

## Learning from the past in order to move forward — Melanie Peacock



Melanie Peacock,  
MRFA President

It was an interesting coincidence that daylight saving time required us to move our clocks one hour ahead at a time when we had just ratified a new collective agreement. It was as though the universe itself was reminding us to move forward. As someone who considers herself to be optimistic and a strategic planner, I have found that while it is important to look ahead and anticipate good outcomes, this is not completely possible without looking back at, and learning from, the past.

What does this paradox mean for members of the Mount Royal Faculty Association (MRFA)?

I encourage my colleagues to review your key points of learning over the most recent academic year. I refer to this as a start, stop and continue exercise, as I like to think about what I need to start doing, what I need to

stop doing, and what has been working well and therefore I should continue doing.

What elements in the collective agreement were unclear and which were especially helpful and could be leveraged again in the future

I invite you to reflect on your teaching and interactions with students over the past months. What insights does this bring forth and what could you share with colleagues in order to help others enhance their pedagogy? What elements in the collective agreement were unclear and which were especially helpful and could be leveraged again in the future? What elements of the collective bargaining process caused anxiety for you, and what further information can you seek out in order to better prepare for this work as it continues to advance? When and how can you become more aware of key processes and issues in this regard? How has the MRFA engaged with you and how can this be improved?

**Note: Elections for MRFA Executive Board positions and various committee roles will be taking place in May. I encourage you to consider contributing to these important positions and I would value the opportunity to work with you to help advance our campus community.**



Guy Obrecht,  
Contract Member Rep.

## The Contract Faculty Commitment to Students — Guy Obrecht

In the context of negotiating a collective agreement "moving forward" is a misleading metaphor. It's a metaphor popular in political discourse that seems to connect to the idea of "growth" and the steady march of "progress" which is normally linked to economic indicators and a narrative of imperatives. While there are goals that the negotiating team moved towards or brought forward, most movement was met with a whole

lot of other moving parts such that the spatial direction was sometimes hard to discern. I am cautiously optimistic that the changes we have made will increase job security and benefits for contract faculty, but we need to watch the implementation closely and be ready to adjust as necessary. While we are moving forward, we need to keep an eye on the past.

For example, one move that became a little complex was the move to a SICH based grid---that is, a pay grid that calculates step by quantity of teaching experience rather than semesters taught. The grid movement itself was easy enough to create (especially under the constraint of being cost-neutral). What becomes complex is how to migrate all employees (past and present) over to a new grid without resetting their accrued credit towards advancement on the grid. What about the person who was just about to move via semesters and is now being calculated in SICH?

What about the person who moved via semester during the bridged agreement?

Ultimately, some contract members will be retroactively moved up the grid, receive back pay and continue to advance at a faster rate. Others will remain at their current rate of pay and face a longer road to the next step.

Perhaps the biggest movement we had was establishing a new category of employment, the Senior Lecturer. The amount of negotiating that was required to formulate the position as it now stands was disproportionately large. Both parties were very far away from each other at first, so the position we have is really a compromise of interests. There's a lot to be positive about with these positions: they are full time, they have access to List A funds so they can play a larger role in curriculum development, and they have guaranteed workload, a salary, and full benefits. But how are they going to be allocated, are they going to create tension amongst the Full-Time cohort, and how do they respond and relate to the existing Fixed-Term contracts? We've got language to try to regulate these issues, but ultimately we need to see that language in action and bring our observations back to the review committees and future negotiating teams.

## President's Report (Continued)—Melanie Peacock

How are you willing to become involved in your faculty association and contribute your expertise in order to help us all progress? (Note: Elections for MRFA Executive Board positions and various committee roles will be taking place in May. I encourage you to consider contributing to these important positions, and I would value the opportunity to work with you to help advance our campus community.)

The questions posed are what will enable all of us to evolve and move forward. As I reflect on this recent academic year and the steep and intense learning curve I have encountered, I want to thank each and every one of you for your support and encouragement. Serving as your president has, and continues to be, a tremendous honour. As I review my experiences and learning over the past months, this leads

me to look forward to the upcoming challenges and opportunities with immense excitement and hope.

*Together we are stronger.*

Melanie Peacock

**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.**

## The Contract Faculty Commitment to Students (Continued) — Guy Obrecht

Other changes were more straightforward: full year scheduling dates, more transparency for the "black box" of article 4.8., an annual recreation card, an increase to the contract PD fund and the amount that one can apply for (\$1200). These changes were not easy to achieve, but they all represent an incremental step in job security and professional development for contract faculty.

If I had to replace the moving forward metaphor, it would be with dance, where movement in all directions defines the space and the dancers simultaneously. As the collective agreement gets implemented, we have to watch to ensure that the place it defines unfolds in ways that are equitable and supportive of all faculty.

## The 411 on the LRO – Derrick Antson



Derrick Antson,  
Labour Relations Officer

For those of you that I have not had the opportunity to meet, I am MRFA's new Labour Relations Officer. Prior to moving to Calgary, I worked with the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association, and held a variety of different volunteer positions with different organizations in Lethbridge (ranging from the Lethbridge Public Library Board of Trustees, the Canadian Red Cross, and the Lethbridge Pride Fest Society). I hold a Master

of Advance Studies in Peace & Conflict Transformation and a Bachelors in Philosophy and am a proud dog-dad of two beagles.

Within the Association, my role is to act as a technician of the collective agreement (CA), supporting members and committees as they interact and navigate through the agreement. In the realm of grievance and member concerns, the most recent round of collective bargaining did not change any of the established processes. Article 22.2.1 remained unchanged, maintaining each members' right to initiate a grievance at Step 1. Additionally, both the VP Policy & Senior Grievance Officer (Brady Killough) and I are available to discuss member's concerns and help navigate the collective agreement.

With respect to collective bargaining, there are no small parts when it comes to collective bargaining; whether participating on the Negotiating Committee or as a member who is staying engaged and expressing their thoughts and concerns to the folks at the table, every member played a role in the bargaining process. As of March 14, 2019, the CA has been accepted by both parties and will be in effect retroactively to July 1, 2018.

The CA brings many improvements for the membership, while also offering the opportunity to change elements that had not been achieved in previous rounds. In terms of timelines, the newly ratified CA states that notice to bargain must be served between January 2, 2020 and March 1, 2020. As such, both the VP Negotiations (Lee Easton) and I are available to discuss members' ideas related to collective bargaining.

In the realm of job action, although it is not the easiest topic to discuss, ignoring the implications associated with Job Action is a disservice. I find it helpful to think of job action as a *72-Hour Preparedness Kit*; it isn't something that you endeavour to use, but it is something that you have in case the need arises.

**Before the next round of bargaining begins, there are a few things members can start doing now to get their Preparedness Kit ready:**

1. Seek out information relating to job action, its implications, and when and why it might be utilized.
2. Examine your personal finances. Although it will be the case that some financial support is provided by the MRFA during job action and leniency for routine bills is common, allowing yourself 15 months to prepare is reassuring.
3. Contact the Chair of the Job Action Committee (MRFA President Melanie Peacock) and me if you have any outstanding questions from the most recent round of bargaining that relate to job action.

I also want to remind members to think about how they contribute to diversity and equity. MRFA's Diversity and Equity Committee is tasked with advising the Association on principles and best practices, and in identifying gaps in policy, support, and services, which could include examining day-to-day aspects or systemic aspects. If members have any thoughts on this, I would welcome your input.

In closing, members are always welcome to contact me, stop by my office, or give me a phone call. I am happy to chat about the collective agreement, concerns in the workplace, and show you photos of my beagles.

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## Interview with Marc Schroeder, Past President

Karen Owen



### TRANSITION BACK TO TEACHING.

An interview with Marc Schroeder, MRFA President 2014 – 2018.

Marc Schroeder finished up his second term as the association's president on June 14, 2018. He stayed on for six months in the role of past-president and at the same time prepared to go back to teaching

in the Mathematics and Computing Department. Marc has been teaching Computer Science at MRU since 2002, so he's no stranger to the classroom. However, he says it was a transition. He started teaching again in the Winter 2019 semester.

Here's an edited version of an interview with Marc Schroeder about that transition.

### What were the first few days or weeks back in the classroom like for you?

It was exhausting is what it was. After my first day or two, I went home at the end of the day just dog-tired. That got better – I underestimated how draining it would be. It was also really fun. I love being with my students.

### Was there anything you took from your four years as MRFA President back into the classroom?

I think I've come back with a different world view than I had going into the role and a different way of thinking about human relationships and that sort of thing. It didn't particularly change my approach to the technical or the disciplinary aspects of the material. It has changed the way I think about interactions between people. I also have a greater appreciation for the social implications and benefits of what we do as educators.

### Such as?

When you are dealing with faculty association issues you are dealing with a lot of interpersonal dynamics and a lot of interpersonal conflict - things that are difficult challenges for people.

I think it's the new insights into power dynamics between people and the equity issues that we want to be mindful of as we teach. Power relationships, equity relationships, inclusion – that sort of thing. And I hope I try to be more mindful of those issues.

### Anything you forgot about teaching? Or saw in a new light?

The sheer amount of work to get ready for teaching a course and the unforgiving nature of a semester is something I had gotten out of. When you are in the MRFA office day after day, the timelines are all different, the cycles are all different and when I returned to the department all of sudden you are on this week by week, or semester by semester cycle where you have to have everything done by a certain date.

There are other cycles and intense pressures that present at the MRFA office. In fact, when faculty are really busy with their marking or end of semester work, the MRFA president's phone rings less. It's actually in the intersession or the gap between Fall and Winter where your inbox tends to fill more and your phone rings more with faculty concerns because that's when they have time to actually reach out to you.

### Was there any sort of identity crisis, for lack of a better term, going from MRFA President back to Associate Professor?

As I neared the final months of being MRFA president I wondered about that. I think the kind of thing I was concerned about was making sure a lot of the good work we had undertaken would keep being advanced. But I have to say, the more I spoke to Melanie (Peacock), the more confident I was that everything was going to be in excellent hands and that helped me to ease out.

In the end, when I actually got back to the department and started delving into my plans for scholarship and looking at my classes I would be teaching, I was just really, really happy. And I'm excited about my scholarship moving forward.

One of the reasons I don't think I had too much of an identity crisis was I wanted to find a way I could continue contributing and advancing some of the issues I really care about. Maybe I'll return to the MRFA Executive Board someday, but I found that by running for a position on the CAUT executive that's how I could take all of my hard won experience and I could leverage it in another way.

So I'm still involved in faculty association issues and union issues, making sure that issues like academic freedom, faculty rights and working conditions are well taken care of, but I can do it in a different venue now.

## Nominations Committee – Geoff Owens, Chair

A great way to get to know fellow faculty and become directly involved in your faculty association is to serve as a member of a MRFA committee.

On **Friday, April 26th from noon until 2 p.m.** in the Faculty Centre will be the "Committee Affair". This event is to give faculty the opportunity to find out more about available MRFA committee vacancies, including general duties and workload. Current members from each committee will be present to answer questions and, as importantly, a light lunch will be provided. So come by for some good food and good discussion.

In regards to the process for joining a committee, all Nominees are required to submit a campaign statement and to attend the May 10, 2019, AGM to participate in an All Candidates' Forum. Voting will take place at the AGM with advance online polling available by request only. For more information, please contact Irene Leclerc (6192) or at [ileclerc@mtroyal.ca](mailto:ileclerc@mtroyal.ca).

The MRFA encourages nominations from members of diverse backgrounds, including with respect to category of appointment, depart-

ment, as well as membership in equity-seeking groups. A finalized version of committees, vacancies and position descriptions will be made available on the MRFA website near the end of March. You will be able to find this information at [mrfa.net/2019selection](http://mrfa.net/2019selection).

Geoff Owens, Nominations Committee, Chair

## MRFA Members show their support for FUNSCAD Job Action #Solidarity



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**Did you Know you Have this Right....?**

You have the right to professional development funds, regardless of employment category. The recently ratified Collective Agreement (CA) includes changes to Articles 18.1, 18.6, and 18.7, which deal with professional development funding. Following are the highlights of these changes.

- Article 18.1: The annual contribution from the Board of Governors (the Board) to be divided between the Academic Units for professional development increases to **\$350,000** plus any unspent amount (at the end of the budget year) in the Contract Professional Development Fund in excess of **\$45,000**.
- Article 18.6.1: The amount of unspent funds in the Contract Professional Development Fund that will carry forward to the next year increases to **\$45,000**.
- Article 18.6.2: The amount of professional development funds available to contract faculty who teach three or more courses per Academic Year (on a first come, first served basis) increases to **\$1,200**.
- Article 18.6.3: The amount of professional development funds allocated annually to each fixed-term contract faculty member increases to **\$1,100**.
- Article 18.7.1: The amount of individual professional development funds allocated annually to each tenured, tenurable, conditional tenurable, and limited-term tenurable faculty member increases to **\$1,500**.
- Article 18.7.4: The amount of individual professional development funds allocated annually to each full-time and limited-term laboratory instructor increases to **\$1,500**.
- Article 18.7.5: The amount of individual professional development funds allocated annually to each full-time and limited-term senior lecturer is **\$1,500**. *This is a new employment category in the CA.*

**We welcome your questions for upcoming issues of *News to Use*.**

**Please submit your questions online via the link provided on the Communications Committee webpage at [mrfa.net/comment](http://mrfa.net/comment)**