



To: MRFA Members

From: MRFA President

Date: March 28, 2023

Re: Amendments to MRFA Bylaws

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Colleagues,

At the April 6 Special Meeting, you will vote on proposed amendments to the Association Bylaw amendments outlined here. These recommended changes are the culmination of three major initiatives the Executive Board has undertaken this year:

- Further steps to move the Association to the engagement/organizing model of unionization;
- Revising the Association's mission, vision and values and;
- Aligning the Association's standing committee structure to support those two objectives.

These amendments reflect the important changes that have occurred since we last reviewed the Association's structures over a decade ago. The most notable changes are to collective bargaining processes since becoming a deemed trade union under the Alberta Labour Relations Code. (See the separate memo on these changes.) The Membership Bylaw amendments are required to clarify that under provincial legislation only currently employed members of the academic staff are members of the Association. (Contract academic faculty

remain members for 12 months after their last contract expires.)

These changes also continue the necessary work to ensure that our Association pushes forward on its commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion in the *MRFA 2025* plan.

### **Member Consultation**

As part of the drive to engage members in Association decision-making processes, in 2020, the Executive Board created and implemented a 30-day consultation period for members to comment on proposed bylaws and new policies. In addition to the providing members with this opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments, the Executive Board also engaged members in the following ways:

- Department visits in Fall 2022
- Presentations at the January Regular Meeting
- MRFA PD Day February 24, 2022

Thank you to the members who took time to comment on these proposed bylaw changes. In each area of proposed changes, this memo notes how comments have been addressed. The proposed amendments are a response to the urgent need to make our Association an inclusive, diverse and welcoming organization, which will connect members, champion our rights and celebrate our successes.

I want to thank the members of the MRFA Executive Board's Reorganization Working Group, the Bylaws and Governance Committee and the MRFA Executive Board for their work on developing these proposed changes.

I welcome your questions at the Special Meeting on April 6, 2023.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO MRFA BYLAWS

### Background

Starting with the recommendations of the Equity Review Working Group in April 2021, the Association has been reviewing its underlying structure to promote an inclusive and diverse organization and to ensure compliance with relevant provincial legislation and the provisions of the Alberta Labour Relations Code. In April 2020, we removed barriers to contract faculty's full participation in the MRFA and embedded measures to promote diversity, equity and inclusion into our structure. We are also seeking to streamline the Bylaws by creating policies and committee charters that expand on the Bylaws. Committee members reviewed committee charters annually and recommended changes to the Executive Board, which can act on them expeditiously; MRFA policies are now regularly reviewed, according to the recently approved Cyclical Policy Review Policy, which reviews MRFA policies.

### Amendments to Membership (Article 6)

The amendments to the Membership bylaws confirm that only currently employed academic staff and contract academic staff are members of the MRFA. Contract academic staff remain members 12 months after their last contract expires. On the advice of our legal counsel, we are proposing to eliminate other categories of "members" and create a new category of "Associates" whose privileges are articulated in the *Associated Individuals Policy*. We received no comments on these proposed changes.

### Amendments to the Executive Board (Article 8)

The Executive Board bylaws amendments propose the following changes:

- Rename all positions as "Officer" positions to reduce internal hierarchies;
- Rename the Academic Liaison Officer as the Academic Policy and Governance Officer whose focus reflects the Association's emphasis on protecting bicameral governance and having input into academic policies that affect all faculty;
- Add Workplace Wellness to the role of Senior Grievance Officer, who will also be appointed to sit on the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee;
- Ensure all Officers now sit on and/or chair at least one MRFA Committee for better coordination and focus.

Given the budget challenges we currently face, these bylaw changes are cost neutral. The Audit and Finance Committee will conduct a reassigned time review next year to assess the distribution of work and alignment of reassigned time. There were no member comments on these proposed changes and informal consultations were largely positive.

### Revised Committee Structure (Article 10)

As outlined in the reorganization memo distributed in January 2023, the proposed changes to the bylaws reduce the current 21 MRFA committees to 16. This streamlining of committees is intended to ensure that the MRFA asks its members to engage in service that contributes to the Association's mission, vision and values. To that end, the following committees will be dissolved:

- **Faculty Centre Management-** The mandate of this Committee overlaps with the role of the Faculty Centre Coordinator, the MRFA staff and the President, who manages the staff. As the Committee that programs the use of the Faculty Centre, the Social Committee will be responsible for ensuring the Centre meets the needs of members and for making recommendations to the Board in that regard. The Audit and Finance Committee is responsible for the financial oversight of the Centre and its operations.

- **Grants Committee**--MRFA staff complete most of the work of this Committee. Oversight and approvals now reside with the Audit and Finance Committee. Responsibility for determining the MRFA Scholarships will reside with the MRFA Awards Committee.
- **Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee**-- This Committee has been evolved into the Collective Bargaining Caucus, which will guide collective bargaining before and during bargaining. See the accompanying memo for details about changes proposed to the Negotiating Committee and more information about the proposed Collective Bargaining Caucus.
- **Job Action Preparedness Committee**—This Committee has been replaced by the Collective Bargaining Coordinating Committee. Job action preparedness has been delegated to the MRFA staff with oversight by the Job Action Coordinating Committee, which meets at the beginning of any bargaining year.
- **Faculty Evaluation Committee**-- This committee's work has been allocated to the proposed Academic Policy and Governance Committee to ensure that recommendations about peer evaluations, administration of SPoTs are more easily brought to General Faculties Council and its Standing Committees.
- **Professional Ethics and Standards Committee**—With the repeal of Bylaw 16-Code of Ethics and the suspension of Article 17, the mandate of this Committee is much smaller. The Professional Development Committee will take on the professional development topics, which PSEC often sponsored, while the proposed Academic Appointments Committee will take up questions related to supporting tenure, promotion and permanency processes.
- **Bargaining Communication Committee**—During the last round of collective bargaining, we learned that this Committee's mandate overlapped with that of the Communications Committee and the Advocacy Committee. This Committee's role has been subsumed into the Communications and Advancement Committee, one of whose co-Chairs will sit on the Job Action Coordinating Committee.
- **Communications and Advocacy Committees**—The Communications and Advocacy Committees are being merged under the Advancement and Communications Committee, which will be responsible for communication both internally and externally. This Committee will also coordinate communication throughout bargaining.

Because of these changes, the proposed amendments create five new committees and modify several committees' mandates.

- **Academic Appointments Support Committee**—The Association continues to play an important role in offering workshops and sessions that support faculty seeking tenure, promotion or permanence. The Association also offers regular sessions on contract hiring processes for contract faculty and for Chairs. This Committee will bring all these activities under one group.
- **Academic Policy and Governance Committee** - This Committee will have the former role of the Academic Liaison Committee, with additional work of reviewing academic policy and matters pertaining to faculty evaluation
- **Advancement and Communications Committee** - This Committee will be responsible for internal and external communications and will be responsible for advocacy-related campaign and strategic communications development, including bargaining-related communications.
- **Collective Bargaining Coordinating Committee.** During the last two rounds of collective bargaining, we learned that we needed to coordinate progress at the bargaining table with the

Job Action Plan. We created an ad hoc Bargaining Umbrella Group, which worked well to focus the Association's efforts to arrive at a collective agreement.

Based on this recent experience, this group will meet at the start of every bargaining year to review the Job Action Plan and to coordinate communications with the Collective Bargaining Caucus and the Bargaining Committee.

- **Member Engagement and Services Committee**—Revisions to this Committee's membership strengthens the role of the Department Liaisons, who are the Association's main link to academic units.

### **Summary**

You will note a number of other minor changes, some the product of members' excellent close reading and suggestions. For example, Bylaw 2 has been rewritten for greater clarity. In summary, these changes will enable us to move the Association forward over the next decade.

I hope you agree and attend the Special Meeting on April 6 to support these amendments.

Sincerely,

Lee Easton, MRFA President