

# FACULTY CIRCUIT

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Alberta Colleges & Institutes  
Faculties Association

acifa

Serving college and technical institute faculty

## What Does Mount Royal Want?

### New MRC President Lays out Agenda

Dr. David Marshall, the new President of Mount Royal College, has outlined his ambition to transform MRC, in his words, “from Canada’s premier college into Canada’s only undergraduate, instructionally-focused university.”

At a ‘town hall’ meeting on October 21, Dr. Marshall argued that the Minister of Learning’s much-heralded proposal to allow colleges and institutes in Alberta to grant bachelor’s degrees in some programs – under the terms of the new Post-Secondary Learning Act scheduled to be passed this fall – will inevitably result in second-class degrees. For the purposes of securing employment or a place in a graduate or professional program, a degree granted by a college or institute simply will not have the same value as a university degree, according to the MRC President, and for this reason, he said, “Mount Royal has decided it wants to offer degrees from a university platform to give students the maximum flexibility.”

In his presentation, now available on the MRC website, Dr. Marshall addresses some of the implications which this proposed mandate change would have for Mount Royal. The curriculum is one element, but “it is equally important that the degree experience take place in a unique environment” – that is, within a university, as accredited by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). In order to secure AUCC accreditation as a university, Mount Royal would have to make significant changes in three primary areas – governance, program mix, and faculty workload and

(1) ‘MRU’ would have to move to bicameral governance, the accepted model for a university, under which a board manages finance and other non-academic matters, while a body comprised of academic staff governs academic issues.

(2) At the same time, under a university mandate, Mount Royal would need to increase significantly the percentage of degree programs – to at least 70% of total offerings, according to Marshall’s figures. (The norm for Canadian universities is more like 85%.) Necessarily, this would require a corresponding reduction in the percentage of certificate and diploma programs, but Marshall’s plan emphasizes that MRU’s baccalaureate degrees, including what are now ‘applied’ degrees, would retain ‘a workplace focus’.

(3) Mount Royal faculty might expect to see classroom contact hours decrease significantly under a university mandate, though teaching would remain the major focus of the job (60%), with lesser expectations for research (20%) and service (20%). More PhD’s would be needed to teach in the degree areas, and a full rank structure would have to be instituted for full-time faculty.

The Mount Royal plan envisions that what would distinguish the proposed new ‘university’ from existing institutions is that ‘MRU’ would continue to put the chief emphasis on teaching rather than research or scholarship, while maintaining the ‘applied / workplace orientation’ of its programs.

Transition to ‘MRU’ cannot happen overnight. Dr. Marshall concedes that, even if the Minister approves the concept, the mandate change for Mount Royal would entail a commitment of new funding for the library, faculty, and program delivery, in order to create the appropriate scholarly environment for delivery of degrees at university level. Mandate change is only the first step.

## INSIDE

‘What is the PAC?’.....p.2

Auditor General’ Report.....p.3

Call for Proposals, ACIFA 2004.....p.4

## What is the PAC?

by  
Rocky Wallbaum,  
ACIFA VP Professional Affairs

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In 1989, ACIFA established the **Professional Affairs Committee (PAC)**. According to the ACIFA Handbook, the PAC *provides a forum for discussing matters that affect a) the quality of teaching and learning and b) the personal and professional needs of the individual or institutional members of ACIFA.*

### Where does the PAC fit into ACIFA?

The PAC reports to Presidents' Council, which sets all policy and direction for the ACIFA. The Chair of the PAC sits as VP on the ACIFA Executive, which also reports to Presidents' Council.

### How much does it cost to run the PAC?

Not including the cost of office staff support for the PAC's efforts, the annual budget for 2003-04 is around \$14,500 (for 2003-04), or about 4% of the total ACIFA annual budget.

### What does the PAC do?

- ✓ Maintains a database comparing funding levels and structures among institutions.
- ✓ Selects and oversees the committee which organizes the ACIFA Spring Conference.
- ✓ Selects the committee to judge entries for the ACIFA Morgex Award for Innovation in Teaching.
- ✓ Makes recommendations for managing the Alberta Post-Secondary Education Trust Fund.

### What can the PAC do for me?

The PAC's network of PD professionals aims to give faculty members at member institutions enhanced access to cost-effective and proven PD activities. Members often discuss their experience with trainers and speakers. When a representative contracts a workshop based on peer reports at PAC, individual associations can expect a quality speaker at reasonable cost.

### How can I get involved in the PAC?

- ✓ Get involved at your own institution by joining the committee that reviews applications for support.
- ✓ Review your association's copy of the comparison document and lobby your college to seek more PD funding during their next round of negotiations.
- ✓ Submit a nomination for an ACIFA MORGEX Innovation in Teaching Award..
- ✓ Get your colleagues together to submit a team application.
- ✓ Look around and see what's working at your institution.
- ✓ Send in a proposal to present a session on new practices and approaches at this year's ACIFA Conference in Jasper, May 30 – June 2, 2004.

### Why does ACIFA have a PAC, anyway?

The PAC helps faculty associations and PD professionals keep up with what's happening in the province. Communicating with colleagues has led to increased cooperation between institutions, lowering the cost of PD events and making them more affordable for individual faculty members. Individual associations adopt or modify proven programs for orientation and ongoing faculty support to meet particular needs. Information assembled by the PAC has been used in negotiating increased funding for P.D. at member institutions.

### The future for the PAC

- ✓ Continuing to enhance the annual ACIFA Conference through increased efficiency and better cooperation.
- ✓ Increasing fund-raising to provide a larger Alberta Post-Secondary Education Trust Fund to sponsor scholarships for individual faculty members in the province.
- ✓ Encouraging more interaction between member institutions to deliver quality in-service programs.
- ✓ Initiating partnerships among institutions to more effectively deliver proven programming to institutions which lack the resources to create those opportunities on their own.

## Auditor General's Report, 2002-2003

### Recommendations for Alberta Learning

The Auditor General's Annual Report, 2002-2003, which came down recently, contains a number of recommendations concerning Alberta Learning. (This is the Report which, famously, revealed that the net assets of the Alberta School Foundation Fund, that is, the accumulated excess of school property tax collections over distributions to school jurisdictions, amounted to \$65 million, as at March 31, 2003.) Some of the A-G's recommendations address post-secondary issues:

***We recommend that the Department of Learning improve one of the core performance measures (public satisfaction with the affordability of the learning system) that reports its progress in delivering high quality learning opportunities.*** (page 223)

For the first goal in the Ministry's 2002-2005 Business Plan – *high quality learning opportunities* – outcomes include:

- *the learning system is affordable*
- *financial need is not a barrier to learners participating in learning opportunities.*

To measure how well these outcomes are achieved, the Ministry employs an annual survey which asks Albertans if they agree that *the learning system is within the means of most Albertans*. (In 2001, 75% agreed, but the figure dropped to 63% in 2002, and to 52% this year.)

ACIFA has argued repeatedly in consultations on the Learning Business Plan that this survey question is of only limited utility as a performance measure. The A-G agrees:

*Through this question, the Department is trying to measure affordability for three different parties (students, taxpayers and government) and for three different components (basic education, post-secondary and apprenticeship). Since the question tries to measure so many different aspects of affordability, stakeholders can't tell what caused the decrease in results.*

In any case, as the Auditor General concludes, this survey of public perception is an indirect way, at best, to measure and report what is actually happening in the learning system. [The Ministry itself maintains *that other, more direct indicators contradict part of the survey results and show that post-secondary education is affordable to students.*] The Auditor General draws the obvious conclusion -- without appropriate core performance measures for the stated goal, *the Legislative Assembly may*

***We recommend that the Department of Learning improve its grant processes.*** (p. 231)

The Auditor General notes that, in addition to providing operating grants to post-secondary institutions, the Ministry *periodically provides grants on the condition that they be used for a specified purpose*. However, contrary to sound practice, the Ministry has approved conditional grants 'before defining the nature and extent of the commitment or establishing accountability criteria.' For example, Alberta Learning provided \$28.4 million of Faculty Staff Attraction and Retention grants to institutions in 2001, *but didn't establish accountability reporting requirements until 2002, at which point most of the funds had already been spent*.

Nor has Alberta Learning ensured that realistic target dates are established for spending of grant funds and achievement of program outcomes. The Ministry provided one-time Access grants to institutions of \$14 million in 2000-2001, without specifying any deadlines for their use. The problem the Auditor General sees with this is that, *without reasonable deadlines for use of grant funds, the benefits of the grant may not be realized and surplus funds not returned or redirected*.

***We recommend that the Department of Learning require public post-secondary institutions to comply with the Tuition Fee Policy. We also recommend that the Department clarify the methodology for applying the Policy.*** (p. 226)

The Tuition Fee Policy, which applies to every public post-secondary institution in Alberta except the Banff Centre, requires that tuition fee revenue shall not exceed 30% of the net operating expenditures of an institution. Regulations cover the calculation of the 30% cap and of the allowable annual increase.

The A-G finds that the calculations under the Policy need to be clarified: *Each institution and stakeholder needs to have a common understanding of the Policy to determine compliance*. Alberta Learning is finding the Policy difficult to administer, due to the incompatibility of academic and fiscal timelines: *Because the cap calculation is based on actual figures, the cap calculation is done after the institution's year-end. By the time a Board has determined that the institution is over the cap, the Board has already approved and implemented the increase for the following year*. Under the circumstances, the Ministry has been forgiving non-compliance by institutions *for at least one year following the year that non-compliance is discovered*. The A-G draws the conclusion that without a clear methodology and processes in place to ensure compliance, the objectives of the Tuition Fee Policy may not be met.

## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

### **“Learning, Leading n’Lightening”**

#### **ACIFA Annual Conference 2004**

Mountain Park Lodges, Jasper  
May 30 – June 2, 2004

We invite submissions from prospective presenters for Conference sessions related to one of the following themes:

- ✓ Learning: the students’ perspective
  - Enhancing learning experiences
  - Developing learning strategies
  - Innovations for learning
- ✓ Leading: the faculty’s perspective
  - Changing climate and culture in post-secondary institutions
  - Preparing for leadership roles
  - Direction from the Ministry
  - Trends in leadership; changing roles
- ✓ n’Lightening: considering external factors
  - economic drivers and post-secondary education
  - business partnerships
  - politics and education

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#### **TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL**

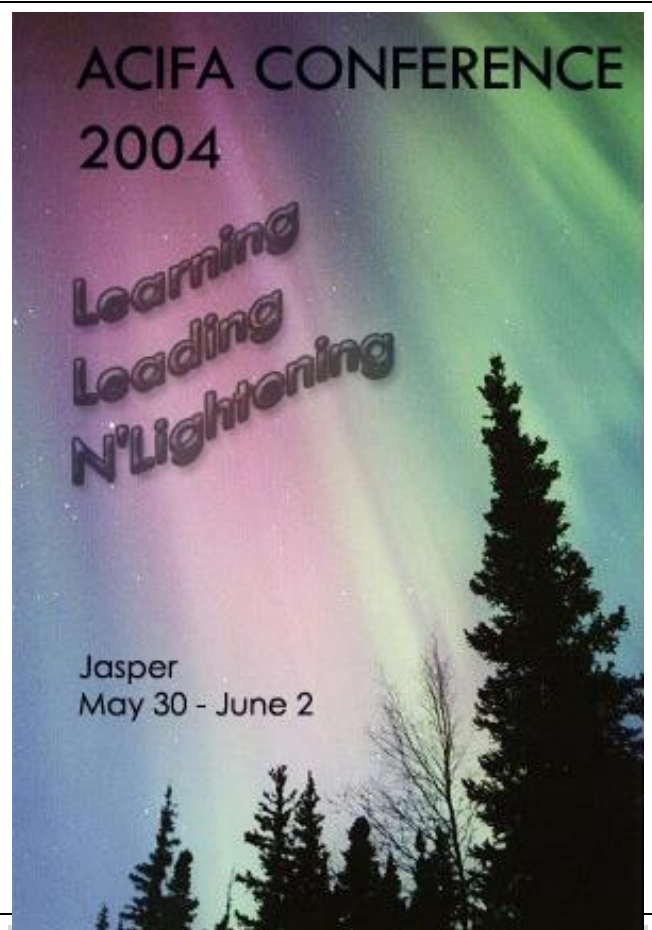
Please complete a Session Proposal Form for ACIFA 2004, available from your academic staff association office or from our new website at: [www.acifa.ca](http://www.acifa.ca).

#### **RETURN TO:**

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#### **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS**

**January 12, 2004**



#### **Editorial Content**

The views in the Faculty Circuit are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect ACIFA’s policies and positions. Please address all inquiries and submissions to:

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#### **Member Associations**

Alberta College of Art and Design Faculty Association  
Bow Valley College Faculty Association  
Faculty Association of Medicine Hat College  
Fairview College Academic Staff Association  
Grande Prairie Regional College Academic Staff Association  
Grant MacEwan College Faculty Association  
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