

Report of the Advocacy Committee 2012-13

The newly formed Advocacy Committee of the MRFA has met on at least on a monthly basis throughout the year in order to implement the Political Activity Policy of the Association. As this is a newly formed committee, we started the year by discussing our mandate and compiling a list of issues pertinent to the MRU community that require collaboration and meaningful attention. We feel it is important to work in consensus and equity. Thus, each of the committee members took turns chairing the committee, compiling meeting agenda and completing the meeting minutes.

Listed below are some of our key accomplishments for this year:

- 1) The committee hosted a visit by Dr. Michael Ma of Kwantlen Polytechnic University on November 15, 2012. Ma came to MRU to speak about racism in Canadian universities and the “too Asian” controversy in *MacLean’s* magazine. His public talk was attended by 80 people in room E133, a full house. He also gave a talk to an Introduction to Women's Studies class run by Dr. Maki Motapanyane. Overall, he spoke to about 120 students and faculty.
- 2) In early January 2013, Dr. Michael Truscello attended a conference on "austerity and the academy" hosted by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) in Toronto. His report from the conference was circulated to all faculty at MRU.
- 3) Members of the Committee hired and supervised a senior student to conduct research on student debt loads in Canada in order to consider tactics that the MRFA might adopt in order to support MRU students. This research was submitted as a 20-page report.
- 4) Members of the Committee have researched ethical purchasing policies in Canadian universities with the goal of proposing such a policy to the MRFA. At the time of writing this, the report is in progress but should be completed before April 30.
- 5) Members of the Committee have researched corporate sponsorship in Canadian universities with the goal of proposing such a policy to the MRFA. At the time of writing this, the report is in progress but should be completed before June 15th.
- 6) Members of the Committee compiled a list of resources on issues pertinent to post secondary education (such as effects of budget cuts on postsecondary education). The Committee feels it is important that these resources (books, journals and reports) are housed at the Faculty Centre for reference, education and as a resource for MRU faculty. These resources have been purchased by MRFA and will be available at the MRU Faculty Centre.
- 7) Since the provincial budget came down, members of the committee have helped the MRFA to draft press releases, coordinate political efforts, and to help mobilize students for the province-wide day of action to support post-secondary education on April 10th.

- 8) On March 16, 2013, Dr. Michael Truscello and Dr. Ada Jaarsma, along with two MRU students, attended a rally in Edmonton sponsored by CAPSE, the Coalition for Action on Post-Secondary Education. The rally was attended by about 500 students and faculty, and Dr. Truscello's address to the crowd, acknowledging that he was from Calgary, drew much applause.
- 9) The advocacy committee worked closely with the Student Empowerment Community to organize the April 10, 2013 protest from MRU to Alison Redford's office. This march attracted anywhere from 300 to 700 students and faculty, depending on different media estimates. It is worth noting that our protest on April 10 was larger than the simultaneous protest by CAPSE in Edmonton. Before our protest began, MRFA President Gerry Cross addressed the crowd, and student Wolfgang Knox offered chants of inspiration. The crowd marched from the East Gate of MRU to Redford's office, where Dr. Roberta Lexier and student Desdemona Lunz delivered short speeches. Petitions with hundreds of names were delivered to Redford's staff. Most importantly, this event received favorable coverage from CBC (both radio and TV), CTV, Global News, Calgary Metro, Calgary Herald, Calgary Journal, and Calgary Sun. We have attached some links to these news stories in Appendix A.

The protest was initiated by the Student Empowerment Committee (<https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/The-Student-Empowerment-Committee/223755027763119?fref=ts>), and most of the organizing was handled by the students. Members of the Advocacy Committee attended planning meetings and offered advice to the students involved, but we saw our role in this initiative as primarily one of support.

- 10) Committee members continue to work with the Student Empowerment Community to support and participate in protests against the provincial budget cuts.
- 11) We met in April to finalize this year's activities and plan out our goals for the next year. The committee, working within principles of consensus and equity, functioned very efficiently.

It is the desire of the Advocacy Committee to continue to promote solidarity with MRU students and staff. Moreover, we are committed to working with the MRU faculty association to respond to issues of social justice both within and outside of Mount Royal University.

MRU Advocacy Committee

Appendix A

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/story/2013/04/10/calgary-mount-royal-university-education-cuts.html>

<http://calgary.ctvnews.ca/mru-students-rally-at-redford-s-office-1.1231580>

<http://globalnews.ca/video/471165/mru-students-protest-education-cuts>

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/Frustrated+students+faculty+take+rally+Redford+office/8223109/story.html>

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/04/10/mount-royal-university-alison-redford-protest_n_3056158.html