

MRSAY! Newsletter April 2017 EDITION

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Be sure to check the MRSA Events Google calendar often to stay informed about the various events and activities taking place on campus.

MRSAY! Editors and/or contributors

Baset Zarrug
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President's Message-An Academic Year in Review

As you read this issue of MRSAY!, it marks the end of the 2016/2017 academic year, final exams are underway and students are busy preparing to be challenged. Also, MRU has marked and added another academic year to its history. It is a great opportunity for me (I hope for you too) to reflect on the current year as it is coming to a close.

As I reflect on this academic year, there are a few highlights that make me appreciate working at MRU and how I feel about making a difference. I have had the opportunity to attend the Strategic Human Resource Management class in the Fall and the Winter semesters to represent and to talk about the Association; also, I attended the student's presentations for projects that are assigned to them by our HR department. Students were presented with a research question, perform a literature review, write a report and present their findings. Having had the opportunity to converse with some of the HR students about these projects, it is definitely the highlight of their academic journey at MRU because they have the chance to put their skills into practice with a real world "HR problem".

A second highlight for me (and the MRSA Executive Board) is meeting and introducing the MRSA to our new MRU leaders; we have had the chance to meet Michael Barr, CIO in ITS and Elizabeth Evans, Founding Dean of the School Business and Communications; in the next few weeks we are planning to meet with Paul Rossmann, VP of UA; Jonathan Withey, Dean of Science and Technology and other new MRU leaders.

A third highlight for me is the collaboration among the three MRU Associations - MRSA, MRFA and SAMRU - on campus, we have the chance to meet discuss some organizational issues. We are planning to meet

shortly with some provincial politicians to discuss some of the institutional issues so that they can be our advocates in the Legislation; we are meeting with our MLA, Greg Clark and Dave Rodney.

Lastly, another highlight for me is the meet and greet of MacEwan Staff Association (MSA) at MacEwan University and Non-Academic Staff Association(NASA) at the University of Alberta; we had the chance to meet them twice this year; both meetings were very productive; the three Associations see a greater value in forming and strengthening relationships because there are many common interests among the three, the work environment is very similar and we are in the same industry. We are in the process of arranging a meeting for the Summer.

Having said that, our Association has had an active year of collaboration while working alongside other similar entities.

-Baset Zarrug

Negotiations and Essential Services Agreement (ESA) Update

The MRSA and MRU Negotiations process is moving along; both teams have exchanged and merged the interests into a list - a long one. There has been some progress in signing "Green Sheets" for items that require no or limited discussion. "Green Sheets" are the documents that are signed by both parties and end up as formal articles in the Collective Agreement; once signed, there are no more discussions about the interest or the topic.

Another extremely important item that is being negotiated this round is the "Essential Services Agreement" (ESA) which was mandated by the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2015. "Essential services are those public services that if interrupted would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public, or that are necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law and public security." Having an ESA in place at MRU is now required by law, and will allow either a strike or lock-out to occur if deemed necessary by either MRU or MRSA. It will also ensure "essential" services be available during the strike/lock-out. The University Negotiating Team submitted a proposal to the MRSA Team for the positions that might be essential. The MRSA Team has consulted with our MRSA lawyer to ensure we are not unknowingly agreeing to something that would not be beneficial to our staff.

Mount Royal Staff Association (MRSA)

Mount Royal Staff Association was founded in 1978 with the purpose of having a body to promote aims/objectives of Staff. The goals of that time are still present today.

It was initially called the Mount Royal Support Staff Association (MRSSA). The Association obtained its certificate from the Labour Board to represent and bargain on behalf of all of us, at that time we believe we were 100-200 strong. Now we have approximately 670 MRSA colleagues.

Your current President Baset Zarrug has a deep and ongoing conviction that everyone needs to be treated the same at MRU....there should not be the "them vs. us" in our vocabulary. Thus, great discussion and debate surrounded the word "Support" in our name, and the executive unanimously decided on the name to be changed to reflect the mutual and respectful relationship between the Staff and MRU. This became effective in 2013 and a new certificate with the new name was reissued by the Labour Board. As a result, a marketing campaign was launched to rebrand the Association name and our new logo. As part of the process, MRSA colleagues had the opportunity to submit a proposal of the logo, a committee was struck to pick the best design which we currently utilize.

**Meet your MRSA Executive:
Director at Large - Kirsten Garcia**



Kirsten has contributed greatly to the University community over almost 10 years of her employment with MRU. Over the last three years, she has been an active member of numerous University committees including Co-Treasurer of the Continuing Education Green Team, which won the 2014 Effective Team Award.

Serving for the past three years as member of the MRSA Executive Board, Kirsten works hard to advocate for MRU staff and to cultivate staff engagement within the Conservatory as well as the broader MRU community through extensive committee work.

As an MRSA representative, Kirsten also sits on the Budget Advisory Committee, where she contributes to advising the Executive team on the development of the University's annual budget.

Kirsten also sits on the MRU Coalition Committee with members of the MRSA, MRFA and SAMRU, advocating as one collective voice to the MRU Board of Governors, government representatives, and the MRU Executive for issues affecting staff, students, and faculty.

She has also dedicated her time to the Job Classification Committee with Human Resources, and as well as the Effective Team Award Selection Committee. She is committed to learning and gaining a broad range of perspectives from all over the University campus and to being a well-rounded and knowledgeable MRU employee.

When Kirsten is not working at MRU, she enjoys a creative life in the performing arts, studying and performing as a semi-professional actor. She has most recently been cast in the Eugene Stickland play "First and Last", which will be playing at the Pumphouse Theatre in May.

Your Collective Agreement (CA)

-the MRSA acts as the bargaining agent for our members and we are currently in negotiations as our current contract expires on June 30, 2017

-some of you may remember that our last negotiations ended up going to arbitration as we could not reach a mutually agreeable settlement and our members had told us quite clearly during our town halls that they wanted COLA increases.

At that time, our contract major changes won were COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) increases of 2% in 2014, 2 ¼ % in 2015 and 2.5 % in 2016. Vacation was also substantially increased to move up to the next level earlier...e.g., move to 20 days a year vacation went from 6 years to 5 years; and 25 days went from 15 completed years of service to 12 years.

-currently approximately 660 MRSA members are represented and supported by the MRSA in various capacities including employee relations. Your executive meet weekly with a Human Resources representative to work on any problems that occur. For example, just recently staff overtime wages were reviewed and corrected as needed, as we worked to protect the terms and conditions of our Collective Agreement.

Board Reception

The Board's Reception for the University Community is on April 27, 2017, 4-6 p.m. in the Knuckle (EA3001). This annual reception is hosted by the Board of Governors to express appreciation to members of the University community for their hard work and accomplishments during the academic year. On February 28 and March 7, our MRSA Negotiations team had the opportunity to host an Open House/Town Hall where the key findings of the bargaining survey sent out last fall were presented. The response rate to the survey was very high, and we would like to thank and acknowledge those colleagues who completed the survey and those who were able to attend one of the Open Houses. Your feedback and input is very valuable as we prepare to move forward with negotiations. The term of our current collective agreement ends on June 30, 2017.

The negotiations process has begun. Both teams took part in a joint training session on January 26 and 27, and two preliminary meetings were conducted during of the week of March 6.

MRSA Professional Development Day--May 10 ONLINE REGISTRATION continues until April 21 and is restricted to the first 250. There will be a waitlist if necessary.



(click on photo to enlarge)

The MRSA PD Day Committee is pleased to announce that the 2017 PD Day event will be held at The Commonwealth Centre 1177-3961 52 Ave NE on **Wednesday, May 10, 2017**. All MRSA members, Exempt and Management are invited to attend the day.

We have some interesting topics and great speakers lined up for the day addressing our theme: **Reignite: Community, Resiliency, Wellness**
See you May 10!

Please check our [PD Day webpage](#) for complete details on this highly anticipated day.

MRU Presidential Reappointment Process

President David Docherty's contract with Mount Royal University expires on July 31, 2018. In accordance with the "Selection of the President of the University Policy," President Docherty has advised Board Chair Bryan Pinney that he is requesting an extension to his contract. A Presidential Reappointment Committee has been struck as outlined in the Policy and the Committee has begun its work.

Your colleagues on the MRSA Executive Board have been sent a survey to participate in the reappointment process. If you have any feedback and you would like to share, please contact one of your colleagues on the Executive Board.

Provincial Budget Highlights

- A 2% per year increase to base operating grants;
- A renewal of \$3.6 million for mental health supports for post-secondary students;

- \$630 million for student loans to help 81,300 students—a \$51 million increase from 2016;
- \$252 million for Student Aid, including \$96 million in scholarships and awards for 54,500 students and \$56 million in grants for 16,400 students;
- This includes \$4.4 million more for the Alexander Rutherford Scholarship to meet increased demand; and \$4.2 million more for the Alberta Low Income Grant;
- \$46 million for Apprenticeship Delivery - to develop and deliver trade and occupational programs, as well as staff 12 regional offices. This includes an additional \$900,000 for apprenticeship training initiatives;
- Additional \$900,000 for literacy programs delivered through the Community Adult Learning Program; and,
- \$85 million for Foundation Learning Supports, helping Albertans seeking English as a Second Language training, academic and skills upgrading, and occupational skills.

Coffee with the Presidents:

Tuesday, May 2 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the staff lounge (W305).

Why you should attend.....it is a time to discuss any of your important MRU questions with the MRU President David Docherty. He is always very friendly and approachable and willing to share all that he knows about what is currently happening at MRU.

MRU Employee Appreciation Day - Save the Date! May 25

Mark your calendar; plan to join the fun!

MRU's Employee Appreciation Day (EAD) is coming up on May 25, 2017. EAD is Mount Royal's annual event dedicated to showing appreciation to its employees. EAD also exists to foster, develop and nurture a sense of community among MRU employees.

Details:

Thursday, May 25, 2017

All employees are invited (All = faculty, staff, management, casual, temporary, exempt, contract, retired)
Lots of opportunities to have fun and it can be as little as 1 hour to take part.

SAVE THE DATES!

LOOKING AHEAD....save the date!

Preparing for Canada's biggest birthday party EVER!!! Canada is turning 150 on July 1, 2017.
Save the date to celebrate with MRSA at noon on June 30.



CANADA 150

March question and the answer...March questions.....did you know Canada has a "Trail"? When did it begin and why? How long is it now and how long will it eventually be? When will it be finished?

ANSWER---Canada does indeed boast the world's largest network of recreational trails. Our trail began with the name "Trans Canada Trail" but is now being proudly called. "The Great Trail.". Way back on Canada's 125th birthday celebrations in 1992 this trail was begun, with the goal of being completed by our 150th birthday....so yes, this year! It will be 24,000 kilometers (or 15,000 miles for us oldies!) long and stretching from ocean to ocean. So, one can dip their foot in either the Atlantic, Pacific or Arctic oceans whilst on this trail. Currently it is 90% complete with the aim to complete 6200 km of various gaps by our 150th birthday on July.

April question?

When did Canada introduce the one dollar coin?

Bonus question....why was the original design replaced with a loon?

Look forward to Canada being in a large party mode once again in 2017 as we celebrate 150 years! Stay tuned for more trivia in the coming months as we work feverishly to stir up even more Canadian pride here with staff at MRU!

Karen's Korner

Why do we have Easter and Easter Bunny and Easter eggs?

Most of us enjoyed a 4 day weekend recently, some of us celebrated with large family dinners, attending church and even dropped by to see the Easter Bunny or attend Easter egg hunts with children. A lot of us enjoyed wonderful chocolate Easter eggs too.

Where did this all come from and why?

Christians believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross on Good Friday and was resurrected 3 days later. The actual dates vary each year based on the full moon cycle in spring. Many companies recognize this Christian belief by closing on Good Friday, some also close on Monday. In Canada Easter Friday is a statutory holiday.

Now the Easter Bunny....since rabbits are very prolific and have large litters of kittens they became the symbol of new life. Thus the legend began....of the Easter Bunny who "lays, decorates and hides eggs as they are also a symbol of new life."

Originally the church did not allow the eating of eggs during Holy Week which is the week prior to Easter, thus eggs laid were saved and decorated and given to children as gifts. Over time Victorians adapted the tradition, seems the first chocolate eggs started appearing in the 19th century in both France and Germany. Did you know that the Easter Bunny is not the only one delivering eggs to eager children? He has help....in Switzerland the eggs arrive via a cuckoo bird and in Germany a fox delivers the eggs.

Cheers!

Karen Hiebert



Just a friendly reminder to check your [myMRU](#) Events Calendar (Home tab) frequently for upcoming MRU events, courses and workshops.

Employee Development Opportunities

Dates are quickly approaching, be sure to register to reserve your spot!

April 26 - Project Management Basics

May 9 - Managing Multiple Priorities

May 31 - Leading with Emotional Intelligence

Watch the Employee Training Calendar for more opportunities coming soon.

*Please navigate to the Employee Training portal through [mymru](#) and scroll through the calendar to register!

Note: Registrations will only be accepted by completing the registration form.

Recreation Registration

All of Recreation's spring and summer activities are now available to [view and wishlist!](#) You can find all [registration information here.](#)

GoodLife Fitness Health & Wellness Leadership Summit

Build Great Workplaces through Mental Health & Team Effectiveness

MRSA Special Offer – save 40%

Learn to inspire the best in workplace performance at the GoodLife Fitness Health & Wellness Leadership Summit on May 24th, 2017 in Calgary, AB. Gain valuable work- life skills from 4 extraordinary guest speakers in one incredible day! Save 40% off the cost of registration with promo code **MRSA!**

[Click here for more information on the summit.](#)

[Click here to register online.](#)