

Member Outreach Campaign

In August 2021, we embarked on an ambitious campaign to listen to the thoughts and concerns of all 838 members of the MRFA. Your feedback to the department liaisons has given us valuable insight into our MRFA community's perspective on our return to campus, contract negotiations, and concerns specific to precariously employed contract faculty members. Thank you to the more than 300 MRFA members who have already contributed to the Member Outreach Campaign!

What did we learn?

We learned about a variety of topics from your feedback - some broad and systemic, and some local and specific. Many of you shared your concerns: the lack of leadership and transparency across the university, the amount of racism on campus, the toxic and unsafe work environment in which we all work, extremely heavy workloads, too much service and the need for more hires. Four key themes surfaced in many of the conversations you had with liaisons:

1. Our Return to Campus

- Our MRFA community expressed differing opinions on the return to campus - some faculty were happy to return, others were not.
- You shared that the uncertainty around shifting between in-person and remote teaching has caused high stress and anxiety about the continuing uncertainty and need to shift between in-person and remote teaching is felt across all members who were contacted.
- Being asked to accommodate for absent students (especially for those who are away from campus due to COVID symptoms or exposure) has resulted in an increase in workload for all.

2. Contract Negotiations

- The majority of the members contacted are supportive of the efforts made by the negotiating committee, particularly in resisting compensation cutbacks.
- Many members are worried about the potential financial repercussions of a strike.
- Many members commented on the possible lack of public support for a strike.
- Some concerns were raised about an adversarial approach taken by the MRFA

3. The MRFA

- Some community members felt that there was not enough diversity of representation in the MRFA committees and executive structure.
- Many members recommended that the MRFA work to coordinate more closely with the MRSA.
- Most of the MRFA community felt a strong sense of trust in the negotiating team and the executive
- Many of you would like to find new ways to create space for debate and discussion in MRFA meetings.

4. Contract Faculty

- MRFA contract faculty shared their feelings of detachment from both the MRFA and the institution.
- Many members shared concerns about the lack of access to extended health benefits between contracts.
- The reliance on precarious labour at MRU is a primary concern for our community, as is the expectation that contract faculty begin preparing for their classes before the start of their employment contract. Many of you are seeking clarity from Chairs and Administration about Contract Faculty hiring processes and orientation services. Chairs are not always clear; and there is an unclear hiring process.
- Most importantly, you shared your dismay that Contract faculty were not paid for the extra work that resulted from the changes due to COVID.

What will we do with these findings?

Findings from the MRFA Member Outreach Campaign will inform our bargaining strategies now and in the future. The insight you've shared will also guide the actions and activities that the MRFA prioritizes, and the context of ongoing conversations between the MRFA and MRU this year.

What comes next?

We are pleased to share that the MRFA has extended the Member Outreach Campaign to the end of April 2022. If you have not had a call and would like one, please let the MRFA President or Communications Officer know and we will be happy to reach out to you sooner rather than later.

Without the willingness of all members contacted to engage in these conversations, we would not be able to move forward in a way that appropriately represents our membership. Thank you.

Thank you, also, to our very committed and involved Department Liaisons for reaching out, making contact, and engaging in these conversations. We are all appreciative of the opportunity to share our thoughts through these conversations.