

President

(2 years - Tenured Members only)

Lee Easton - English, Languages and Cultures and General Education

Greetings, colleagues! I hope you and your families have kept safe and are managing through this unprecedented pandemic. As you are undoubtedly aware, MRU face three main issues both immediately and going forward: the ramifications of the pandemic; major budget cuts as a result of performance-based metrics; and changes to bicameral governance.

My name is Lee Easton, a veteran faculty member of MRU for over 22 years, and I am putting my name forward for President of the Mount Royal Faculty Association.

As the attached summary shows, I bring to the President's role a range of skills derived from a variety of leadership roles I have held over the past two decades. I want to bring this experience to the Association as we meet the challenges today and well into the foreseeable future. In addition, I offer an established record of advocating for faculty in a variety of settings ranging from collective bargaining to department Chair to the Association Executive Board.

The pandemic has highlighted how faculty have rallied to meet our students' needs under the most trying circumstances. I also want to thank the entire Executive Board and President Melanie Peacock for their hard work navigating this unprecedented challenge. As we look ahead to Fall 2020 and the impact of the pandemic, we know that on-line delivery is not what students most want when they come to MRU, but we must also ensure that our workplace is safe for all before we return to campus. In either case, the Association must ensure decisions that affect our ability to teach arrive in a timely manner.

Indeed, I believe the Association must play a key role in shaping whatever return to work plans emerge.

We must also consider the pandemic's impact on faculty's disrupted work plans and the ramifications of that disruption for annual reporting requirements and, most importantly, for our colleagues working towards tenure or permanency. We must advocate too for contract faculty upon whom MRU has relied to deliver its programs. Many may find themselves having to prepare for on-line delivery, underscoring, yet again, how the University, even in these difficult budgetary times, must address its over-reliance on contract academic faculty. You can expect that, as MRFA President, I will continue to advocate strongly for all faculty interests, including those of contract academic faculty.

In September, we have two important challenges ahead. First, bicameral governance will change significantly as we start a new General Faculties. The MRFA must play a key role in the bicameral governance of the University and, as my record shows I bring extensive history in governance at Mount Royal and a strong faculty advocate. As a newly-elected Faculty of Arts representative on the Part 1 GFC,

I have been working with other colleagues on the new GFC bylaws. I have been delighted to work with the Association's Academic Liaison Officer to ensure that faculty representatives are well-informed about how this new body will function.

Our second challenge is the development of a new Academic Plan. As a past co-chair of GFC's ad hoc Academic Plan Steering Committee, I know how important this planning process is to our collective future. I also know how important the Association's input can be to a creating a successful Academic Plan. Working with the Executive Board, I look forward to ensuring that our collective voice is fully engaged with this planning process.

As we look ahead to the challenges over at least the next two years, the current budget crisis will be driving much of the University's decisions. My involvement with the Collective Agreement will help me

ensure that our rights both in the CA and in the *MOU on Financial Emergencies* are observed. As faculty members, we will be exhorted to find creative ways to deliver our programs. The Association must stand fast to ensure that such creative approaches fit within the current Collective Agreement or be brought to the table in the current round for our Negotiations Committee to review.

We must also be prepared to challenge the province's imposition of performance metrics. The Association must continue to work internally with SAMRU and the MRSA and provincially with our peer institutions and other Alberta postsecondary organizations to oppose Alberta's new performance-based funding models. We must also engage other universities across the country through CAUT. I look forward to building on my experience serving on CAUT's Standing Committee for Collective Bargaining and Economic Benefits to represent our Association at Presidents' Council where we can find other allies.

So, what can you expect from me as the MRFA President? You can expect that, following in the steps of our Past Presidents, I will:

- Report frequently and frankly, as our past Presidents have done, about the realities we face as faculty;
- Advocate forcefully for the centrality of our academic mission and the crucial role that all faculty play in achieving that mission even as provincial cutbacks continue;
- Work with University leadership and administration to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on all faculty regardless of employment status;
- Collaborate with the Executive Board to continue our efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University and in the Association;
- Remain open and accountable to you, my colleagues.

We are in a turbulent, unpredictable time. But I have confidence that we as faculty and an Association have both the resilience to weather this storm and the ingenuity and creativity to ensure we emerge stronger. I am eager to lead us during this time. I ask for your support.

In
solidarity
, Lee