

#BeAnAdvocate

Advocacy Week February 26 - March 2, 2018

Faculty are encouraged to participate in events being held during Advocacy week. For more information visit mrfa.net

Film Screening: Migrant Dreams

Mornings 8-10am RLLC, Ideas Visualization Lounge

Remember | Resist | Redraw: A Radical History Poster

Project Monday, February 26 + Friday, March 2 from 10am-2pm on Main Street

MRU Board of Governors Meeting

Monday, February 26 at 3pm EC2010

Film Screening and a conversation with the filmmakers:

'Junct: The Trashing of Higher Ed. in America

February 27 from 2-4pm RLLC, Ideas Visualization Lounge

The Taxing Work of Debating the Provincial Budget

Friday, March 2 at 8:30am Faculty Centre

MRFA Regular Meeting

Friday, March 2 from 10am-12pm Lincoln Park Room

MRFA Social Event: Transitioning to a Union Culture

Friday, March 2 at 4pm—Faculty Centre (faculty only, please)

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Why Has MRU's Spending on Instruction Faltered? — President's Report

The year 2009 was a heady time for Mount Royal. Long years of dedicated and collaborative work (truly so) by faculty, staff and administrators had led us to the crux of institutional transformation. A new model of shared academic governance had just been instituted; baccalaureate degree programs were actively being developed, approved and rolled out to high demand; the General Education component of our degrees had recently been designed and was being integrated as those programs emerged; mutual interests had been leveraged at the bargaining table to achieve extensive transformation of our Collective Agreement, including the formal introduction of research and scholarship into faculty workloads, as well as the introduction of a university-style tenure, rank and promotion system; Mount Royal was admitted into the AUCC (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, now Universities Canada); our name was changed; and much more. High quality, person-

alized learning was the focus (as it had been for years) and, despite some inevitable skepticism about university branding exercises, faculty seemed to earnestly embrace the "Face to Face" brand concept of the day (later to be supplanted by "You Belong Here"), maybe because it was seen to accurately reflect our shared vision and our real, frontline practice. None of this is to suggest that there weren't challenges, anxieties, disagreements, and stumbles (there most certainly were). But, overall, I view it as a testament to what can be achieved when all stakeholders work together to build broad consensus about the direction to take, and then to cooperate on moving forward. It also serves as a counterexample to the sometimes perceived necessity of a "command and control" management style for ushering in change at a post-secondary institution. The MRFA was a key player in this transformation, and it too evolved as an organization.

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Advocacy Against Adjunctification — Guy Obrecht, Contract Member Rep

The MRFA has advocacy built into its core goal that "advocates for the highest standards of professionalism in higher education...". As the contract member representative, my role is in part to advocate for reducing precarity

and finding equity amongst faculty. The precarious nature of contract work does not help to advance our collective mission. On the contrary, adjunctification essentially deprofessionalizes higher education.

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Why Has MRU's Spending on Instruction Faltered? (Continued)



Marc Schroeder,
MRFA President

Since then, we have experienced near-total turnover in administration and on the Board of Governors (sometimes multiple times per position), even if our hallways are still full of faculty who worked to make the transformation a reality and remember what we were all trying to achieve. What has been our University's level of financial support for our core academic function since 2009? Unfortunately, the data that is made available publicly is expressed only in very high-level terms. It can be frustratingly difficult to get a sense of the real story from this material alone. However, it is possible to see some general trends, in broad strokes, over time. First, one must understand how revenues and expenses are categorized and regulated.

Financial reporting to the government requires inclusion of a breakdown of expenses by function. The "instruction" function represents those activities that constitute the core function of a post-secondary institution: all activities that are part of an institution's credit programming and those "non-sponsored" research and scholarly activities undertaken by faculty and within academic departments which contribute jointly to instruction and research functions. The salaries of most faculty, and the vast majority of academic department budgets, are accounted for within the instruction function. Mount Royal's reporting of the instruction function also folds in spending on non-credit instruction (although it would be much more meaningful if credit and credit-free revenues and expenses were more clearly distinguished in reports). The instruction function does *not* include spending on "academic support" (that which directly supports the core instruction function, such as the spending on libraries or Dean/department-level administration) or on "student services". Further, the instruction function is distinct from "institutional support" (executive-level management overhead, institution-wide administrative functions outside of academic departments/faculties such as the Marketing and Communications department or the Human Resources department, and computing, networking and information technology functions), "facility operations and maintenance", "ancillary services" (e.g. parking, the bookstore, business and retail services, etc.) and "sponsored research" (i.e. research and scholarship activities funded through contracts with, or grants from, external organizations).

According to Mount Royal's audited annual financial statements, in 2009 spending on instruction constituted half of our institution's expenses by function (arguably, already somewhat low for a Baccalaureate and Applied Studies college). As of the most recent 2017 statement, this has fallen to two-fifths of MRU's spending. This relative decline in spending on instruction has been despite overall growth of 29.4% in MRU's expenses (linked very closely to growth in revenues) – an average growth in spending of 3.3% per year. By function, as reported on the audited financial statements, spending in key areas has grown over 2009 numbers, through 2017, as follows:

- . Instruction and non-sponsored research: 5.3% (an average growth in spending of 0.7% per year)
- . Academic and student support: 81.3%
- . Facility operations and maintenance: 113.3%
- . Institutional support: 29.2%

It is interesting to note that Alberta's annual CPI experienced an average growth of slightly above 1.5% per year over the same period, according to Statistics Canada. In other words, spending on instruction and non-sponsored research has not just stagnated since 2009 (and fallen significantly as a relative component of Mount Royal's overall spending), but has lagged inflation and has therefore *declined in absolute terms when measured in 2009 dollars*. All of this has occurred in the context of strong demand for our programs and rising credit student enrolments at MRU. We are told repeatedly that growth in "labour costs" (an interesting choice of phrase given that the number being cited by administration is really the total cost of salaries and benefits including those of management/exempt employees) has led to an unsustainable budgetary situation, especially given that our two main sources of revenue, the operating grant and tuition fees, are outside of institutional control (the former is within the control of the Alberta government through its provincial budget, and the latter is regulated by law such that Mount Royal's Board of Governors cannot usually hike tuition rates, annually and in aggregate for the institution, faster than the rise in the Alberta CPI, although this doesn't mean the institution cannot increase tuition and fee revenue through increased enrolments of course). Indeed, although precise annual numbers for the operating grant and credit tuition/fee revenue are hard to distill

from the publicly available audited financial statements, the available data suggest that institutional revenues from these sources have, on average, outpaced inflation over this period (notwithstanding the significant hit taken by MRU in 2010 when it was denied the promised increase to its operating grant to fund the upper years of new degrees midway through their rollout). This appears to be true even despite collapse in credit-free tuition/fee revenue during Alberta's recent economic downturn.

Those who attended the MRU budget town hall on February 14 will know that the University has now set its sights on our "high expense to FLE [student enrolment] ratio". It is clear that administration aims to lower it by increasing enrolments while containing instructional costs (if there was any doubt, the recently-released 2016-2017 Annual Report to the government is entitled *Positioned for Growth* and proclaims MRU's "untapped instructional capacity"). But, if the above expense function trends suggest anything, it is that spending on our core instructional function has been a model of restraint, whereas spending on other functions has inflated dramatically since 2009. In other words, faculty salaries and spending on instruction and non-sponsored research are not out of control. And yet, it is class size and/or reliance on sessional contracts that are going to be pushed higher in order to continue to be able to run annual surpluses that will enable funding of the University's "strategic initiatives". On top of this, academic departments and faculties are being tasked with finding between 2.5% and 3.5% to cut as part of the current phase of this year's budgeting cycle ("don't worry", we are assured, "it's just an exercise" at this point). Attentive colleagues will note that, when the 2017-2018 budget was approved last year, it came with assurances that additional funds had been earmarked for 20 tenure-track positions (filling 13 longstanding vacancies plus creating 7 new positions), in order to help address our contract to full-time imbalance. Unfortunately, commitment of resources to more full-time positions did not actually happen. Based on the membership data shared with the MRFA by the University, we know that in Winter 2018 there are in fact fewer tenured/tenurable faculty employed by the University than twelve months ago. There is no starker reminder of the University's failure to prioritize the instruction function than our extreme overreliance on contract appointments for carrying out the clear majority of credit instruction. This is bad for Mount Royal

for a vast number of reasons, which have been detailed in previous President's reports – beyond the very real human impact it undermines virtually all of the University's stated goals. Literally every external program review has flagged the insufficient number of full-time faculty as a threat to the quality of our degrees.

There are some who will argue that Mount Royal's audited financial statements present only the most coarse-grained view of institutional income and spending, and that the real stories of our resource allocations cannot be gleaned from them. It is certainly true that there are subtleties and complexities not revealed in these documents. In fact, I agree that the University must do a much better job of presenting and explaining its planned and actual resource allocations to the University community and to the broader public we ultimately serve. This requires much more complete and meaningful sharing of budgets and financial reports than is the case now. Still, the available historical data presents a compelling enough picture of the University's relative priorities over this decade, and I don't believe that more detailed reports would actually contradict the general trends documented in the audited annual financial statements. In the end, Mount Royal has evolved into a *medium-sized* Canadian university (the third-largest in the province by many measures) that is attempting to fulfill its core academic mission using the full-time faculty complement of a *small* Canadian university. This is a fundamental challenge that General Faculties Council, the Board of Governors, and our senior administration must take far more seriously. There is no doubt that our provincial government bears the responsibility of providing post-secondary institutions with stable, predictable and sufficient operating funding in order to ensure high-quality, accessible and affordable advanced education – especially in light of tuition regulation – and that this has not always been the case in provincial budgets since 2009. There remains the erosive damage from past neglect and instability to undo. However, institutions also make choices with the resources they have. Can we honestly say that we are sure Mount Royal is making the best ones?

Bargaining Update, February 26, 2018—Lee Easton, MRFA VP Negotiations



Lee Easton
VP Negotiations

Bargaining updates are only provided in the print edition of the News to Use. Please refer to your print edition or email office@mrfa.net for a copy.

Detailed Negotiations Updates will be provided at MRFA Regular Meetings (In Camera Sessions).

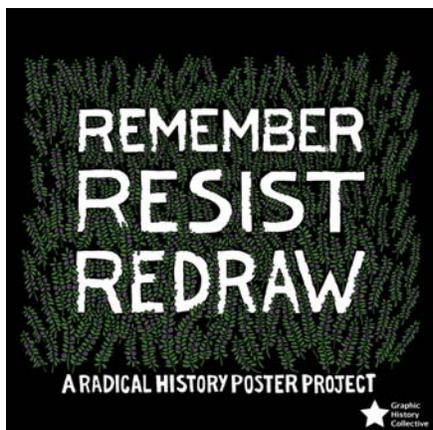
Friday, March 2, 10:00 – 12:00, Lincoln Park Room

Friday, April 6, 9:00 – 11:00, Lincoln Park Room

Friday, May 11, 9:30 – 1:00, MRFA AGM, Lincoln Park Room

The Mount Royal Faculty Association provides a collective voice for faculty, promotes tenure and academic freedom, advocates for the highest standards of professionalism in higher education, and upholds the values of diversity, equity and human rights.

Advocacy Week: Feb 26 to Mar 2 —Michael Truscello, MRFA Advocacy Officer



February 26 to March 2 is MRFA Advocacy Week on campus. During this time, the MRFA Advocacy Committee organizes a series of installations and events designed to provoke and inform. The purpose of these activities is to promote ideas and actions that in a variety of ways contribute to the betterment of post-secondary education in Alberta.

Here are some of the activities we have planned:

- Remember | Resist | Redraw: A Radical History Poster Project comes to us courtesy of MRU historian Sean Carleton and The Graphic History Collective (<http://graphichistorycollective.com/>). This poster exhibit will be displayed from 10am to 2pm on Main Street on Monday, February 26 and Friday, March 2. The exhibit has been featured on CBC and in Canadian Dimension magazine. According to The Graphic History Collective, the posters feature “alternative perspectives on well-known historical events, and highlights the histories of Indigenous peoples, women, workers, and other oppressed people who are often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream historical accounts.”
- The Get Cracking morning breakfast on March 2 at 8:30am will include a session on challenging popular #ABPSE narratives, with some talking points for faculty to engage Alberta politics on the subject of funding post-secondary education. The breakfast will be followed by an MRFA Regular Meeting at 10am.

- Also on March 2, there will be an MRFA Social Event at 4:00pm, which will include discussion of the transition to a union culture, as well as food and beer.
- Film Screening: 'Junct: The Trashing of Higher Ed. in America. Contract faculty are living in poverty. Students are buried in debt. Featuring a conversation with the filmmakers via a Google Hangouts. Tuesday, February 27 from 2-4pm RLLC, Ideas Visualization Lounge

We encourage faculty to tweet about Advocacy Week combining the hashtags #BeAnAdvocate and #ABPSE. If you are not already following the MRFA Twitter account, please follow us at <https://twitter.com/MRUFaculty>. We will be sharing information and graphics from this account during Advocacy Week and beyond, and faculty can help amplify our message by retweeting.



Fanny “Aishaa” is a self-taught nomadic visual artist and muralist passionate about the resilience of humans, the richness of communities, and the natural world. All of her experiences seek to celebrate and learn about a diversity of ways of life and practices that can honour life and maintain balance and respectful relationships between all living creatures. See more of her work at www.fannyaishaa.com/.

Note: The painting is based on a photo by MADOC.

Does Alberta Have a Spending Problem with Respect to University Faculty Salaries? The Data is in, and that's a "No" - Marc Schroeder

An oft-heard assertion in Alberta is that spending on public sector salaries exceeds that of other provincial jurisdictions. The implication (ignoring the fact that these citizens live and work in the same provincial economy as everyone else) is that our province's deficit is the result, at its core, of a spending problem, and that the budget should therefore be balanced through cuts on the expense side. For us, this assertion leads naturally to the following question: are the salaries of the academic staff at Alberta's publicly funded universities inflated relative to Canadian salary scale norms? After all, Mount Royal does receive public operating dollars: just over 40% of Mount Royal's institutional revenue comes from the province's Campus Alberta Operating Grant (this is, both historically and in relation to other public universities, actually a low proportion). And, the cost of salaries and benefits is cited as the leading institutional expense category "by object" at just over 70% of spending (less than half of which goes to MRU's faculty, full-time or otherwise, to be clear). Nevertheless, reliable national data reveals that the answer is a clear "no".

As some of our members will be aware, starting in 1937 Statistics Canada has maintained an annual labour market survey of full-time academic staff in Canada, called UCASS (Universities and Colleges Academic Staff System). This includes a wealth of full-time employment and salary data, including socio-economic characteristics. This was cancelled in 2011 by the Harper government, but reinstated last year by the Trudeau government. Data is not obtained from members of Canada's academic staff through a survey instrument, but rather the data is provided directly from university and college employers to Statistics Canada (including from Mount Royal, which is categorized as a university within UCASS). After a six-year gap, the 2016-2017 data was recently released.

With respect to comparison of full-time university faculty salaries across institutions and jurisdictions, there are a few key takeaways:

- Average full-time university faculty salaries in Alberta (mean \$130,200; median \$121,775) are not inflated compared to the national average (mean \$131,550; median \$128,175).
- This fact is distinct from the reality of executive-level

salaries in the province: as was reported in the media following Alberta's most recent public sector body compensation disclosures in summer 2017 (the "sunshine list"), Alberta university presidents are the highest-paid in the country, overall.

Most of Alberta's universities, including Mount Royal, have much more modest full-time faculty salary averages than the provincial average, which is pulled higher (unsurprisingly) by the University of Calgary and especially by the University of Alberta (but again, not by enough to surpass the national average). In fact, when combined with our very high reliance on contract academic staff (who teach close to 60% of the credit scheduled instructional course hours at much lower cost – in aggregate MRU spending on contract pay is about a third of spending on full-time faculty pay even before the cost of benefits is included – not all contract faculty qualify for benefits and the vast majority do not have a pension), MRU in fact pays a comparatively low rate on average per "full-time equivalent" instructor.

"MRU in fact pays a comparatively low rate on average per "full-time equivalent" instructor."

The U of L is actually a smaller institution (depending on which measure you use, MRU hovers around being the third-largest university in Alberta). But, with very similar average salaries, they somehow manage to employ significantly more full-time faculty.

The federal government also announced last year that UCASS would be extended to contract academic staff (a very good thing), and Statistics Canada has been consulting on this. Data is not yet being gathered, as there are various complexities to work out before that can happen. The MRFA provided a written submission and consulted on this initiative in the fall (as have other associations including the Canadian Association of University Teachers). But again, please note that the currently-available UCASS data is for full-time university faculty in the professorial ranks only.

In accordance with our membership-approved standing advocacy goals, the Mount Royal Faculty Association believes in decoupling funding of post-secondary education from unstable provincial revenue sources such as resource royalties. Our province's unwillingness, since 1949, to balance its operating budget without relying on resource revenues (with revenue from taxation therefore kept artificially low), the resulting wild ride on the resource revenue rollercoaster, and the accumulation of cuts to PSE operating grants jeopardizing what should be understood as an indispensable public good, all point to a better solution than the current government's attempt to

squeeze faculty salaries: fix the provincial revenue problem.

"a better solution than the current government's attempt to squeeze faculty salaries: fix the provincial revenue problem."

Interested readers can learn more about UCASS, the data and its analysis at:

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171128/dq171128b-eng.htm>

Advocacy Against Adjunctification (Continued) – Guy Obrecht, Contract Rep



Guy Obrecht
MRFA Contract Rep.

A properly funded and supported faculty complement would increase the ability of the University to grow its programs, create optimal learning conditions for students, enable more innovation and experimentation. The good news is everyone understands this; the struggle is figuring out how to get there in an age of diminishing government support and "fiscal restraint".

The precarity of contract faculty employment is not an issue unique to Mount Royal; it is a national and international trend in higher education. The Canadian Association of University Teachers has a standing committee devoted to contract academic staff, building alliances and providing support for a condition that affects everyone. In the States, 70% of university teaching is being done by adjuncts. The American Association of University Professors has drafted a policy statement detailing the decline of tenure track positions, and a new organization known as the New Faculty Majority is working to advocate for equity for adjuncts.

Fortunately, it is not just me, the contract faculty representative, who keeps the issue of precarity and its effects on the university at the centre of our concerns at Mount Royal. The executive board has made contract faculty concerns a priority for the two years that I have been a member. Our advocacy officers know that over-reliance on precarious employment is a weak link in the collective

defence of academic freedom and bicameral governance. In the library's Ideas Visualization Lounge on February 27th, Michael Truscello will screen a film about the "adjunctification" of academic work followed by a discussion with the filmmaker. This is the first step in lifting the curtain on the faculty complement, but wouldn't it be good if parents and students could see the ratios of the contract to tenured faculty as part of a standard measure for university options in Canada?

Not only are the full-time board members sympathetic to the situation, there are two more contract faculty members (Brenda Lang and Jennifer Solinas) currently serving on the board who always bring a diversity of perspectives to our discussions. This representation on the executive board is a first in the history of our Association.

The collective advocacy of the executive is not alone. The negotiating committee has placed the issue of a healthy faculty complement as one of the central interests for the Association in this round of bargaining. We heard from members when we attended department meetings, and we heard it again from our survey of all members: this issue is important to

"We are all advocates against adjunctification."

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**MRFA Social Event
March 2, 2018
4:00pm—7:30pm**



**JUNCT: THE TRASHING
OF HIGHER ED. IN
AMERICA**

Tuesday, February 27 from 2-4pm in the RLLC, Ideas Visualization Lounge

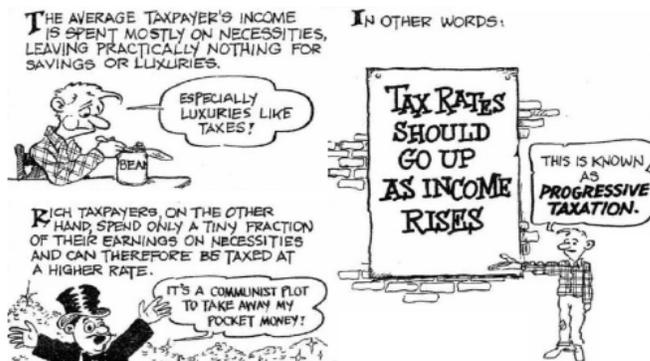
This film will raise awareness of the sad fact that American academia has been replaced by an Edu-Factory which ruins lives more often than improves them. Adjunct university professors living in poverty, undergraduate students crippled by debt — this system has hidden behind a well-preserved myth for too long. 'Junct Rebellion aims to blow the myth wide open and expose the realities.



MIGRANT DREAMS

Every morning, Feb 26—Mar 2, 8-10am in the RLLC, Ideas Visualization Lounge

A powerful feature documentary tells the story of migrant agricultural workers struggling against Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) that treats foreign workers as modern-day indentured labourers. Under the rules of Canada's migrant labour program, low wage migrants are tied to one employer.



**The Taxing Work of
Debating the Provincial Budget**

A more progressive tax structure can provide stable, sustainable funding for PSE in Alberta. Participate in a discussion of the issues and brainstorming answers. Get advice on how to #BeAnAdvocate for PSE!

Students, Faculty, and Staff are Welcome

**Friday, March 2, 8:30—10:00am,
in the Faculty Centre (W315).
(breakfast provided)**



Register Online at mrfa.net/BeAnAdvocate