

President's Report 2013 Annual General Meeting

The 2012-2013 MRFA Executive

It has been a great pleasure to work with this year's Executive, and I would like to thank all members for their outstanding contributions. Each one has brought unwavering dedication to the Executive's work, much of which is unseen by the membership as a whole.

We are losing an unusual number of members from this year's Executive, for a variety of personal reasons. On behalf of the membership, I would like to thank the outgoing members for their service:

- David Sabiston, who as Vice-President, Negotiations skillfully and very successfully led us through a difficult round of negotiations;
- Kit Dobson, who has made enormous contributions in his two years as Communications Officer, chair of the Communications Committee and member of the Faculty Centre Management Committee, and this year as a member of our new Advocacy Committee;
- Pat Kostorous, our Academic Liaison Officer, who worked tirelessly on establishing Faculty caucuses of GFC councillors and was ever sensitive to how issues we dealt with affected members personally;
- Marnie Kramer-Kile, a Member at Large who brought valuable perspectives from nursing and other professional disciplines;
- Val Kinnear, who left to accept the position of Associate Dean in the Bissett School of Business after serving as Treasurer for the fall semester.

Although I have been the spokesperson for the MRFA during the difficult times of the past couple of months, our positions were determined collectively. Written communications went out under my name, but many others contributed, especially Vice-President, Policy, Scott Murray.

Liaison between the Association and senior administration of the University

I met with the President once a month during the year. Scott Murray and I met every two weeks with the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and the Associate Vice-President, Academic to discuss member and MRFA issues. As well, the entire Executive met with these senior administrators once a semester. Topics discussed this semester included budget matters, elimination or reduction of programs, overlaps between the Collective Agreement and academic policies, review of the tenure and promotion processes and criteria, and the MRFA position on applied research and economic diversification, which was developed by the Advocacy Committee as a [press release](#).

The Executive also met with the new Dean of Arts during the fall semester and will meet with the Dean and Associate Dean of the Bissett School of Business at the end of this month.

My relationship with several deans seems to have improved since the previous Provost left.

Grievance Report

We report on grievances to inform members about the number and type that have been initiated during the year and because, in some cases, the knowledge could prevent similar grievances in the future. There were fewer grievances than normal this year, but many member issues were resolved without resorting to the grievance procedure.

Scott Murray and I have met weekly to discuss member issues, as well as other matters such as university policies. These meetings have been very valuable, and they have improved the representation that the Association provides for its members.

Type of Grievance	Outcome	Lessons/Action Required
<p>Concerns regarding sessional reappointment criteria and the definition of accumulated experience, as well as their application in allocation of sessional workload pursuant to Article 4.9 of the Collective Agreement.</p>	<p>Resolved at Step 1 by the department revising the reappointment criteria and the definition of accumulated experience in accordance with the review process required annually by Articles 4.8.2 through 4.8.4. The MRFA was consulted during this review.</p>	<p>A higher level of educational qualifications required by a university can create tension between qualifications and accumulated experience, and this is exacerbated by a shortage of work. The Collective Agreement does not establish an absolute seniority right because Article 4.9.1.2 states, “When all other qualifications are deemed equal, accumulated experience at Mount Royal that is both satisfactory and relevant shall be the determining factor in making a decision”. One can argue that, while qualifications may be equivalent, they can never be exactly equal. But, on the other hand, too great a degree of granularity in differentiating among qualifications introduces its own set of problems. Different workload allocation practices, such as distributing workload equitably amongst all eligible applicants, or filling the workload requests of senior applicants first, are possible. Nevertheless, the method used <u>must</u> be included in the reappointment criteria so that it can be properly considered in the recommendation and approval process outlined in the Collective Agreement. Note: the Dean is responsible for approving the reappointment criteria and the definition of accumulated experience (Article 4.8.4), and the allocation of sessional workload (Article 4.9.4).</p>

<p>Allegations that the Board had failed to maintain a safe workplace, as agreed to in Article 22.2, by not dealing appropriately with incidents of personal harassment.</p>	<p>We were unable to reach a settlement or partial settlement at Step 2. The MRFA Executive Board decided at Step 4, on the advice of our legal counsel, not to advance the grievance to arbitration. However, certain remedies were achieved outside of the grievance process.</p>	<p>The university disputed that personal harassment is grievable under Article 22.2, maintaining that this article applies only to the physical work environment. The Association’s legal counsel asserted that the provincial health and safety legislation is generic enough to justify regulations regarding physiological health and that there are arbitration awards supporting personal harassment being grievable. Had we taken this grievance to arbitration, the university would have argued that the matter was not grievable under our Collective Agreement, and so the Arbitration Board would have had to first rule on whether it was. Our legal counsel thought we likely would have won that, so the grievance could have been heard, but that we likely would have lost the grievance itself. Therefore, we resolved to attempt to strengthen the Collective Agreement by including mental duress and harassment under Article 22.2 in the next round of negotiations.</p>
<p>Redundancy</p>	<p>Two grievances requesting that redundancies be delayed for one year are currently at Step 1.</p>	<p>There is new language about redundancies in the Collective Agreement, and it is only through grievances that we will determine precisely what it means. Examples are: Article 4.16.3, which states that redundancies will not be considered if more than 20% of the annual SICH in an academic unit is taught by sessional faculty unless such employees possess expertise, skills and/or abilities required for the successful delivery of an academic program or service; and Article 4.14.3, which states that, “Before commencing termination of an employee declared redundant, the Board shall make reasonable efforts to redeploy the employee to a faculty position elsewhere in the University for which he/she is qualified.”</p>

MRFA Business

I have reported on the business of the Association in the MRFA Monthly Reports up until January. The remainder of my report summarizes the major MRFA activities from February through April.

The MRFA's Response to the Provincial Budget

With inflationary increases in costs factored in, the unexpected 7.3% reduction in the operating grant from the government was in effect a reduction in funding of almost 12%, or about 5% of the university's budget. Coming on top of the cuts forced upon the university during the past three years, when the funding promised for the third and fourth years of the degrees was not provided and the operating grant was increased by a total of only 2%, the current cut is resulting in a downsizing of the university's operations; some things will no longer be done and others will not be done as well.

The MRFA issued a [budget press release](#) the morning of March 8. This press release and the communications blackout imposed by the university generated numerous requests from the media for interviews and information during the following weeks.

The Executive met later that day and developed the MRFA budget development principles. Immediately after that meeting, I met with the Executive of the Students' Association to identify common ground in dealing with the budget challenges, and to discuss action that we might take to protest the province's funding cuts. I proposed a joint student-faculty protest, ideally in conjunction with students and faculty from other post-secondary institutions in Calgary, and suggested that we also consider a public debate. Unfortunately, the provincial student organizations had been given privileged access to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education, and our students' Executive believed that their interests would be better served through this form of lobbying.

At least partly because of the SAMRU's reluctance to take action, a small group of students formed the Student Empowerment Committee. Mentored by several members of the MRFA Advocacy Committee, this group organized an extremely successful march on Premier Redford's constituency office. As a result of press releases issued by the [MRFA](#) and the students, the march received extensive media coverage. It is considered by CAUT to be a model of what faculty and students can do when they organize collective action.

The [open letter](#) to the citizens of Alberta, requested at the April General Meeting, was finally sent to the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal on May 2, with a request that it be published as an op-ed article. The core message is countering the government's claims that post-secondary institutions can absorb these cuts without harming students. I have since resubmitted it to the Herald, but still have not received a response. The next steps will be to submit the letter to other Alberta newspapers and to prepare an abridged version (250 words instead of 600) to send to the Herald as a letter to the editor.

The [MRFA's response](#) to the original mandate letter was discussed by the Board of Governors and praised by President Docherty, who said it was helpful in convincing the Minister to convert the generic, odious mandate letters into memoranda of understanding that will be agreed to in September.

Programs in which first year admission has been suspended

At a Special Meeting of the General Faculties Council held from 3:00 to 5:45 PM on May 8, a motion to recommend to the Board of Governors that the following programs be suspended:

- University Transfer – Engineering
- Theatre Arts Diploma
- Music Performance Diploma
- Disability Studies Diploma
- Forensic Studies Certificate
- Journalism Certificate
- Advanced Studies in Perinatal and Neonatal Nursing Certificate
- Studies in Aging Certificate

was defeated by a vote of 67 to 3, with no abstentions. It was GFC's proudest moment.

GFC's recommendation is not binding on the Board because, in bicameral governance, the Board of Governors is responsible for budget decisions and the GFC is responsible for academic decisions. GFC's role is to provide the Board with non-budget related advice on these program suspensions, but the Board has an obligation to approve a balanced budget.

The MRFA will recognize the invaluable contributions of the suspended programs to their graduates, to the economy and to our society in conjunction with Attitude Adjustment on Friday, May 17.

Tenure and Promotion Workshops

The Collective Agreement requires that members and alternates serving in their first year on a department Tenure and Promotion Committee or the University Tenure and Promotion Committee attend a tenure and promotion workshop conducted jointly by the MRFA and the University. Because development of Tenure System II was a multi-year process, culminating in approval of the detailed Faculty criteria documents, the workshops have changed every year and so continuing committee members may wish to review the [slides](#) used for the workshops held this February and March.

Members of the TPC must first understand the applicable criteria, types of evidence, and standards and then assess performance based on the evidence in the dossier. Article 10.2.2 of the Collective Agreement states that "Tenure recommendations and decisions shall be based solely on the general criteria in this Article, the Addendum on Teaching, Scholarship and Service, and the detailed criteria recommended by General Faculties Council and approved by the Board of Governors in effect on the date of commencement of appointment, and shall be made in accordance with the Process and Timelines for Tenure System II in effect on the date of commencement of appointment."

The detailed Faculty tenure and promotion criteria documents containing evidence and standards were approved for use in 2011-2012. They have been referred to in the Collective Agreement since 2009-2010, and so are in effect for faculty appointed that year. However, they cannot be

applied retroactively to faculty who started in 2009-2010 or 2010-2011. Tenure and Promotion Committees must be especially careful if their Faculty's document contains quantitative standards.

A department can interpret its Faculty's evidence and standards, but it cannot add new criteria, increase standards, or impose arbitrary conditions. If a department wished to add discipline-specific evidence and standards, they would have to be approved by the Faculty Council and GFC and be added to the Faculty criteria document. They would then be part of the criteria listed in Article 10.2.2, and could be used in tenure recommendations and decisions for faculty appointed after the approval date. In the absence of quantitative standards, there may be a diversity of opinion expressed during the peer review and, if so, this should be captured in the evaluation report produced by the committee.

I also meet with tenurable faculty. In the past, these sessions were for first-year faculty only, but this year they were held under the auspices of the New Faculty Support Program and tenurable faculty of all years were invited. At two well-attended sessions (many were in their fourth year), I reviewed an abridged version of the Tenure and Promotion Committee workshop slides, answered questions, and discussed concerns that members have about the tenure process. Some are feeling considerable stress.

Child Care Needs Survey

As a result of a motion passed at the October General Meeting, an ad hoc MFRA committee was established to develop and administer a revised survey on the needs for child care at Mount Royal University. The committee worked hard at developing a much-improved survey, which it intended to administer shortly after Reading Break. But modified versions for staff and for students still had to be developed from the faculty survey. Then the government dropped its budget bombshell and the group decided it would be better to wait until the fall.

Presidents' Discussion Series

Last summer, Carlton University released the \$15 million donor agreement for a graduate program in political management established in 2010, after fighting access requests by the Canadian Press for almost a year. The agreement revealed that the steering committee had a role in setting the program's budget, in faculty hiring, and in curriculum approvals. The steering committee consisted of two members appointed by the university, two appointed by the donor, and a fifth member, who would be chair, appointed by those four. Preston Manning had been selected as the chair.

Because there have been several agreements recently that did not adequately protect the academic integrity of the university, the fifth event in the Presidents' Discussion Series was an initial discussion about the principles that should govern large private donations and major revenue generation initiatives. President David Docherty and Hope Henderson, Vice-President, University Advancement, attended to discuss faculty concerns. The [notes](#) are posted on the MRFA web site.

The final event in the series was cancelled because of the turmoil caused by the budget cuts.

CAUT Spring Council

I attended CAUT Council from April 25 to 28 as an ACIFA alternate. CAUT's [Get Science Right](#) campaign against the Harper government's continued attack on science and on evidence-based policy making was announced. The [CAUT Analysis of Federal Budget 2013](#) is a related item.

Executive Director, Jim Turk, is retiring at the end of June, 2014. Jim is one of the most articulate spokespersons for post-secondary education in the country. We have invited Jim to speak to us in September. This is tentatively scheduled for a Special Meeting at 3 PM on Tuesday, September 10, at which we also expect to elect a Vice-President, Negotiations.

Scheduling Policy Grievance

The class scheduling policy grievance was filed on December 23, 2010, and it is still outstanding. But I think progress towards achieving better scheduling outcomes is finally being made. The [notes](#) of a meeting that I attended on March 1 are posted with the AGM materials. Subsequently, there was a second meeting to discuss SIS Transfer, which is software that transfers data between the class scheduling system and Banner, and which offers substantial efficiencies over the process currently being used.

Respectfully submitted,
Gerry Cross, MRFA President