overloads as much as they have in the past
  - Assignment of overloads is left to the discretion of

departments and Deans: the decision not to grant an overload is not a violation of the Collective Agreement.

- The other case involved reduction of workload/loss of benefits.
  - Due to the reduction of intake, the reduction of student numbers, the amount of sections offered has decreased. The member, consequently, went down from three potential courses to one course and hence lost benefits.
  - The member had eleven credits in the fall and has three credits in the winter so we made a one time, without prejudice, decision to continue benefits for the winter.
  - Thanks to the dean for supporting this and thanks to Robin Fisher for agreeing to this. This put member concerns above concerns over setting precedents and demonstrates a true commitment to faculty.

## **2. GFC Faculty Caucuses**

Presented by Gerry Cross on behalf of Pat Kostouros, MRFA Academic Liaison Officer

- There are two faculties now actively caucusing prior to GFC meetings to discuss what the business is and what it should be (what should be on the agenda in the future).
- We hope these caucuses come to be considered an effective use of time in fulfilling one's responsibilities as a councillor.
  - These are good forums for sharing information and discussing the issues. This results in better informed councillors and more useful discussions at GFC.
- Caucuses are important if faculty are to take a lead in academic governance.
  - This was shown in Bissett when faculty were not consulted regarding the reorganization of Bissett. At the Bissett faculty council, faculty member were successful in delaying the

reorganisation till proper consultation and planning took place.

### **3. Child Care Task Force Update**

Presented by Gerry Cross on behalf of Pat Kostouros, MRFA Academic Liaison Officer

- The Task Force is preparing a survey which should be out in the latter half of February
- The purpose of this survey is to determine future demand for daycare and childcare
  - Anyone who has or is planning to have children should fill this survey out.
  - Well constructed surveys with good response rates can function as catalysts for things to happen/improve that may not have happened otherwise
  - This survey is one step towards working on solutions
- Any comments about the survey can be sent to Gerry in advance

### **Directors of Research Institutes (Policy 586)**

- From the Policy:

“Institutes at Mount Royal strengthen, coordinate and facilitate collaborative research and other scholarly, artistic and academic activities not readily undertaken within the University's departmental structure.”
- The directors of these institutes are not fundamentally management positions: they are academic positions.
- This has been discussed by the Executive Board and with Robin Fisher. We have determined that we want these to be academic appointments. Some are already academic appointments but they *all* should be.
- There is a gap in the Collective Agreement here: there is no mention of Directors of Research Institutes. The Executive has

asked the Negotiating Committee to incorporate language on these positions in the Collective Agreement.

### **Promotion**

- Gerry will write a report on Promotion in the next Monthly Report that should come out on Wednesday

### **Task Force on Leaves and the Academic Year**

- We thank our members for completing the survey: it was a very good turnout.
- The results will be communicated to the Negotiating Committee

### **Committee Reports**

#### **1. Negotiating Committee, David Sabiston**

- Preparations:
  - The Negotiating Committee has been very busy meeting every Monday preparing for negotiations.
  - On January 12-13 both teams attended a two day workshop on interest focussed bargaining: this was a positive start for the process.
  - David is exchanging our statement of interest with the Board's team on January 31.
- Survey
  - The final revised version of the Survey was circulated today
  - Thank you to the beta testers and to all who provided input
  - The survey will be made available tonight
- Time Logs
  - This will be similar to the logs done in 2004. Faculty will be asked to record what they do over the course of a full week.
  - This will come out next Thursday so it can be done the week of February 6-13 (this is to include work done on the weekend).

- Discussion:
  - Will there be a spot on the log for all the things we should have done?
    - You can state whether it is a normal below or above average work week

## **2. Faculty Evaluation Committee, Bob Uttl**

Introduction, Gerry Cross

- Background:
  - A year ago Gerry brought two concerns to the FEC
    - Should SEIs be confidential and signed or anonymous?
    - The questions did not apply to all forms of instruction
  - FEC did a survey to address these concerns. The unprecedented response rate necessitated further action by the FEC. The MRFA requested that FEC quantify the data and report back to the Executive and the membership
- Moving Forward
  - We do not yet know the process for moving forward.
  - There needs to be a review of the SEI process and form
  - We need a more robust means to evaluate teaching beyond SEIs
  - The UTPC may establish a working group to address the matter. But, we do not know what is going to happen. We also do not know what is going to go forward from the FEC: whether it will just be this report or if there will be recommendations.
  - The Executive and FEC have agreed that if recommendations are to be made then we would have members vote on those recommendations. We could do this online vote or have

another meeting to discuss and then have a vote after.

- The lit review that FEC has developed is quite long and it is important for us to get through this today.
  - We ask that questions be till the end of the presentation unless it is very important to have the context of the moment in asking your questions. Raise your hand we will take all the comments and questions we can without undue delay to the presentation.

Bob Uttl, FEC Chair

- The SEI survey and consequent quantification, review, analysis and research that FEC has done falls within the Committee's mandate:

“The mandate of MRFA FEC is to monitor evaluation of faculty, keep abreast of the latest findings and practices elsewhere, inform MRFA membership, and make recommendations to MRFA Executive.”
- FEC Survey Outcomes
  - 48% response rate
  - A PowerPoint Presentation is available online that details the results and lit review that FEC has done. It is available at [www.mrfa.net/content/2011-2012-1](http://www.mrfa.net/content/2011-2012-1)
- Executive Summary
  - Based on the MRFA FEC SEI Survey results and our review of the literature and teaching evaluation practices, the FEC made a number of recommendations to the MRFA Executive. The key principles behind our recommendations are:
    - evaluation of faculty be based on faculty's performance only
    - evaluation of teaching performance be comprehensive

- assessment of teaching performance be reliable and valid
  - processes, criteria, and standards be transparent and efficient
  - processes, criteria, and standards be in writing
  - evaluators be trained on processes, criteria, and standards
  - evaluation be against written processes, criteria, and standards
  - processes, criteria, and standards be equitable and uniformly applied
  - across departments
  - processes, criteria, and standards be periodically reviewed
- Measurement methods for data
  - Use of Means results in outliers dragging down the average
  - The same applies to the use of Medians
  - Interpolated Median
    - This measurement indicates where the mass of the distribution is
    - This would be most appropriate measurement
    - This is a generally agreed principle
    - Outliers impact Means and Medians but have much less impact on interpolated medians
- Turkey's Analysis
  - Determines whether a score is to be considered an outlier
  - Takes the median and 25% below and 75% above resulting in a category grouping. Anyone beyond that is considered an outlier
  - Using interpolated medians and removing outliers using

Turkey's analysis result in much more accurate SEI scores

- SEI Evaluation of Teaching
  - SEIs only evaluate one element of faculty teaching yet they comprise a significant portion (90%) of the evaluation of teaching at MRU
  - CAUT recommends that SEIs should not be the exclusive basis for evaluating the teaching of faculty
  - SEI scores do not reflect the amount students learn from instructors
- Effects on SEI scores:
  - Motivation of students effects SEIs
    - More motivated students rate classes higher. This is a property of the students not of the instructors and has nothing to do with the teaching effectiveness
    - Differences in motivation can effect SEI score between 0.1 to 0.8 on a 5 point scale
  - Class size also impacts SEIs
  - Attendance
    - Students who attend more classes often give better evaluations
  - Discipline effect on SEIs
    - Fine arts/arts faculty are rated higher than faculty in the sciences
    - Quantitative disciplines are viewed by students as difficult and demanding and therefore students evaluate quantitative courses lower than students in arts classes
  - Student workload
    - Impact of about 0.24 on SEIs
- General agreement in the literature on SEIs



- SEIs cause faculty to inflate grades and reduce students' workload to get better SEIs
- Students use SEIs as reward and/or revenge (in a survey done 40% of students admit that they have done so)
- SEI Validity
  - "The validity of a test is the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure."
  - SEIs are not valid measure of student learning/teaching effectiveness:
    - Do not correlate with learning
    - Influenced by wide variety of TEIFs
    - Students admit using SEI for other purposes
    - Faculty admit engaging in variety of impression management techniques including grade inflation, workload reduction, etc.
  - SEIs are (somewhat) valid measure of student opinions about teaching
    - SEIs ask students to provide their opinions
    - SEIs sometimes do not reflect student opinions about courses/ instruction
- SEI Satisfactory Standards
  - We need to consider where we set the standard: what percentage of faculty to be considered outside the standard
- Reliability
  - The reliability of a test is the extent to which the test scores are consistent across testing occasions.
    - The reliability of SEI is determined primarily by the extent to which individual students give identical ratings to the same professor. Students are assessing (presumably) the same measurable quantity (e.g.,

instructor's teaching effectiveness) and should all give the same rating, if the SEIs were perfectly reliable.

- In reality, different raters rate differently; different raters register in courses; different raters are present on different days; different raters had different amounts of sleep; different raters were dealing with different kinds of problems; different raters arrived to different ratings of whatever they were rating
- There can be considerable impact on peoples' lives when the reliability of test data is not considered
- Three year running averages are more reliable (CAUT recommends doing this)
- Policy in SEI
  - Processes, uses, measurement interpretation &c. should be in writing, in Policy, and available to faculty
- Having knowledgeable Evaluators is important
  - "A major threat to the validity of student ratings is administrators' lack of relevant knowledge and training in interpreting the SEI results"
    - "[do not] assume that those who will examine these ratings have the necessary skills and knowledge to use them within the guidelines recommended by ratings experts"
  - Evaluators should be trained in interpreting SEIs
  - Evaluators should be provided with written guidelines, standards, interpretive guides, warnings
- Summary: Things to consider
  - What do SEI measure?
  - What weight should SEI have in evaluation of teaching?

- Should we develop a new SEI form? What response scales should we use?
- How should we summarize SEI data for valid interpretations?
- Should we include 95% confidence intervals?
- Should we control for TEIFs and how?
- What SEI performance standards should we use?
- Norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, or distribution referenced?
- Should procedures, criteria, & standards be known to faculty?
- Should evaluators be trained?
- Should students be informed about SEIs and their use?
- Should we facilitate formative uses of SEIs?

Discussion:

- The presentation is available online for faculty to review
- Why is personality and expressiveness considered an extraneous variable to teaching effectiveness?
  - It is so because a good teacher does not need, necessarily, to be expressive or have good personalities
  - It is in the Collective Agreement that personality cannot be considered in evaluation of teaching
  - Any literature on this subject can be sent to Bob Uttl
  - Define expressiveness:
    - Animated etc.
- Test validity: test measuring what it is supposed to measure. With this in mind, what is the definition we have of effective teaching at MRU and how well does our SEI measure our notion of teaching effectiveness here?
  - The onus is on MRU to show that the measure is reliable and

valid before they use it for summative purposes

- This is one of FEC's recommendations
- I appreciate the work of FEC and the time is right for this. The tool needs to be worked on and broadened. Teachers with high SEIs like SEIs where those with low SEIs tend not to like them. There is competing literature so FEC is not to be faulted for not knowing all of it. I want assurance that there will not be publication of the results of the survey. I would appreciate removing the example of the sterilization.
  - FEC cannot and will not make any publication resulting from this research. There has been no discussion of this since the meeting last year
  - The example is standard and vividly demonstrates the point, but it will be replaced.
- There seems to be a lack of reflection on the use of SEIs in different modes of instruction. I would be interested in how this will be considered in blended or online learning
  - FEC is still considering this and whether or not these could be done online
  - Bob did mention that there are 10 common questions for all classes and then the instructor selects some others that specifically apply to the course
- Is it possible/suggested to cut off of sample sizes; for example, having an SEI with less than 10 respondents should not be counted?
  - If there are not enough or only a couple responses is not a valid evaluation and then alternate modes of evaluation need to be used.
  - There is a way to make evaluation of online courses mandatory. (e.g. grades not released until the evaluation

form is filled out)

- Moving all evaluations online is something to consider. Less respond but the answers are the same (with all other considerations still being used: average of three years, drop outliers etc.) The way to improve responses is require students to go to the website and either fill out the survey or opt out. Once there many students will just complete the survey rather than opting out,
- Margy Chair of FEC last time the SEI was revised. The committee at the time arranged focus groups, considered teaching in various areas and tested the revised form and questions.
  - Was the validity and reliability tested against the learning outcomes?
    - No
  - If the current FEC would like access to the data collected and revisions drafted by the previous committee they may get these from Marcy.
    - This is a good offer as we move forward in the process
- A faculty member expressed his ambivalent relationship with SEIs. While unable to comprehend the entire presentation, not being a quantitative faculty member, it is understandable that there are several issues with SEIs. However, having worked with SEIs for 25 years and having always kept in mind the occurrence of patterns and anomalies, SEIs can work as they are intended to. It is not the SEI itself that causes these issues, it is how SEIs are used and interpreted by us. Notwithstanding the flaws, SEIs are a very useful and very subjective way of assessing strengths and weaknesses of teaching.
  - Our academic plan mentions that student satisfaction is important but it should not be 90% of what we do

- Not all chairs have standards for satisfactory performance and not all are reasonable when looking at the scores of SEIs. Leaving something like this up to who the chair is isn't something that we should do.
  - If all faculty had this experience with SEIs we would not have had so many negative comments about SEIs on the survey
- How can you determine the reliability of a new SEI form/process before using it?
  - Volunteers test the instrument and are not to be penalized in the use of the instrument or we can adopt one of the instruments that has already been proven valid and reliable
- Interpretation of reliability and validity of SEIs. The literature on the subject is a bit more two sided than what was presented here.
  - We are not concerned with all of the literature that is out there: we are looking at the accuracy of the data
  - This is not an exact science and there are differences of opinion
- Thank you for the thoroughness of the presentation: there seems to be no valid correlation between SEI scores and teaching effectiveness. Given the amount of evidence provided here will the MRFA move forward on having SEIs removed from tenure and annual reviews?
  - FEC would not go this far to fully remove SEIs: student satisfaction is still important.
  - SEIs should be given a much lower rating in evaluating teachers.
  - MRFA would pursue broadening the basis for evaluating teaching beyond only SEIs
- One of the key things behind this is training and education of the

evaluators, evaluatees and the students. We need to educate the people using the tool.

- We could develop so many different SEI models that it would become too complicated: it is important the faculty here are still a unified group and we should still try to get to a place where the SEI reflects that we are still one faculty. Where do we go next from here?
- We have not analyzed the validity of our system
  - We know that we need to get rid of outliers
  - We know that MRU system has some problems that make it unreliable
  - We should make it so that the SEIs do not count for 90% of teaching effectiveness when teaching roles are so much more than that
    - There is no need to consider whether these things should or should not be done: they are self evident.

## **New Business**

### **1. MRFA Political Action and Advocacy Policy (att.)**

- One of the goals the MRFA Executive set this year is to review our Policy on political activity. Because of the SEI discussion we have only put this on this agenda as an information item and it will be a more major item at the next general meeting on March 1
  - Review of current Political Action and Advocacy Policy
- We think it is necessary to review the policy because
  - Through ACIFA we have had a symposium on PSE in Alberta. This is an attempt to get faculty students and administrators together to collectively approach PSE goals that we can bring to the public and the government
  - Jim Turk, CAUT Executive Director, speaks about how

political forces are aligned against PSE and that we as faculty associations need to take a more active role in arguing for the benefits of PSE

- The Executive is preparing a discussion paper on the organization of the MRFA for the Annual General Meeting in May and one of the things we will recommend is the creation of a political advocacy standing committee.
  - We will discuss this in more depth in March

## **2. MRFA Elections (att.)**

- A list of open positions for the May 2012 election is available online. ([www.mrfa.net/content/elections-2012](http://www.mrfa.net/content/elections-2012))
  - Almost all positions are two year terms
  - There are a lot of positions are available
- The Part-time Member Representative is elected in the third week of September the rest of the Executive Board elections take place at the AGM and the rest of the Committee elections happen two days after the AGM
- Please consider whether you would like to stand for one of these positions or nominate a colleague

Discussion:

There seems to be a lack of closure on the SEI discussion. Is this lack of discussion going to be perceived as tacit approval and where it is going to go next?

- We have yet to determine the way forward
- UTPC may strike a working group but it is premature to say that this is what is going to happen
- If there are any specific recommendations going forward as a result of the work of the FEC, it is the feeling of the Executive and the



FEC that the membership needs to have a role in approving or not approving any recommendations. There will be further discussion on the topic.

**Announcements**

Faculty Tenure Party, February 10 at 4:00pm

Reading Week PD Day: February 22, 2012. Register at [mrfa.net/thebook](http://mrfa.net/thebook)

Spring 2012 PD Retreat, Save the Date! May 15-16

ACIFA Conference, June 3-5, 2012

Winter 2012 MRFA Meeting Schedule

Thursday, March 1, 2012. 3:00-5:00pm. Location: LPR (J301)

Tuesday, April 3, 2012. 2:00-3:50pm. Location: Y224

AGM: May 11, 9:00 - 2:00. Location: Jenkins Theatre (I115)

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:58pm