

ADVOCACY WEEK—#BeAnAdvocate

February 26—March 2, 2018

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The MRFA Joins CAUT Defence Fund—Marc Schroeder, MRFA President



Marc Schroeder,
MRFA President

The past few years have seen considerable evolution in the Mount Royal Faculty Association's role within the provincial and national contexts. At the end of former president Gerry Cross's term in 2014, our membership voted to leave ACIFA (the Alberta Colleges and Institutes Faculties Association) – a provincial association in which we had been a member for some years. Then, in the spring of 2015, we were admitted to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) as a full "Class A" member (to be clear, leaving the former was not a

precondition or taken as a step so that we could join the latter). With this came the ability and responsibility to participate to the fullest extent in the important work of this national organization, which represents 70,000 teachers, librarians, researchers and other academic professionals at 122 universities and colleges throughout Canada. It has been a tremendous privilege to participate as the MRFA's delegate at CAUT Council, lending our voice to the shaping of policies that guide collective efforts to defend academic freedom and to advocate for the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada.

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Refresh Button —Guy Obrecht, MRFA Contract Member Representative



Guy Obrecht
MRFA Contract Rep.

I wish there was a refresh button for things other than loading webpages. A button that could give a fresh perspective on our writing and work, a button that could inspire the classroom, or one that would really re crisp wilted lettuce. But alas, there is no such button, these refreshing things come from serendipitous occasions.

Contract faculty, with limited job security, have an additional incentive for being fresh. We need to stay current with our field and update our syllabi to keep ourselves fresh both in the classroom and outside. We don't want to become the academic equivalent of wilted

lettuce so we work as hard as we can to balance planning class activities and exploring new materials with research, teaching and grading. The stakes for contract faculty are high, so we go hard.

"We need to stay current with our field and update our syllabi to keep ourselves fresh both in the classroom and outside."

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Bargaining Update, January 24, 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).

MRFA Regular Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday, January 30, 3:00 – 5:00, Lincoln Park Room

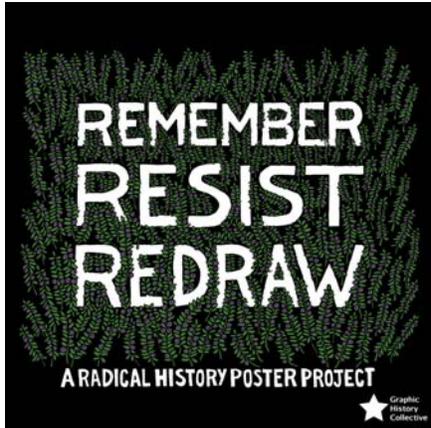
Friday, March 2, 10:00 – 12:00, Lincoln Park Room

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 3:30pm, which will include discussion of the transition to a union culture, as well as food and beer.
- The Advocacy Committee is in the process of booking a film for Advocacy Week, so look forward to an update in the MRFA Weekly Newsletter.

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.

President's Report (Continued) — Marc Schroeder

Recent and current CAUT campaigns have included fair employment for contract faculty, fair copyright, and the rebuilding of federal funding for basic research. I'm also proud that MRFA members have taken the opportunity to serve on national CAUT standing committees (Roberta Lexier was selected by CAUT to serve on its Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee in 2016, and Lee Easton to serve on the Bargaining and Economic Benefits Committee in 2017). Because the MRFA is a Class A member, any of our members can be nominated for committee positions. See caut.ca for a list. Examples include the Executive Committee, the Contract Academic Staff Committee, the Equity Committee and the Librarians' and Archivists' Committee.

More recently, with the coming into force in May 2017 of Alberta's Bill 7, which introduced significant changes to the labour relations regime for the province's post-secondary academic staff and brought legislation in line with recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions (a change about which the MRFA had very actively advocated and consulted in the two years prior), and because we are CAUT members, our Association also became eligible to join the CAUT Defence Fund. Consequently, and as authorized by our membership at the September 2017 Special Meeting, the Association recently submitted an application to join this Fund. As you know, this was an important component of our preparedness strategy for the move to the statutory bargaining process laid out in the Alberta Labour Relations Code (another key element of financial preparedness has been to build of our own MRFA Contingency

"at the December 7 meeting of the [CAUT Defence] Fund's Board of Trustees, our admission into the Fund was approved"

Fund). I'm pleased to report that, at the December 7 meeting of the Fund's Board of Trustees, our admission into the Fund was approved (you may be interested to know that the faculty associations from the University of Alberta and Athabasca University were admitted at the same meeting; the University of Lethbridge and University

of Calgary associations had just recently joined as well; the Grant MacEwan University Faculty Association is also on a path to apply for membership in the Fund). Our participation in the Defence Fund will be yet another way for us to engage in mutual support of faculty colleagues throughout the country.

Based on the MRFA's size (approximately 800 members), we have two positions on the CAUT Defence Fund Board of Trustees. Our two nominees will be elected at the Fund's annual meeting in October. At the MRFA's May Annual General Meeting, our Executive Board plans to bring forward bylaw amendment proposals to governing MRFA nominee selection (note that trustee terms are normally for two years). In the interim, and based on expressions of interest solicited from our members and received by our Executive Board, both Karen Manarin (a former MRFA Vice-President, Negotiations) and I will be serving on the Board of Trustees in an interim capacity.

"our province's evolving labour relations context will necessitate the building of even more cooperation and solidarity, not only around bargaining but also in matters of public advocacy, all in support of high-quality, accessible and affordable post-secondary education as a public good."

At the provincial level, relations with the faculty associations at Alberta's nineteen other publically funded post-secondary institutions are positive. Nevertheless, I anticipate that our province's evolving labour relations context will necessitate the building of even more cooperation and solidarity, not only around bargaining but also in matters of public advocacy, all in support of high-quality, accessible and affordable post-secondary education as a public good. It will be fascinating to see how these changes play out over the coming months and years.

Refresh Button (Continued) — Guy Obrecht, Contract Member Representative

Where fresh perspective often comes from is through teaching. Somehow a class or a student points to some way of seeing material that is surprising and causes us to rethink or add another layer of complexity to the material. For me, sometimes a pedagogical goal that I had for a class is not met and requires me to rethink assumptions implicit in the goal. As a teaching faculty, contract faculty are well positioned to stay fresh through our experience in the classroom. The few presentations and papers I have written in the last two years have all grown out of my teaching practice.

“the collective agreement allows illness leave with full salary for up to a quarter of our contract’s scheduled hours.”

Of course, we are human too, and we get sick; this is perhaps less refresh than hard reset. While contract faculty do not have benefits associated with illness leave, the collective agreement allows illness leave with full salary for up to a quarter of our contract’s scheduled

hours. We tend not to miss classes for minor illness out of our desire to be optimal for our students, and illnesses tend to arrive right at holidays and weekends, but perhaps these serendipitous occasions of sickness are calling us to take a time-out moment to refresh.

Lastly, sometimes getting outside can be key to getting perspective during this time of year. Getting outside for a walk, ski, or snowshoe can be a challenge; from finding gear to wading through snow and starting the car everything seems to be recommending to stay inside, but like a polar bear dip it’s always refreshing, especially when out of cell phone service areas.

The challenge is balance: working to stay current and inspire student learning, teaching and grading, staying healthy, and getting outdoor exercise, not to mention family life, seem logically connected but can often be competing interests that can easily outweigh each other. It’s up to us to negotiate this balancing act so that no one outweighs the other, to take turns turning off one in favor of the other.

Faculty Student Relations—Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

The MRFA’s Professional Standards and Ethics Committee recently hosted a very well attended session on Faculty Student Relations. Some key tips from the session:

- Be firm and fair, and then you can be fun: set clear and specific boundaries.
- Do not share your cell phone or other personal communication channels with students.
- Have, and stick to, an email communication policy (i.e. what will be communicated via email and when you will and will not respond to email).
- In course outlines, specify student responsibilities and faculty responsibilities.
- Do not accept gifts of any kind from students, and state this at the outset.
- Connect with peers who are in similar faculty roles as you to have them as a resource and sounding board.

- Refer students with personal problems or traumas to Counselling and those with significant and ongoing academic problems to the Office of Student Success.
- If you are anticipating a difficult or uncomfortable conversation with a student you can put the student in touch with the Student Advocacy Officer, Andrea Davis, and her participation is invaluable in this process.
 - Phone: 403.440.7792;
 - Email: a.davis@samru.ca

A complete event summary, links to relevant documents and MRU policies, and further resources are available online:

mrfa.net/ProfessionalBoundaries

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To book
meeting rooms call:
403.440.6193

The MRFA's New Website

After reviewing best practices, other Association sites, and possible website content, as well as subsequent user testing, the MRFA's Communications Committee has developed a new website!

Same url: mrfa.net

However, all the links and urls connecting to the old site will no longer function. Please take a moment to check out our new site and familiarize yourself with where to access information (e.g. PD Forms are under "Funding Opportunities" / "PD Allocations"). If you're having trouble finding something, please refer to the site map (linked in the upper navigation bar and summarized at the bottom of the front page) or search for it (at the bottom of the front page). If you need further assistance, or if you notice any issues with the new site, please contact Chantelle Anderson at 6192 or cpanderson@mtroyal.ca.

Features and Changes:

- **No User Accounts** as there are no longer any member restricted sections of the site.
- **Sign up for Text Messages** which will only be sent for *very* high priority communications (nothing related to regular operations of the Association)
- **Detailed Information on MRFA Supports and Related Processes** can be found under the "Member Support" tab.
- **Increased Content Relating to Faculty work and Faculty Evaluation** under the "Faculty" tab. Information related to specific appointment categories at MRU.
- **Copy to My Calendar** button on the calendar page (mrfa.net/calendar)