

Notes of the Mount Royal Faculty Association

Meeting date: November 26, 2012

Call to order: A General Meeting of the MRFA was held in Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta on November 26, 2012. The meeting convened at 4:07pm, President Gerry Cross presiding. The meeting did not have quorum.

Members in attendance:

See attached Attendance Sheets

Agenda

Approved

Approval of minutes:

Deferred

Officers' Reports

President

1. Department Visits

The Executive Board has visited most departments. Many common themes have emerged from these meetings and there are, also, some diverse issues across departments. The Executive is compiling a list of items and will report back more fully in the Winter term.

2. Reductions to Instructional Hours

If your department is under pressure to reduce instructional hours and you think this would negatively impact the students and the quality of instruction then you should work on submitting your impact statement to the MRFA.

APPC had an amendment to the list of editorial changes as an item of business in its recent meeting. Editorial changes do not go to APPC or GFC for review or approval whereas substantial curriculum changes are approved by APPC and then go to GFC on the consent agenda. At GFC, curriculum change submissions can be removed from the consent agenda and can be considered and altered before being approved by GFC. The current list of editorial changes includes things such as changing a course's prefix or title, the course number, minor course description changes, prerequisites within the faculty, etc.

APPC was considering adding the reduction of instructional hours due to budget considerations to the list of editorial changes. The chair of the committee informed Gerry of this and he, Scott Murray and Marc Schroeder attended the meeting at which this was discussed. You do not need to be a GFC councillor to speak at GFC subcommittee meetings. At this meeting, Gerry said,

with respect to principles of academic and bi-cameral governance, academic matters which involve budget should be considered by [GFC] prior to going forward to the Board so that the Board may consider an academic perspective. The assertion of the Provost that the Dean has authority to dictate that a reduction in instructional hours due to budget considerations is an editorial change constitutes a direct attack on academic governance and academic debate. The principle is that if instructional hours need to be reduced for budgetary reasons, that recommendation needs to be considered by the Board along with other options that may be presented. The Board needs as much information as possible about all options in order to make an informed decision.

Scott also highlighted the fact that adding reductions to instructional hours to the list of editorial changes

abdicates the responsibility of APPC to consider academic matters and rather constitutes a measure to address a particular problem that exists in this moment in time. This change is a creative use of what the term editorial represents; to suggest that removal of hours in a course is editorial is inappropriate....such decisions should proceed through GFC so that the Board may receive advice with respect to which cuts may prove most valuable. Furthermore, this would allow a student voice and an investigation of cross-impact.

Following this conversation APPC amended their motion to amend the list and removed reductions in instructional hours from the list of possible editorial changes. This amendment passed with only a 6 to 5 majority. If APPC had approved this it would have gone to GFC where the Deans would have jointly spoken in favour of it and it would have likely passed even though GFC is comprised with a majority of faculty members. There is now a delay of one year for allowing reductions to instructional hours because courses have to be held as described in the calendar which has already been finalized and any such reductions would need to go through the full approval process.

3. CAUT Council

Gerry attended CAUT council last week which was why he was not at the Ratification meeting or at the joint training session for TPC Chairs. CAUT Council is the decision making body of CAUT, it passes model clauses and policies for Universities Associations to try to emulate. On Parliament Hill Day at Council Gerry met a conservative MP who may be an ally for PSE and Gerry will be meeting with him again in January.

CAUT's Executive Director is retiring in a year and a half. This is a significant loss as he has been the biggest proponent of PSE and Faculty interests in Canada for many years. He is going to speak to MRU faculty next fall.

4. Concordia University College

Concordia is a private Lutheran University in Edmonton. Because it is a private institution it is not covered under the PSLA and, so, did not have an Association or any form of representation or collective bargaining. Without a Collective Agreement, all faculty made individual contracts with the administration and there was a lot of inequities and discrepancies between the contracts. In April, the faculty were certified as a union, but since then the administration has presented many reasons for not bargaining with the union (e.g. their negotiator was away, and the VPA resigned). The administration is, also, claiming that many core articles are not open for negotiations; such as, academic freedom, permanency, promotion, or evaluation. Moreover, the administration is excluding librarians from the faculty's bargaining unit.

The MRFA has written a letter in support of the faculty at Concordia.

Unfinished Business

MRFA Position on Tenure Restrictions for Service

This item has carried over from our last general meeting as we lost quorum. We need to have some discussion on this as it is an important issue that needs to be well considered. The Executive Board did not take a position on this as it is the membership's right to make this decision.

The matter was brought forward as a concern after the Vice President Academic selection committee was revised from having 5 tenured faculty to having four tenured faculty and one part-time faculty member. The concern is that if part-time members can be involved in the hiring of senior administrators then tenure

track faculty should be able to be involved as well. When this concern came to the MRFA, the Executive board decided that we needed to look at the tenure requirements we have in our documents before making recommendations to the administration to remove tenure requirements in their documents.

Discussion:

- There is value in having tenured members on hiring committees as they are experiences in the institution and know the values of the institution. There are also very skilled new members who are tenure track and they could bring their skills to these committees as well. There are positive and negative sides to both approached, allowing or not allowing tenure track members on these committees, and we need to fully consider this matter before making any decisions.
- Hiring is one of the most important things that faculty do at the University. Hiring is particularly important in this time of transition.
- Over the past few years we have hired around 100 new faculty: most of whom were hired with research agendas and/or expectations and they, likely, have different views of the institution than the long standing tenured members have. This difference was particularly evident when we revised the profile of the VPA at the last General Meeting.
- Part of the problem is that there is inconsistency in interpreting and allying the Collective Agreement. Some departments have tenure track members on these committees where others do not allow it because of what the Agreement states.
- New Faculty are aware of the wider institutional culture, and, though they are not tenured yet, they do have a permanent interest in helping shape the future of the University.
- Another consideration is the tenured track members' vulnerability in being involved in making such decisions.
 - Tenure track faculty members do not agree with this. Their highest level of vulnerability is in their departments: they are not vulnerable in relation to senior administrators (chairs would now who did not pick them whereas an unsuccessful VPA would not be aware of this).
- Could we consider differentiating among the tenure track members; for instance, could we allow a tenure track member who has been at MRU for three years to be involved like this?
 - This has not been considered but it will be: it is a very good idea.
- People keep arguing that familiarity with the institution is important but this could be flipped. The opposite is also true. Mount Royal was a college and its culture was based on its status as a college. Being now a University it could be beneficial having tenure track members more involved in decision making as they are closer to the University culture than others. Recent University Graduates are more aware of a University's culture, policies, and practices than faculty are who have taught in a college for a long time. Tenure track faculty could be better able to contribute to MRU's culture.
- Tenure track members are already included in defining their departments' hiring criteria/qualifications. In some departments, and it should be like this in most, the hiring committee is simply the agent of the department following the guidance of the department. This being the case, tenure track faculty do not need to be on hiring committee's as they have their input when the department develops the qualifications.
- This matter warrants a lot of consideration. In thinking of this we need to also consider what it means to be tenured and do we care? Are there additional; rights and obligations associated with tenure? One concern that has not yet been mentioned is that tenure track faculty are probationary employees and it is not common practice anywhere to have probationary employees making hiring/permanent decisions.

- A related consideration is that we consider tenure track members to be vulnerable: they should not be. Their vulnerability indicates the need to more broadly define our academic freedom. In doing this we should look at CAUT's definition of Academic Freedom
- If there is going to be a question related to this in the negotiating survey then there needs to be a communication sent out to faculty beforehand listing the concerns and the pros and cons of both approaches.
- It is becoming increasingly uncomfortable having so many positional references to different groups of faculty such as tenured and tenure track. There were researchers here before we became a University and there are TS faculty among our recent hires. Not all members of each group fit the mould that people have been tending to assign. We do not need to present things as dichotomies: it is not Us and Them and we need to stop addressing things like this.

Moving Forward

- Tenure requirements for MRFA Committee and Executive Board service referred to the MRFA Organization Committee
- Tenure requirements for hiring committees referred to the Negotiations Support Committee

New Business

1. MRFA Executive Board Goals 2012-2013

Internal MRFA

- Introduce new full-time faculty to the MRFA
 - This is going well.
 - The Members at Large have initiated a new faculty outreach program where they meet with all new full time faculty for a half hour to introduce them to the Association. These meetings have proven to be very useful in the past when the Professional Standards and Governance Committee did this. This is a very valuable program.
- New Faculty Relocation assistance. This came up in department meetings and the MRFA is going to look into the resources that are provided already and see if we can provide any further assistance.
- We are continuing to work with department communicators and provide them with more information and resources to enhance our communications with the membership
- Continue to develop strategies specifically to communicate with part-time faculty members
 - We are still holding the part time grub and Gabs but they are now called Food for Thought: Sessional Dialogues with the MRFA.
- Examine the reporting relationship of, and develop charters for, all standing committees.
 - The Executive made a lot of progress on this last year but it is not quite done yet so it is a carry over item we will complete this year.
- Consider recommendations of the Association Reorganization Subcommittee
 - Ongoing work in defining the role of the President and VP Policy. Gerry and Scott meet every week to consider the workload and division of responsibilities.
 - We will be reviewing the tenure requirements again in light of recent discussions regarding tenure restrictions for hiring committees. We did this last year but are looking at it again.
 - The relationship between the Executive and the Negotiating Committee needs to be revised. This was made very apparent during the process of mediation in which the Executive was not informed and should be.

- We need to, also, develop a plan for our membership in external organizations.
- Prepare bylaw changes for a Negotiations Support Committee.
 - Last year we had an ad hoc workload committee supporting the work of negotiations and it was very helpful. This committee would do research on behalf of the Negotiating Committee to help inform the members of practices at other institutions and faculty interests at MRU: this will help the Negotiating Committee develop their positions.
- Strengthen the relationship between the Association and department Chairs.
 - At MacEwan, the Association created a Chairs Advisory Council which provides advice to the Association Executive on matter affecting Chairs. There are 9 chairs on this committee and a representative from the Executive Board.
 - Chairs have a difficult role as they are members of the association but they do carry out administrative roles.
 - We need to improve our support and representation of Chairs in the grievance process. It sometimes seems that Chairs' decisions are being questioned in the grievance process and that the Association is supporting the greivor in the case. Both parties are members of the Association and both need to be supported and represented by the Association. Moreover, a grievance is not a complaint against an individual or a Chair it is a means by which we can resolve a difference in interpretation or application of the Collective Agreement.
- Ascertain whether full-time laboratory instructors are being represented adequately.
 - We do not know if we are representing these members adequately and want to ensure that we are meeting their needs.

Collective Agreement

- Continue efforts to define all types of workload in the Agreement including, but not limited to, supervision of student research, the definition of SICH as it relates to online instruction, and service, especially in small departments. Request that the ad hoc Workload Committee survey the membership in support of these efforts.
- Build support for an article on academic freedom in the Collective Agreement.
 - This is still an issue and we need to build some support for this before it goes back to negotiations.
- Work with the University Tenure and Promotion Committee in ensuring that tenure and promotion recommendations and decisions are in compliance with Appendix A (Principles of a Tenure, Promotion and Rank System at Mount Royal) of the Collective Agreement.
 - Both teams wanted these principles in the agreement so that we could at a later point review how well the process has worked and determine if we are still in line with the principles we established at the outset.
- Develop written grievance procedures.
 - This is very important and needs to be done.
- Research spousal hiring policies at other universities.
 - This came up in department meetings and we will be looking into this.

University Governance

- Continue to seek improvements in class scheduling and instructor assignment through the Academic Scheduling Committee.
 - It is likely that we are not using many components of the system or using

some incorrectly. In the Winter, we will be having an engineer review our system in an implementation audit to help us improve the system.

- Support the ongoing work of the Academic Liaison Committee in improving the efficacy of GFC in having meaningful input into the development of academic policy.
 - Though Jim Turk from CAUT said that getting bicameral governance to actually work as it should is impossible we are still going to keep trying.
- Attempt to establish a formal mechanism whereby the MRFA is consulted at an early stage in the development of university policies which do not go to GFC for approval.
- Support the work of the ad hoc Child Care Task Team in conducting a child care survey as approved at the October General Meeting.
 - The survey developed by this committee will go to all faculty staff and hopefully students.
- Invite administrators who are new to Mount Royal University to meet with the MRFA President and with the Executive Board.
 - This is ongoing and it is very useful. The President and the Vice President Academic attend an Executive Board meeting each term.
- Support departments in their efforts to maintain instructional hours.
 - This is ongoing. We have received many impact statements and are hoping to get some more.

Internal/External Relationships

- Maintain an effective working relationship with the MRSA and the SAMRU.
- Develop a relationship with the University of Calgary Faculty Association.
- Offer Associate Membership to all instructional staff at Mount Royal University who are not members of the MRFA.
 - This refers to cont-ed instructors teaching upgrading courses. They used to be full members of the association.

2. Input for Budget Advisory Sub-Committees

BAC has three subcommittees for the generation of ideas for short term cost savings, long term cost savings and increasing revenue. These committees are chaired by Gerry Cross, Bruce Ravelli and Valerie Kinnear, respectively. The ideas generated by BAC will go to the President's Executive committee and they will compile a long list of things we may move forward on. There is still time at this point to submit additional ideas.

All members should attend the December 4 Academic Affairs Budget Town Hall. One of the big problems is that it is much easier to make cuts out of teaching than it is to cut administration. We need to ensure that there are, at least, equal cuts coming from both areas. We need to be resolute in our determination to maintain what we think is important and to do this we need to come up with alternatives.

Discussion:

- Horizontal-across the board- cuts are often made and departments can suffer a lot for such cuts. It would be better to make vertical cuts: cut one thing completely rather than cutting everything.
 - They are considering this.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:28pm.

There was no quorum for this meeting. There will be no approval of the minutes: only notes retained.