

MRFA Press Release, March 8, 2013

The Mount Royal Faculty Association is deeply concerned about the cuts to funding for post-secondary education announced in yesterday's budget.

After two years of no increase in operating grants, the government promised a 2% increase. Suddenly that has turned into an almost 7% decrease.

These cuts will inevitably reduce the quality of our post-secondary education and harm the future of Alberta. This budget ensures that Alberta students, who already graduate with an average of \$28,000 in government funded debt, will suffer.

Alberta needs to diversify its economy and a well funded system of post-secondary education is required to do this.

The Mount Royal Faculty Association urges the provincial government to collaborate with post-secondary institutions to create affordable, accessible education so that all Albertans have an opportunity to contribute to the future of the province in productive ways.

The MRFA Executive met Friday afternoon to discuss Mount Royal University's new budget realities. Significant reductions in the university's expenditures, a large part of which is faculty, staff and administrative salaries, have been imposed by the government's drastic and unexpected reduction in our operating grant. We agreed to the following principles that will guide me in my role as the Association's representative on the Budget Advisory Committee as the university works to prepare a balanced budget.

1. The Association will strive to protect the work of its members.
2. The university must protect its core business of teaching and, therefore, the cuts to direct instruction must be proportionately less than the cuts to other areas.
3. The decision making process must be transparent and consultative.
4. The university must not make decisions hastily until the details of the distribution of the cuts have been communicated (now we just know that the total post-secondary operating grant has been reduced by 7.3%) and the mandate letter has been received, as it is expected to contain specific directives.
5. The Association will work with the administration to hold the government accountable for its assertions about duplication in the system and to clearly distinguish between duplication and necessary elements of a university, to request that government provides

evidence of the cost-savings that could be achieved through rationalization of particular programs and services, and to discuss why it is essential that government respects the autonomy of universities. We will strive to collaborate with other post-secondary institutions in this work and to do it as publicly as possible.

Dr. Gerry Cross
President, Mount Royal Faculty Association

Dear Colleagues,

As we all know, significant cuts have been imposed upon Mount Royal University by the 7.3 percent reduction in our operating grant from the provincial government. The MRFA is doing everything it can to represent faculty interests in these difficult times. The press release we issued last Friday generated two media interviews. I distributed and discussed the MRFA Statement of Budget Principles at the Budget Advisory Committee meeting on Monday. Our Advocacy Committee is working with the Executive to plan a concerted response from the MRFA community.

We know there will be significant changes and have been put in the difficult position of having to wait because, according to the budget development schedule released by the President, the decisions on how to address the budget shortfall will not be completed until mid-May. The uncertainty and lack of control over the situation have created stress for many of us. People naturally have begun to speculate, which is not helpful because it feeds rumours and increases stress.

The members of the MRFA Executive understand what some of you are going through and acknowledge that we will all be affected in some way. If you are feeling anxious, please do what you need to do to look after yourself. Everyone will have their own way of dealing with stress; for example, exercise, meditation, yoga, eating well, or making use of the Employee Family Assistance Program, which is accessible from the Human Resources [benefits page](#).

For some, action is the way to reduce stress. If you need to give voice to your concerns, you may want to take the President up on the offer to contact him, or speak with any member of the MRFA Executive. If you have ideas related to the budget that could be shared with your Dean, please do so.

Sincerely,
Gerry Cross