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October 3, 2019

Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides, MLA  
Minister of Advanced Education  
Office of the Minister of Advanced Education, 403 Legislature Building  
10800 – 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Nicolaides,

Thank you, once again, for meeting with me on September 9<sup>th</sup>. I appreciated the opportunity to introduce you to the Mount Royal Faculty Association (MRFA) and to share our insights and vision regarding our important role within, and contributions to, post-secondary education in Alberta.

During our meeting I spoke about various funding and budgetary concerns and at this point the MRFA would like to specifically address some of our discomfort regarding comments in the “Report and Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta’s Finances” (the report). Specifically, we note that Universities in Alberta have not been enjoying salary increases as all institutions had multi-year 0% cost of living adjustments (COLA) in the most recently concluded rounds of collective bargaining. Furthermore, over the years prior to this our faculty have had limited salary increases. Benchmarking to comparable universities across Canada has provided data which we utilized when negotiating any changes. As such, faculty salaries are not as burdensome as represented.

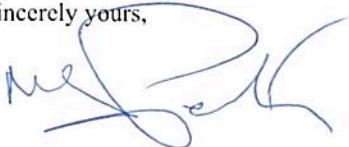
Also worrisome is the report’s suggestions regarding the possible use of “legislative mandates” to limit salaries for public sector employees. This amounts to interference in the collective bargaining process and would strongly limit our ability to effectively engage in this process with Mount Royal University’s Board of Governors.

We also convey our concern about tying the roles of universities tightly to labour market needs. While some professionals are trained, at least in part, in universities, the character of a university education is far broader and not necessarily tied to any one particular occupation. As such, careful review and consideration of the implications of labour market outcome measurements is warranted before any such metrics are implemented, if at all.

In summary, advanced education represents an investment in our province’s future and should not be regarded merely as an expense to be contained. The report itself notes that “Alberta’s future depends on having one of the most highly skilled and well-educated populations in the world.” We concur, but note that this future is at risk if funding is diminished and if inappropriate measurements for funding allocation are utilized.

I, and other members of our Association, would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share research that illuminates the value of post-secondary education in Alberta. As well, we would be pleased to share our ideas, insights and to continue to engage in dialogue.

Sincerely yours,



Melanie Peacock PhD, MBA, CPHR, SHRM-SCP  
President, Mount Royal Faculty Association