



# MOUNT ROYAL FACULTY ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION TO THE 2030 REVIEW GUIDING COALITION

Recommendations for a Thriving Postsecondary  
Sector in Alberta

## Abstract

This submission provides 18 recommendations to ensure that a thriving postsecondary sector meets the needs of Albertans over the next decade. Alberta's undergraduate universities have a unique role in ensuring that undergraduates have the collaborative, communication and critical thinking skills that Albertans will need to thrive in a rapidly changing economic and social environment.

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As one of Alberta's leading undergraduate universities, Mount Royal University is a teaching-focused institution that draws on over 100 years of delivering high-quality programs in a wide range of disciplines and professions. Mount Royal has a long history of achieving high scores for student satisfaction on many measures and this success is key to the recommendations that this submission makes.

The Mount Royal Faculty Association represents almost 800 academic staff including 389 full-time tenured and tenurable faculty, senior lecturers, lab instructors, clinicians and just over 400 contract academic staff. As faculty who have worked in a publicly-funded community college, then in an undergraduate university first under both Part 2, and now, Part 1 of the *Post-secondary Learning Act*, Mount Royal faculty offers the Guiding Coalition a unique perspective from within the Alberta postsecondary system.

This submission contains 19 recommendations which respond to the guiding questions from the *Coalition Workbook*. These recommendations are based on input from the Association's Advocacy Committee as well as the MRFA Executive Board and from the Association's members. We have been guided by the Association's member-approved Advocacy Goals that stress the need for consistent stable provincial funding for post-secondary education and the urgent need to address the overreliance on contract academic faculty whose precarious working conditions mitigate against achieving the goal of excellence in Alberta PSE.

For emphasis, the Association place its four major recommendations here so that they receive the Coalition's attention and because they address the most urgent issues Alberta postsecondary education system now faces.

***Recommendation #1 Stop the government's defunding of postsecondary education. Restore and improve funding through the Campus Alberta Grants.***

Following the recommendations of the McKinnon Report, the provincial government has embarked on a deliberate policy of **defunding** postsecondary education. By 2022, the PSE sector will receive 20 percent less government funding than it received in 2018. Moreover, the province intends to proceed with a range of accountability measures including performance-based metrics, institutional investment management agreements and austerity budget measures. While the Association agrees that all PSE institutions must be responsible to many stakeholders including taxpayers, these tools will reduce institutional autonomy, increase costs to students, and infringe on collective bargaining. The use of performance-based funding comes with risks as well. A recent meta-study reviewed 50 studies of performance-based funding in the United States and found not only that performance based funding was ineffective but also worked against attracting learners from under-represented groups. At a time when the pandemic has created great uncertainty and when Alberta post-secondary institutions need to be more attuned to the needs of diverse learners, especially those who are first-generation students, moving to performance-based funding models will prove to be counterproductive.

***Recommendation #2 Endorse the need for all graduates from Alberta post-secondary education institutions to possess the aptitudes and capabilities acquired through foundational general education. A solid general education offers the best means to provide learners with the necessary values and skills to navigate the challenges of automation, digitization and an increasingly diverse workplace.***

Undergraduate foundational general education (i.e. not focused on a particular vocation or on particular employers' needs) has a vital role in maintaining a prosperous society and a strong democracy. The three Cs of the 21<sup>st</sup> workplace—communication, collaboration and critical

thinking- are best acquired through a general or liberal education. The Association echoes CAFA's statement that "universities are not just for producing highly-skilled graduates; instead we believe that universities are a place to develop workers with an envelope of competencies as well as engaged critical citizens."<sup>1</sup>

### **Recommendation #3 Reduce the Reliance on Contract Academic Teaching Staff**

The reliance on contract academic faculty runs counter to the need for an excellent system of postsecondary education. While the common belief is that contract academic faculty are simply "filling in" for full-time faculty or gaining experience teaching while applying for full-time work, the MRFA data show that a significant segment of MRU contract faculty are working full-time teaching loads AND remain current in research and scholarship even without significant support.

The use of contract academic faculty conflicts with the works against the government's desire to see colleges and universities as an important players in its diversification strategy. The province needs "all hands on deck" as part of its ten-year economic diversification strategy but relying on a just-in-time faculty ignores an important resource that is *already here* if only there were more permanent, less precarious work arrangements available. Developing new fields of knowledge such as those associated with plastics recycling and artificial intelligence takes qualified faculty working over longer periods of time than a single four-month contract.

### **Recommendation #4. *Ensure that Boards of Governors and General Faculties Councils reflect a more diverse Alberta, including representatives from marginalized, racialized and Indigenous peoples who are often underrepresented in Alberta PSE.***

Demographics show that the Alberta's population is becoming increasingly diverse and vibrant. Alberta's post-secondary education system must reflect the learners who come to them. This means that Boards of Governors must be sure to include representatives from those groups who have not always participated in higher education. Indigenous peoples must also have representation at both the Board of Governors and in the General Faculties Council.

## **The MRFA's Reservations about the Alberta 2030 Review Process**

The *MacKinnon Report on Alberta Finances* recommended that the government "consult with post-secondary stakeholders to set an overall future direction and goals for the post-secondary system along with appropriate governance models."<sup>2</sup> In August 2020, the provincial government commenced *Alberta 2030 Review*, a five-month consultation process on the future of the post-secondary education system in Alberta.

The Mount Royal Faculty Association has several reservations the 2030 Review process including:

- The abbreviated review process, which started only in August 2020 and will likely conclude in December 2020. While this process may well be the largest consultation about postsecondary education in Alberta's history, the Association notes that four months to arrive a new direction for Alberta's postsecondary system is too short to make meaningful considered recommendations.
- Concerns about the small number of student and faculty representatives on the Guiding Coalition compared with the number of representatives from the private sector. The MRFA notes that it was only after CAFA and ACIFA pressed for representation from faculty from both sectors of Alberta's postsecondary system, the Guiding Coalition was expanded to include both umbrella organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> CAFA Submission to McKinsey & Company's Alberta 2030 Review, p. 5

<sup>2</sup> *Report and Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finance*, p.39.

- Assumptions underlying the various stakeholder survey suggest PSE is only about the economy. The student survey, for example, did not ask students questions about overall program affordability or about what they value about their post-secondary experience such as class sizes or student-instructor ratios, access to knowledgeable faculty, or their learning experience. This gap is especially disturbing since institutions such as Mount Royal excel in these metrics and the government claims to want to ensure student satisfaction. Similarly, the assumptions that guide the workbook questions fail to ask about the needs for humanities and social sciences, arts education, social innovation or creativity.

The Association is concerned that the short time frame, the limited faculty representation on the Guiding Coalition and the gaps in the data will lead to recommendations that will not serve Albertans well in the long run.

Having stated these reservations, the Association nevertheless offers its best thoughts on the questions posed in the Coalition workbook. The Association believes that Alberta's postsecondary system does have a crucial role to play in the province over the next decade and this submission offers its perspective on how to create an even better Alberta postsecondary system.

### **The Mount Royal Faculty Association**

## 1. *What are your impressions of Alberta's advanced education system today?*

The MacKinnon Report claimed that Alberta post-secondary education (PSE) “does not appear to be an overall direction for Alberta’s postsecondary system,”<sup>3</sup> a view the provincial government apparently shares. The Association’s impressions of the Alberta advanced education system differs from this view. The public perception of Alberta PSE, for example, suggests that most Albertans are satisfied with the PSE system and indeed so are employers. The government’s own data shows that 92% of employers were satisfied or very satisfied with graduate skills preparedness in the 2018 Graduate Outcomes survey.

Moreover, Alberta has two globally-recognized research universities (the University of Alberta and University of Calgary), both ranking in the top 200 universities in the world. And, despite declining government funding, Alberta’s undergraduate universities continue to excel in student satisfaction surveys. According to the 2019 Canadian University Survey Consortium, 93 percent of first-year students at MRU said they were satisfied with their decision to attend MRU while 92% of first-year students at MRU agreed they were satisfied with the quality of teaching they received.<sup>4</sup> Surveys of graduating MRU students also revealed excellent rates of student satisfaction with the MRU experience. The 2018 CUSC survey revealed:

- 96% of graduating students said they were satisfied with their decision to attend MRU.
- 95% of graduating students at MRU agreed they were satisfied with the quality of teaching they had received.
- 94% of graduating students said they were satisfied with the overall quality of education they had received at MRU.<sup>5</sup>

Access to the postsecondary education remains an important policy consideration in shaping Alberta’s postsecondary system. However, despite some surveys showing general satisfaction with system access, rural enrolment is lower than those in urban areas. Some students want to stay and learn in their community rather than pursue higher education in larger centers.

Alberta’s six-sector model has the strength of providing a range of institutional types to meet students’ needs across the province. Alberta’s undergraduate universities have been among the first in Canada to focus specifically on the needs of undergraduates who often prefer the personalized and teaching focused liberal arts education that engages community orientation with broad educational outcomes. MRU excellent programs in STEM and in professional disciplines such as education, nursing, public relations and policy studies are in high student demand.

Alberta’s universities have also equipped learners with the skills they need for success. In 2017 Statistics Canada issued a census analysis dedicated to the comparison or earning by level of education, and identifies that “Among the provinces, men and women residing in Alberta had the highest earnings at every level of education.” This seems to indicate that the value of the education system in AB is well rewarded by employers. The census underscored the earnings disparity between university graduates with a bachelor degree and graduates of skill based training. This difference in earnings between Bachelor’s degree holders and Apprenticeship certificates of \$30,112 for women and \$9,127 for men when looking at national averages. When

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<sup>3</sup> *Report and Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta’s Finance*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Institutional Planning and Research, Mount Royal University, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Office of Institutional Planning and Research, Mount Royal University, 2020.

looking at Alberta only the same difference in earnings for women was \$30,749 and \$5,153 **for men.**<sup>6</sup> Notably, the census data was collected when oil prices were 50-90% higher than they are currently.

### **What does it all mean?**

Cuts in post-secondary education seem to affect negatively women and gender equality the most and the difference in earning potential. Moreover when looking at the tax benefit for apprenticeship versus bachelor degree the results become quite tangible.

#### **Tax Benefit Calculation for the Difference in Earnings**

**Women: \$30,749 x 35% (tax rate) = \$10,762 tax owed**

**\$10,762 x 40 years of labor force participation = \$430,480 income tax paid**

**Men: \$5,153 x 35% (tax rate) = \$1,804 tax owed**

**\$1,804 x 40 years of labor force participation = \$72,142 income tax paid**

This calculation points to an additional lifetime direct tax benefit of \$430,480 from women holding a bachelor degree and of \$72,142 for men. The calculation does not add the economic value created by attaining a masters or the positive impact of additional disposable income in services, construction and communities.

The Association stresses that undergraduate baccalaureate education continues to offer the best return on investment even as the temptation remains to fund more skills-oriented, vocational training. Research consistently shows that a foundational general education, which focuses on long-term intellectual outcomes and competencies, consistently lead to successful careers both in the professions and the disciplines. As numerous Alberta Quality Council reviews of Mount Royal degree program show, employers consistently laud MRU's integration of general (liberal) education with its undergraduate programs, which ensure graduates are well-equipped for the changing workplace. Alberta's undergraduate universities have a crucial role to play in ensuring Alberta's students are prepared with the communication, critical thinking and creativity skills they will require for the world of work they will be entering while ensuring a continuing high standard of living in the province.

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<sup>6</sup> Stats Canada, Table 1, *Census of Population*, 2016

## 2. ***How can Alberta’s advanced education system (for post-secondary institutions, students & others) be strengthened to continue producing highly skilled and globally competitive graduates for the future?***

The Association is concerned that this question assumes the focus of all post-secondary education is to produce skilled graduates. While graduating learners with the appropriate work-ready aptitudes and abilities is important, the Mount Royal Faculty Association contends that we must also consider the benefits of postsecondary education in maintaining a healthy democracy that respects diversity and vibrant debate at a time of increasing polarization in North America. The Association contends that a single-minded focus on job skills, completion and employment rates overlooks this equally important dimension of a post-secondary education.

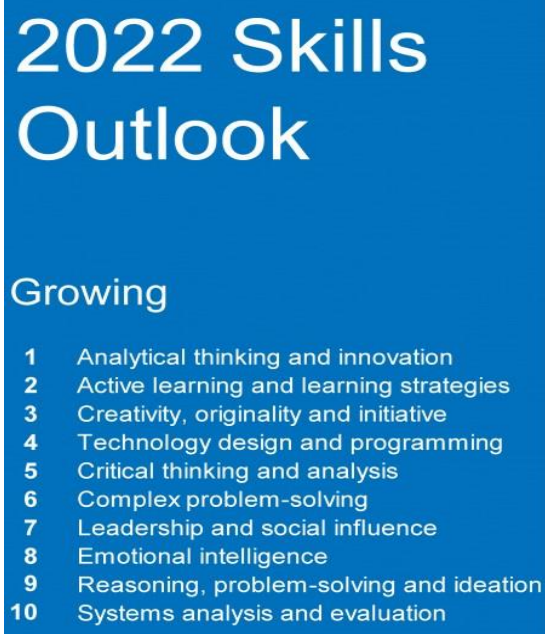


Figure 1.0 Year 2020 Skills Outlook<sup>7</sup>

The Association echoes CAFA’s concern that a focus on “specific vocational skills will substantially diminish opportunities for university graduates.” This focus is also counterproductive in light of changes in the kind of skills the labour market needs. As Figure 1 shows, the aptitudes and abilities most in demand in the labour market are those that a university education provides.

More specifically, the accelerating energy transition, which is seeing the permanent displacement of workers in the oil and gas industry, requires graduates who are *work ready*, not simply *job ready*. Postsecondary institutions, especially universities, have a crucial role to ensure that graduates have the *critical* and *creative* thinking skills that enable learners to adapt and navigate the new work landscape that will evolve in the face of dealing with energy transition, climate change and automation.

### **Recommendation #2.1 The Guiding Coalition must affirm the important role Alberta’s undergraduate universities play in offering a strong foundational education that favors long-term intellectual outcomes and competencies for learners.**

As the province seeks to diversify its economy, there will be a need for job specific skill training. However, there will also be a growing need for graduates who are adaptable and work ready for a rapidly-shifting economy. The Association is concerned that Guiding Coalition appears preoccupied with short-term deliverables (e.g. success among graduates in finding jobs in targeted sectors) in PSE. This focus is misguided and short-sighted since the benefits to society from PSE accrue over the long-term and require a system that can support the long-term need to diversify the economy.

Drawing on Mount Royal’s long history of offering high-quality programs with high rates of job placement, the MRFA knows that successful employment outcomes are important. However, the Association members also

<sup>7</sup> Future of Jobs 2018, World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/future-of-jobs-2018-things-to-know>. Accessed October 28,2020

know that students need the knowledge, values, and skills that a strong foundational education provides. Mount Royal University's highly regarded general education program provides MRU graduates with the necessary cross- and multi-disciplinary perspectives that enable them to navigate their professions in Alberta's rapidly changing work environment. As the Royal Bank report *Humans Wanted*

**Recommendation 2.2 Keep Alberta's PSE System Affordable by ensuring tuition costs do not exceed inflation.**

According to data from Statistics Canada, Alberta contributes only 1.77 per cent of its GDP to post-secondary education, the lowest proportion of any province. Students are expected to shoulder a heavier burden in the form of tuition fees. This shift has decreased access to higher education and resulted in enormous debt loads for those who do attend. Indeed, accessibility cannot be achieved when students face cumulative increases in tuition of 7% for three (3) years in a row, which will place the cost of attending post-secondary education close to the highest level in the country. In fact, Alberta tuition has increased at a rate greater than inflation and this threatens accessibility when the province most needs it.

The government's policy to increase learner's contributions to postsecondary education works against accessibility, especially when many learners will need to access higher education to change careers, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. Enrolments have actually *increased* at MRU during the pandemic, underscoring that people turn to what needs to be a stable system of PSE not only in the good times, but especially in the bad times.

**Recommendation 2.3 Create the Infrastructure to Support Personalized Learning**

For over a century, Mount Royal University has specialized in delivering successful programs that enhance student success. There remains a need for institutions such as MRU that focus on personalized learning in smaller classes where professors and students can interact. The Association urges that adequate funding be provided to maintain this focus on students and on personalized learning. Specifically, there must be funding for infrastructure (capital funding) that supports growth of programs in small classrooms, and avoids packing more students into large auditoriums. There needs to be adequate room for lecture/discussion space, and most importantly, for laboratory space. Targeted funding for faculty and students to have access to new technologies and technical capacities (i.e. labs, software programs) is essential.

**Recommendation 2.4 Provide the necessary resources to ensure that learners can access –and faculty can create--the best on-line learning materials and experiences possible.**

Postsecondary education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unanticipated reliance on remote delivery instruction. While on-line instruction has been able to deliver instruction during the COVID-19 emergency, the pandemic experience has also underscored how excellent on-line courses require specialized knowledge to develop excellent on-line delivery. Most of Alberta's postsecondary institutions largely lack the infrastructure and expertise evident at Athabasca University, where a team of educational developers, web designers and editors work to create exceptional on-line learning opportunities.

Moreover, the pandemic experience has shown that a move to large scale on-line delivery even in a blended form results in faculty spending their own resources to support remote delivery, costs that are appropriately borne by the institution. At Mount Royal University, the Association has found 50 percent of faculty reported spending from \$500 to \$1,000 of their own funds to support on-line delivery.<sup>8</sup> This amount excludes on-going costs for high-speed internet access and office supplies. The tale here is that while hybrid approaches to teaching may become more possible after the pandemic, many costs of on-line delivery are less visible but still must be taken into account.

Mount Royal faculty are also concerned about student access to on-line delivery methods. Faculty have reported many students do not have the economic means to afford reliable internet connections and/or the necessary bandwidth to access on-line learning. Indeed, the MRFA urges the Guiding Coalition to take a broad

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<sup>8</sup> *Impact of Covid-19 on Faculty Work Survey*, Mount Royal Faculty Association, September 2020.



view of this question of using technology to deliver instruction. Instead of seeing on-line delivery as the means to reduce costs while increasing access, the Association recommends that the Guiding Coalition recommend appropriate technologies be deployed to ensure greater access. It's difficult to imagine a world-class, accessible student-centered postsecondary education system in Alberta if there's a persistent system-wide shift to on-line instruction.

### **Recommendation #2.5 Support Experiential Learning Opportunities**

The MRFA recognizes the importance of a range of experiential learning opportunities. There does need to be more funding and support for paid cooperative work opportunities and for experiential learning programs that help integrate students in the labor force. However, experiential learning encompasses far more than acquiring work experiences. Experiential learning can be student organized undergraduate conferences, travel study programs and exchanges. The workforce priorities of today will not be the same in five or even 10 years: a well-designed academic education should include *a range of experiential learning opportunities* that enable students to adapt and respond to new challenges and opportunities.

### **Recommendation 2.6 Provide Targeted Support for Undergraduate Research, especially for Black, Indigenous and other racialized students.**

Many faculty at undergraduate universities undertake research and scholarship, which specifically engages undergraduate students. Close to 75 percent of full-time faculty at MRU are engaged in research, advancing knowledge and creating a rich and responsive educational context for our students. The MRFA supports a system to fund undergraduate participation in research, perhaps to take the place of the cancelled STEP program.

Undergraduate research provides learners with the skills and aptitudes required for research they may undertake in graduate programs or within their chosen professions. Support for, and facilitation of, research at the undergraduate level also means targeted funds for the acquisition of research equipment and laboratory equipment. Such funding should also extend to creating experiential learning opportunities, whether they be research, internships, co-ops etc. Targeted funding is particularly needed for Black, Indigenous, and other racialized students who have historically been underrepresented and underfunded within postsecondary institutions and excluded from undergraduate research opportunities.

***RECOMMENDATION 2.7 The MRFA recommends creating a number of "Alberta Teaching Excellence Chairs," awarded competitively to outstanding sessional instructors in Alberta PSE institutions that provide 5-year contracts, with competitive renewals. This initiative should be followed by targeted funding to convert eligible contract academic staff into full-time tenurable positions. Both initiatives should ensure that funding exists for contract academic faculty from Black, Indigenous and people of colour to ensure a more inclusive academy.***

The initial step can immediately bring those high-performing contract instructors into a more permanent work arrangement where they can fully contribute to the postsecondary education. However, the long-term solution for which the MFRA advocates remains for the province to provide specific targeted funding directed towards converting eligible contract academic faculty into full-time tenurable positions. Such targeted funding should also give priority wherever possible to underrepresented groups from Black, Indigenous, and people of color as well as members of other equity-seeking groups, who comprise a significant portion of contract academic staff at Alberta's undergraduate universities.

### **3. *How can Alberta create a more cost-efficient post-secondary system?***

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The government's contention that Alberta's PSE system is over-funded relative to other provinces such as B.C. and Ontario is open to debate given that substantial questions have been posed about the data on which this claim is made. The MRFA emphasizes that the government's decision to cut Campus Alberta Grants for the next three years will work against the need to engage Alberta's postsecondary system to confront the social, environmental and economic challenges that face Alberta. The Association notes that wages are not the main problem here: Statistics Canada University Salary data shows that full-time faculty at Alberta universities are paid at \*below\* the national average.<sup>9</sup> Rather as other reports have shown, there has been an increase in administrative expenses, including executive compensation, which needs to be addressed.

That said, the MRFA emphasizes the concern expressed in CAFA's submission about the consequences of further reducing costs or expenditures when our institutions are undergoing a roughly 20% reduction of Alberta Campus Grant in just three years. As the CAFA submission states:

This massive reduction in government funding will mean serious structural changes that will likely not improve the quality of education in our province: more students in a class (on-line or in person) means less instructional and one-on-one time for students to spend with their professors, and less support staff... to help with research or funding proposals.<sup>10</sup>

At Mount Royal University, these funding cuts are hindering the University's ability to deliver the student services and supports that have produced the excellent student experience that MRU has been shown to deliver.

Many institutions have turned to ancillary services and to the private sector to offset the decline in government funding. However, the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the dangers of this approach. At MRU, revenues from these sources has stumbled during the pandemic resulting in more service reductions and concomitant layoffs and staffing cuts. Far from creating a more efficient system, shifting universities' reliance on the private sector and ancillary business activities threatens to increase instability by intensifying the effects of economic shocks.

There has been considerable discussion about consolidating institutions or where that is undesirable, the Guiding Coalition recommend institutions explore merging 'backroom operations,' as if these were all the same at all institutions. There is a sense that many institutions across the province unnecessarily duplicate programs and courses, creating ripe grounds for efficiencies. Rather than view this phenomenon as duplication, the Association sees this as a sign of how Alberta's PSE institutions are successfully meeting the specific needs of their communities. Suggesting that all curriculum can be pre-packaged and then delivered like any other commodity overlooks how the needs and interests of learners in Lac La Biche will differ from those in Calgary. As alluring as the supposed cost saving might be from eliminating so-called duplication, Alberta still needs vibrant, locally-attuned postsecondary institutions that respond to local needs.

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0108-01. *Number and salaries of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710010801-eng>

<sup>10</sup> CAFA Submission to McKinsey & Company's Alberta 2030 Review, p. 5

#### 4. *How can we strengthen post-secondary participation rates and accommodate growing enrollment demands?*

Alberta has lower participation in postsecondary education than Ontario or B.C., especially among those ages 17-24. This lower participation rate is partly a consequence of attractive employment opportunities that offer better returns than postsecondary education. However, since 2015, as the MacKinnon Report notes, although high-paying energy jobs have become scarcer the AB PSE participation rate remains at 17%.<sup>11</sup> More recent studies show that Alberta's lower rates of participation in higher education may also be attributed to parental success which have come without higher education and therefore less support for young adults to pursue higher education.

##### **Recommendation 4.1 Provide better advising to students in K-12 about the benefits of postsecondary education and encourage transitional collaborative programs.**

The Association supports CAFA's recommendation that there be more consultation with those groups who are underrepresented in Alberta postsecondary education. However, the Association believes that resources must be allocated both to academic advising within the K-12 system and to provide incentives for undergraduate university/high school collaborations to bridge the transition between secondary and postsecondary education. The collaboration between Mount Royal University and Calgary's Bishop Carroll High School offer an example of such successful programs.

##### **Recommendation 4.2 Support for learner pathways, especially through funding for collaborative programs between undergraduate universities and local colleges.**

Collaborative programs help students acquire baccalaureate degrees in business and education while remaining in their communities. Drawing on Mount Royal's unique position as an undergraduate university, the collaborations between Medicine Hat College, Red Deer College, and Keyano College have been able to address the specific needs of local students with high quality, learner-focused curriculum.

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<sup>11</sup> *Report and Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's Finances*, p. 40.

## 5. How can we strengthen the commercialization of research?

The Mount Royal Faculty Association is concerned about the tendency to position university research and its value entirely in terms of commercialization, as if research is conducted only for the benefit of private industry. This view overlooks the value of basic research from which many subsequent applications flow. The Association also opposes the idea that university research should serve only private industry when other pressing social, medical and environmental research must be undertaken for the public good. Research is generated by human curiosity, which often drives major breakthroughs. At the very least, the MRFA advocates that research funding be available for a broad spectrum of fields and disciplines, not just STEM disciplines or oil/gas development.

**Recommendation 5.1 Rather than a focus increasing access to STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs, the Association suggests that the province focus on STEAM—Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics.**

Funding for research on the arts as well as the social sciences is critical to find the best way to equip learners with the skills required for the emerging economy. As the RBC 2018 report *Humans Wanted* puts it:

Communication, collaboration and critical thinking will serve you well in any career — even technical and scientific ones. Imagine a mining engineer who can't negotiate with her local community, or a doctor who can't talk to his patients. Well-rounded basic and social skills are must-haves across the board.<sup>12</sup>

Alberta's undergraduate universities, especially Mount Royal University with its emphasis on foundational general education and undergraduate research, are well-positioned to help Albertans have the aptitudes they will require for success in the coming decade.

**Recommendation #5.2 The MRFA recommends that the guiding coalition affirm the importance of observing existing collective agreements and their Intellectual Property provisions.**

The Association supports the CAFA submission's comments related to intellectual property rights. The MRFA additionally notes that Alberta Universities have collective agreements that have negotiated how intellectual property rights are to be handled. While industry often bemoans the complexity of universities' Intellectual Property agreements, expressing a desire for simpler standard agreements, the MRFA believes that the government will not be well served by such an approach.

**Recommendation #5.3 The MRFA recommends that the Guiding Coalition explicitly acknowledge that contract academic faculty's right to their intellectual property produced in the course of their employment and where these rights exist in collective agreements, they will be respected.**

This recommendation is especially vital when we consider contract academic faculty who at Mount Royal University deliver over 50 percent of teaching hours in its programs. At Mount Royal University contract academic faculty maintain the moral and intellectual property rights to the work they produce in the course of their employment at Mount Royal University, a right that is vital for the many contract faculty who work at multiple institutions. This right acknowledges that in the absence of permanent employment, contract faculty must have the right to use their intellectual property freely.

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<sup>12</sup> Royal Bank of Canada. *Humans Wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption*, 2018, p. 27.

## *How can the governance of the Alberta Advanced Education system be improved?*

The Association notes that universities and colleges have different governance arrangements that accord with their function. Bicameral governance at postsecondary universities remains the best guarantor of academic excellence and quality programs.

Buttressed by the peer review process, bicameral governance ensures that the program curriculum meets the highest standards of academic rigor and respects academic freedom. A strong collegial government system ensures that credentialing, program decisions, and pedagogical decisions are being made for academic reasons and not to cater to the current but shifting economic environment. Institutional autonomy and the academic freedom of faculty on which bicameral governance rests, ensures that universities remain responsive to the *many* publics that universities are called upon to serve.

**Recommendation 6.1 The MFA firmly recommends that there be no “super board” or unicameral governance system created for Alberta’s universities; indeed, the Association strongly recommends that the Guiding Coalition affirm its support for bicameral governance and that it recommend the provincial government do likewise.**

Some discussions have focused on unicameral governance systems, which appear to offer a more efficient governance approach. A closer examination of the unicameral system at the University of Toronto shows that a unicameral system has structures that replicate those of bicameral governance. (See Appendix A.) While there are some advantages to the discussions that might arise between academic and public representatives on a unicameral body, those same conversations might be facilitated by providing legislation that mandates an annual meeting between the General Faculties Council and the Board of Governors to discuss institutional priorities. Based on its long history as a public institution under three different governance models, the Mount Royal Faculty Association offers the following suggestions with respect to effective governance:

**Recommendation 6.2 The Association recommends that the role of Chair of the General Faculties Council be separated from that of the University President.**

The Association agrees with CAFA when it argues that the role of President and the Chair of GFC should be separated since conflating the two roles allows the President to control debate and at times silence members whose views are contrary to that of administration. At the very least, legislation should allow GFC the option of creating an academic staff member to act as a Speaker who will direct GFC meetings.

**Recommendation 6.3 Appoint Board members with a deep commitment to PSE overarching academic mission and long-term institutional interests.**

Ideally the Board will include arms-length members who have experience and expertise in education and research at post-secondary institutions, and support the collegial governance culture of PSE institutions generally. As noted earlier, these appointments should reflect the diversity of Alberta’s changing population.

**Recommendation 6.4 Revive and reinvigorate the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT)**

Considerable discussion has centered on the need for more transferability among Alberta’s postsecondary institutions. The Association agrees that there must be more emphasis on credit transfer between and among different institutions. Drawing on Mount Royal’s long history of providing and accepting transfer credits, the Association advocates for using the reinvigorated Alberta Council for Admissions and Transfers to engage all stakeholders in discussions about standards for transfer with an eye to improving student mobility and education quality. While students benefit from better transferability, there are some challenges for receiving institutions who have less time to build the kind of strong attachments that may later lead to strong alumni organizations. The Association also notes that transfer discussions should also address other forms of credential collaboration such as block transfer of credits and “two+ two” diploma-degree arrangements, both of which can also address access and affordability in innovative ways.