

All Candidates Forum:

Candidates nominated for Executive Board positions for the 2021 Spring Election are listed below. **Please click on the candidates' names to view their video recorded campaign statements or scroll down to view written statements.** Recorded statements will also be played at the AGM in accordance with the Association's voting policy.

Executive Board Voting:

Voting will be conducted by online ballot immediately following the adjournment of the Special Meeting on May 14, 2021 and voting shall close at 6:00pm the same day. Advance voting is available by request only (email office@mrfa.net) from 9:00am on May 11 to 5:00pm on May 12, 2021.

<i>Position / Candidates</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Eligibility</i>
<i>Vice-President Negotiations</i>	2021-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members, <i>with at least five years of membership in the MRFA</i>, are eligible. Candidates should have demonstrable familiarity with the Collective Agreement and bargaining processes, preferably at MRU.
<u>Kirk Niergarth</u>	Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities	
<i>VP Policy and Sr. Grievance Officer</i>	2021-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members, <i>with at least five years of membership in the MRFA</i>, are eligible. Candidates should have demonstrable familiarity with the Collective Agreement and representational processes, preferably as a member of the Grievance Committee.
<u>Cynthia Gallop</u>	Associate Professor in the Department of General Education	
<u>Kelly Sundberg</u>	Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies	
<i>Contract Member Representative</i>	2021-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Contract Members are eligible
<u>Brenda Lang</u>	Lecturer in the Department of General Management and HR	
<u>Richard Erlendson</u>	Lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Broadcast Media Studies	
<i>Academic Liaison Officer</i>	2021-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members are eligible
<u>Frances Widdowson</u>	Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies	
<u>Peter Ryan</u>	Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Relations	
<i>Advocacy Officer</i>	2021-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members are eligible
<u>Marc Schroeder</u>	Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computing	
<i>Diversity and Equity Officer</i>	2021-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members are eligible
<u>Milena Radzikowska</u>	Professor in the Department of Information Design	
<i>Member Engagement Officer</i>	2021-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Regular Members are eligible
<u>Roberta Lexier</u>	Associate Professor in the Departments of General Education and Humanities	

Vice President Negotiations

Candidate: Kirk Niergarth, Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities

Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

If anyone who has closely followed the progress of the current round of negotiation tells you they are *really looking forward* to serving as VP Negotiations, you should question their honesty, their sanity, or both.

Having been a member of the Executive Board over the past year and serving upon our Bargaining Communications Committee, our Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee, and the Job Action Preparedness Committee, I have been working closely with the Negotiations team and I admire the work they have done enormously.

They have consulted broadly with the membership. They have developed workable, reasonable, and feasible proposals to improve our Collective Agreement sustain the quality of our academic working lives. They have worked extremely hard and been well-led by the current VP Negotiations, Professor Anupam Das.

It is, has been, and will continue to be a difficult round at a pivotal time. The MRFA has been extremely well represented by an extraordinary team and we should be very grateful to those who have completed their service to the Negotiations Committee and those who are continuing to serve. It is in honour and recognition of the work of this team that I stand for election today. If I have few illusions of the frustrations that may lie ahead as VP Negotiations, it will be a privilege to work alongside the members of this team. That *is* something to which I'm really looking forward.

Serving as Communications Officer has been useful preparation for the stage of this round that lies ahead. As VP Negotiations, it will be of vital importance to keep members informed about what choices are facing us and to hear about every member's priorities and concerns. When it comes to a Collective Agreement, we really are all in it together. And our livelihoods depend upon it.

Our hope must always be to arrive at a fair deal at the table without disruption to our important work of teaching and scholarship, but it takes two sides to reach an agreement. While the MRFA must be reasonable and aware of the constraints of the present moment, it is nevertheless the case that our work is vital to the institutions and our working conditions have been hard won over decades of bargaining. We cannot allow an atmosphere of crisis to obscure our longstanding commitments and interests.

I can promise only that if elected to this position I will be honest and frank with the membership and will serve their interests faithfully. My hope is to return as soon as is practicably possible to spending the bulk of my time teaching and writing history, so, like everyone, I would appreciate a speedy resolution to negotiations. I do not expect one. I expect a grind and I will resign before recommending any agreement to you that I believe does not serve our common interests well.

Vice President Policy and Senior Grievance Officer

Candidate: Cynthia Gallop, Associate Professor in the Department of General Education

Written Campaign Statement below

Thank you for considering me for this important position. For those of you who do not know me, I am an Associate Professor in the Department of General Education. Formerly, I was cross appointed between the Departments of Child Studies and Social Work and General Education. I have also been a Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) member since August 2013 and was the Chair of HREB from August 2015 to July 2019.

The role of Vice President Policy and Grievance is one of the most important positions in a university. It is through this office, process, and person that an employee is able to raise concerns about a fair and equitable work environment without the fear of negative repercussions. The knowledge that any concerns will be taken seriously and handled fairly will not only help bolster faculty morale, and wellness, it helps maintain levels of productivity for the university. Ultimately, it is through this role and process that we are able to ensure a fair and thorough process is in place and maintained to protect faculty from arbitrary decisions made by management.

I believe the key qualities and skills required for this role are: 1) an understanding of, and ability to interpret, the Collective Agreement and MRU policies; 2) strong leadership skills; 3) creative and innovative thinking; 4) good communication skills; 5) strong ethics and integrity; and 6) good administration skills for report development. I believe both my work experience, prior to coming to MRU and my service and teaching experience at MRU has prepared me for this role.

Prior to beginning my career at MRU in 2008, ten years of my postgraduate career were spent working as a consultant to non-profit organizations in the area of policy and program development and evaluation. Through this work, I was

able to assist organizations to create programs more equitable and accessible to both diverse service users and staff. Much of this work involved my ability to interpret policy, conduct evaluations, and coach management to change their practices to be more inclusive. My expertise in the areas of organizational development and leadership were further refined by developing and teaching the *Canadian Social Policy* course for 10 years, and the *Leadership in Human Service Organizations* course for 9 years while in the Social Work department at MRU.

Having said all of that, I believe it is my time with the Human Research Ethics Board at MRU that has best prepared me for this type of role. The HREB Chair position is unique in all universities in that it requires an understanding of various ethical requirements and quandaries, an understanding of how university practices and government compliance systems need to align and be managed, strong communication and negotiation skills within competing environments (participants, researchers, REB reviewers, and senior administrators), supervisory skills for the staff required to run a HREB department, and administration skills for report development and writing. I spent four years honing all of these skills.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight my personal qualities that will also support me in this role. Namely, I am not afraid of hard work, nor am I easily intimidated by people in positions of authority. I have a strong sense of justice, and compassion for those who have been treated unfairly. I also understand the importance of working with integrity. More than any skills, I believe these personal qualities will serve my colleagues well if I am in this position.

My goals, should I be elected to this position, include maintaining the excellent work of my colleagues and support the current grievance processes at MRU. As well, as someone who has also had challenges and grievances at MRU, I would like to use the evidence and learning from this role to highlight some of the gaps that may exist in our current Collective Agreement, and bring them to the Negotiating Committee for review.

Candidate: Kelly Sundberg, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

Dear Colleagues, I'm Kelly Sundberg, and I'm seeking your vote for VP Policy and Senior Grievance Officer. I've been at MRU for over 15 years and currently work as an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, Justice, and Policy Studies. Having served as a former Chair for the Department of Justice Studies, and as a regional Assistant Vice-President and Chief Shop Stewart with the Public Service Alliance of Canada during my previous career with the Government of Canada, I know first hand the importance of evidence-based and concise policy, and also the frustration, anxiety, and other challenges associated with filing a grievance. If elected as our next VP Policy and Senior Grievance Officer, I will work diligently to ensure all those who file a grievance are treated with dignity and respect — also ensuring unbiased, timely, and informed support. Thank you again, and I thank you for your support and vote.

Contract Member Representative

Candidate: Brenda Lang, Lecturer in the Department of General Management and Human Resources
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

I have been a member of the MRFA for 20 years and served on the Executive Board in two positions. From 2012 – 2016, I served as the Contract Faculty Representative, and from 2016 – 2020, I served as the Communications Officer (and was the first contract faculty member to serve on the Executive Board in a role other than Contract Faculty Representative). During last spring's elections, I was elected to the Negotiating Committee and am thrilled that this year's Committee includes three contract faculty members to bargain alongside three full-time members.

While there may be differences in the concerns of contract members and those of full-time members, I believe there are more areas in which the concerns are aligned. We are all concerned about receiving fair compensation for the work we do. We are all concerned about workload creep and job security. We all understand that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions, and we all care about our students. It is also important to note that we are all regular members of the Association with the same rights.

Although the Contract Faculty Representative does have the responsibility of representing the issues and concerns of approximately 50% of the Association membership, the entire Executive Board has the responsibility of acting in the best interest of all members – both full-time and contract. All members of the Executive Board must strive to understand the issues facing contract members, and the Contract Faculty Representative must strive to understand the issues facing full-time members.

The Contract Faculty Representative also serves on the Grievance Committee and the Negotiating Committee. These Committees deal with matters requiring a deep understanding of the Collective Agreement. As a past member of the

Executive Board and a current member of the Negotiating Committee, I have strong knowledge of the Collective Agreement. I also understand the work of these Committees and the Executive Board – I am ready and able to get to work immediately.

As a contract faculty representative on GFC for more than five years, I appreciate the importance of a strong faculty voice in the University's academic decision making, and I am aware of the academic governance process. This understanding is helpful to the effective governance of the Association.

I am passionate about advocating for contract faculty, and I am a proud, supportive, and active member of the MRFA. I respectfully ask for your vote for the position of Contract Faculty Representative on the Executive Board.

Candidate: Richard Erlendson, Lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Broadcast Media Studies
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

Hi colleagues. My name is Richard Erlendson from Journalism and Broadcast Media Studies.

Some of you will be familiar with my name because I have previously served as the Contract Faculty Representative on the MRFA Executive Committee, and I am currently serving on the Negotiating Committee – and have from its start nearly two years ago.

So, I've just completed the steepest learning curve anybody could possibly have, and what I know at the end of that steep climb, assuredly, is that I'd like to continue into another term ahead.

When I think of my previous term as the Contract Faculty Member on the MRFA executive, several themes run through my mind.

I enjoyed researching and writing biweekly emails with important information pertaining to contract faculty.

I relished meeting with contract faculty members one-on-one when they had questions or concerns.

I enjoyed contributing to the work of the Grievance Committee and Benefits Committee – on which I was also a member.

I was thrilled to be exposed to the role of CAFA and to participate in provincial negotiating-related communication..

And I enjoyed welcoming contract faculty at new faculty orientations and attending information sessions regarding contract faculty member hiring and workload allocation.

But, it was the membership on the Executive Committee of the Mount Royal Faculty Association that became the important work in my role as the Contract Faculty Member.

Previously in my career, I served as an elected School Board Trustee, and in that situation, yes, I represented the schools in my ward, but there again, the important work was as a voting member of the school board in general. It's a seat at the table; it's the ability to contribute to policy development and strategic direction; it's the opportunity to contribute to a strong council that matters most.

The Contract Faculty Representative role on the MRFA Executive Committee is a similar situation. Yes, I'd like to support and encourage contract faculty members, individually and collectively, but, more importantly, I want to contribute holistically and significantly to the vibrant leadership of the MRFA Executive. For me, this is the essential work of the contract faculty representative, and it is my goal in submitting my nomination to contribute in significant ways to the MRFA Executive and its decisions and directions in the daunting year ahead.

As well, I have become part of a tight team currently negotiating a new collective agreement between the MRFA and The Board. Negotiating a collective agreement is vital work for our Association. After nearly two years of difficult negotiating, I would like to continue on the negotiating committee as the Contract Faculty member until an agreement is reached.

I'd like to serve again as the Contract Faculty Member to provide stability and continuity to the MRFA negotiating team in what has become incredibly uncertain times.

So, to conclude, my earlier term as the Contract Faculty Representative was invigorating for me, and I'd like to translate my steep learning curve into effective and informed contributions in the year ahead.

I want to make a difference in the final season of my decades-long, post-secondary career – the past 12 years at Mount Royal University.

I believe I have been well-prepared for this next season as the Contract Faculty Member on the MRFA Executive and Negotiating Committees.

Thank you for your consideration on voting day.

Academic Liaison Officer

Candidate: Frances Widdowson, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Justice and Policy Studies

Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

I have been a faculty member at Mount Royal University (MRU) for thirteen years, and have been actively involved in the faculty association during this time. I have served on the Communications Committee and the Social Events Committee, and have participated extensively in providing feedback on many of the MRU initiatives that involve academic standards, freedom of expression and academic freedom. I have served on General Faculties Council and have not been afraid to raise questions about issues that negatively impact our ability, as academics, to speak honestly about the challenges that we face. In addition, I founded the Rational Space Network (@SpaceRational) in 2016 so as to promote open inquiry and critical thinking at MRU, enabling me to develop connections with faculty members in many different departments. My position as a board member with the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (www.saafs.ca) also has enhanced my understanding of academic issues, as I constantly deal with violations of academic freedom and provide criticism of initiatives that lower academic standards. If I am elected as Academic Liaison Officer, I will use all this experience to assist the MRFA President in upholding the rights of faculty and to increase their control over academic governance at MRU. MRU is increasingly becoming a corporatized university, and a strong faculty voice is needed to ensure that it is the development and dissemination of knowledge, not managerial imperatives or the satisfaction of student-customers, which is the focus.

In addition to using my experience to facilitate the exchange of information with Faculty Councils and General Faculties Council, I am uniquely placed to assist decision-making on the MRFA Executive. We all recognize that MRU should be a diverse and inclusive institution, but this requires ensuring that the MRFA Executive considers a variety of perspectives. Throughout my time at MRU, I have been a champion of making the MRFA more representative of all faculty members. To this end, I will promote the sharing of information with all members, and try to develop forums where we can listen to the different perspectives that are held across the institution. I understand that while we all have political opinions, these should be kept separate from decisions that are made to protect members' rights under the Collective Agreement. The MRFA Executive needs to create a climate where we can develop solidarity amongst members as a community of scholars, so as to protect the academic mandate of MRU from external pressures. The MRFA has a long and storied history as a vibrant and fair organization, and by focusing on our shared interests as teachers and researchers, we can become even stronger in our defense of MRU as an academic institution. If elected as the Academic Liaison Officer, I will work tirelessly to nurture our capacity, as academics, to engage in discussions that protect the intellectual character of MRU.

Candidate: Peter Ryan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Relations

Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#) and written statement below

I have been on the Academic Liaison Committee (ALC) as the Faculty of Business and Communication Studies (FBCS) representative for the past three years. The ALC is the MRFA group that reviews each GFC agenda and package prior to the monthly GFC meeting, so that any MRFA member can come learn more about the issues being discussed at GFC, and to provide their input, while also helping to support GFC councillors in their roles. During my time on the ALC, I was fortunate to be mentored by two ALC Chairs, Carlton-James Osakwe and Allison MacKenzie, for their respective tenures. My hope will be to continue the practices that they have established, while also building off their work to help streamline and improve communications support to GFC councillors as the new GFC likely returns to in-person sessions in Fall 2021. To note, I will also start as a FBCS GFC councillor for a three-year term in July 2021, and I was previously a GFC councillor for a two-year period from 2018 to 2020. I believe those experiences will help me to guide, and work together with, the next group of ALC representatives in Fall 2021, to provide effective, timely support for our GFC councillors.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information about the ALC. Thank you for your time and kind consideration of my nomination.

Advocacy Officer

**Candidate: Marc Schroeder, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computing
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#)**

Diversity and Equity Officer

**Candidate: Milena Radzikowska, Professor in the Department of Information Design
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#)**

Member Engagement Officer

**Candidate: Roberta Lexier, Associate Professor in the Departments of General Education and Humanities
Campaign Statement – Submitted via [video recording](#)**

Hello. My name is Roberta Lexier and I am an Associate Professor in the Departments of General Education and Humanities.

I'm hoping you will consider me for the new position of Member Engagement Officer on the MRFA executive board.

I am a historian by training but have developed a particularly interdisciplinary research and teaching program centred around the study of social movements and social change, as well as left politics in Canada.

Since I arrived at MRU in 2011, I have been actively engaged in the faculty association and union organizing. I have, in the past, sat on the Advocacy Committee and was the Advocacy Chair and, for a short time, was the MRFA representative on the Board of Governors (I resigned in opposition to the Board's positions on tuition increases, provincial government funding cuts, and performance-based funding).

I have tried to offer a strong and principled voice in favour of higher education in Alberta and more broadly, and I hope to do so again as a member of the executive board team during these incredibly difficult times ahead.

In particular, I hope to fill the newly-created Member Engagement Officer position and bring both my academic research and my personal organizing experience to this important role. My goal is to help build the leverage necessary to fight the cuts to post-secondary education and, at the same time, prepare for the possibility of a lockout or the ability to strike.

Unions play a central role in a capitalist democracy, protecting and promoting the rights of workers in the face of strong oppositional forces. I know for many, the confrontational approach this implies can be a challenge – we all want good relationships with our employers (especially at a university, I think) – but, as is increasingly obvious, we, as employees, have our own interests that often differ from our employers (and the government) and we need to be able to promote and protect them effectively.

This is not just about money or salaries or the possibility of strike/lockout. There are fundamental struggles ahead for our sector and we, whether we like it or not, must be able to fight for ourselves.

Others seemingly have all the power in this relationship.

But we can be stronger. Because we have the numbers.

Also, we're on the right side of history, but that doesn't really seem to matter much in these cases!

Our strength, without a doubt, is our members – our overwhelming numbers, our fundamental importance to the system, and our demonstrated willingness to take action.

And the MRFA has an incredibly engaged membership – better than most unions, especially faculty associations! It makes me very proud to be colleagues with such an incredible group of people.

But... we lost the right to strike from 2005 until 2018 – during which time many of us arrived – and we logically and understandably abandoned some of the focused and persistent organizing necessary to fully engage our members in such a context.

This is true for most unions, so we shouldn't feel bad, but it's time to commit to the real work of organizing.

There are, as union activist Jane McAlevey says, No Shortcuts.

So, if you elect me as Member Engagement Officer, my intention is to create a formalized and systematic process by which to increase and maintain connections between the executive and the membership in order to mobilize the masses towards a common cause.

This will involve:

- The development of the Member Engagement Committee into an effective place to hear member concerns and connect those concerns with union activities
 - The creation of an ongoing program where individual members will be trained to reach out to their colleagues, and will – through a dialectic – make connections between member concerns and union responses
- Identifying the leaders in each unit/area and the webs of relationships between and among our different faculties.
 - One person cannot do this work alone and, if elected, I will be calling on you to help develop methods that work for different areas/faculties.
 - There is no one-size-all solution and we need the active participation of everyone.
- Work with the other executive members to develop progressively more involved actions to test support for campaigns and build community/solidarity amongst our members
- Develop self-esteem programs to help us rediscover our importance and our value – not in any hokey way but a legitimate effort to find our purpose again
- Work with the Communications committee/exec/job action committee/Chantelle to develop fast and effective communication tools, like telephone trees, to quickly mobilize our membership if/when needed

I have felt demoralized and defeated for years now – helpless and hopeless.

But it's better to fight. To organize. To work.

So, I hope you give me the chance to work for you. For us. So we can survive this struggle. Together.

Solidarity!