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Editor, Dr. Idahlynn Karre
IdahlynnKarre@aol.com

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Executive Director, Dr. Gary L. Filan
gary.filan@chairacademy.com

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Editor, Leadership
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aseagren1@unl.edu

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The Scholarship of Leading!

By Idahlynn Karre

Dr. Ernest Boyer is credited with coining the phrase “the scholarship of teaching” in his widely discussed *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990). In this work our beloved colleague advocated for our acts of discovery, application, integration, and teaching as “scholarships.” To Ernie Boyer, college and university teaching included our mutually dependent and overlapping forms of inquiry focused on learning.

Much has been written on the scholarship of teaching during the past 20 years. Taken together most of this writing tells us that learning is collaborative. Boyer reminded us that the professor is not the only teacher in the room, and that what happens in the classroom is not just up to the teacher. Everyone implicated in the scholarship of teaching meets everyone else in a series of ever-wider circles: students learning from each other in groups or teams in and outside of the classroom; teachers learning from students; teachers talking to each other about teaching; teachers reading about how students learn and how other teachers teach; teachers writing about teaching and participating in professional conversations.

The work of Ernest Boyer lives on today and we can use his wisdom to inform the “scholarship of leading.” As members of the Academy we can find mutually dependent and overlapping forms of inquiry in our leadership as we discover, apply, integrate, and lead. We, too, can affirm that we are not alone in our endeavors. Every one of us who leads meets others in a series of ever-wider circles: leaders working with leadership teams; leaders learning from colleagues; leaders studying, researching, writing and talking about leadership. Leaders engaged in the scholarship of leading!

Our journal is devoted to the “scholarship of leading.” Our authors draw us into their inquiry, application, and integration of theory, principles, and best practices in leadership. Dr. James Mabry, Vice President Academic, Mesa Community College argues for *Transparent Leadership*. He insists that transparency must be intentionally built into our structures and processes as well as our personal leadership. Building trust and fostering open communication are key to effective decision-making in today’s post-secondary organizations. Transparency extends far beyond an individual leader’s behavior to the entire organization.

Student retention is a huge and continuing issue for our colleges and universities. Dr. Deana Sheppard, Associate Vice President of College Centers for Lone Star College – CyFair shares the research on retention and argues for first year experiences that will make a difference for our communities, colleges, and students. As a scholar on retention and first year experiences Deana’s scholarship of leading integrates insights and best practices and contributes to our leadership learning.

Internationalization is another critical issue for post-secondary leadership. Kimberley Howard, Project Manager and Michael Henry, Associate Dean, School of Business, MacEwan University and their co-author, Dr. Ilan Alon, Executive Director of the China Center, Rollins College make the case for *Internationalizing a School of Business*. Our leadership may be in different areas, yet the supporting information and specific strategies used at MacEwan University inform all our efforts for leading in a Global society.

Dr. Lane Glenn, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Professor Suzanne Van Wert, Professor of English, Northern Essex Community College confront the *Male College Student Achievement Gap*. Beginning with the facts and walking us through ten specific strategies for doing something about the male achievement gap, Lane and Suzanne widen the circle of concerned educators and leaders to our partners in public education. Their scholarship of leading invites inquiry and solutions along the P-16 continuum.

Sharing their stories as new leaders, Dr. Jason Dewling, Associate Dean, Lakeland College and Dr. Michael Rivera, Dean of Business, Ivy Tech Community College offer *Four Guiding Concepts to Increase Your Success*. Sharing one’s journey is at the heart of the scholarship of leading.

This issue of the *Leadership Journal* is dedicated to our friends, colleagues, and leadership guides who were honored as Exemplary Leaders at the 2010 International Leadership Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Gathered in an International Exemplary Leaders’ Yearbook in the closing pages of this issue, these individuals and teams are exemplars of excellence! They practice the scholarship of leading! We honor them and their Exemplary Leadership!

College *to* University

Last fall Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta became Mount Royal University. This apparently simple change in name came after an extended process of transition within the institution so that by the time Mount Royal was designated a university, it was a university.

In today's fast moving world all post-secondary institutions are experiencing change as they strive to keep up with the demands of communities and governments, but Mount Royal's change was a big one in anyone's terms. There is a fairly sharp distinction between College and University in the Canadian post-secondary system even though there are now more institutions, like Mount Royal, that bridge that gap. So moving from one "side" to the other is not a small matter. For Mount Royal the transition involved implementing our own baccalaureate degrees, engaging faculty in scholarship, establishing career long evaluation and academic rank, moving the institution to bicameral governance, acquiring the funding to make all this possible and joining the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada which, in Canada, is the measure of being a university by national standards. This apparently short list of changes actually added up to a major cultural evolution within Mount Royal.

It is almost facile to say that change is constant these days and yet, because change remains difficult for many, it is still important to reflect on what makes significant institutional change possible and successful. I am going to suggest those factors that made the transition go relatively smoothly and certainly come to successful conclusion in the Mount Royal case. I will also mention some of the obstacles. I should note at the outset though, particularly for my colleagues, that these are my views and not those of the institution or, necessarily, anyone else in it.

The Transition at Mount Royal

By Dr. Robin Fisher



President Dave Marshall holds the charter for Mount Royal University while the Premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach, looks on.



History

Mount Royal University was built on the firm foundation of its past as a College. It became a new university last fall and this fall we celebrate our one hundredth anniversary as an institution. So we call ourselves Canada's oldest new university. Founded in 1910, Mount Royal is the same vintage as some of the big universities in Western Canada. The University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan along with Mount Royal College, were all established in the same decade. With its origins in the Methodist Church, Mount Royal College, like other smaller institutions in western Canada, was established at the beginning of the twentieth century to bring learning and the arts to a frontier society that was growing very fast on the basis of utilitarian values. Our founders believed that rampant individualism and material values needed to be mitigated by a sense of social responsibility and a greater emphasis on cultural life.

Mount Royal College has had university aspirations for a long time. In the 1930s it offered the first university level courses in Calgary and advertised itself as the college with the university atmosphere. Mount Royal remained a private college until 1966 when it became a public institution and it continued to evolve and grow. It moved to a new campus in south west Calgary in 1972 that enabled it to accommodate more students. It led the way in Alberta in establishing applied degrees that involved students in three years of academic courses and one year of related workplace experience. Mount Royal also implemented baccalaureate degrees in partnership with other institutions – Nursing with the University of Calgary and later with Athabasca University, and then Arts degrees in four majors, again with Athabasca University. All of these developments were steps along the path to university status and yet the ultimate goal remained elusive.

That was because nothing ever came easy to Mount Royal. While internally the institution was clear about its desired direction and status, governments, both provincial and municipal, were not always supportive. Some other post-secondary institutions did not share

Mount Royal's vision of its future. Universities did not necessarily want a fifth university in the province and some colleges did not like the idea of Mount Royal separating from the pack. Opposition and setbacks did not, however, weaken institutional resolve and successive presidents and administrations continued to move the institution forward towards the goal.

Core Values

Throughout its one hundred year history Mount Royal has gone through many changes and yet has maintained some fundamental core values. Three of these values in particular have defined the institution. First and foremost is an abiding commitment to student success, second, an emphasis on high quality undergraduate teaching and learning and, third, a strong sense of the stewardship of community.

Students have always come first at Mount Royal College and it was important that this commitment was integral to the transition to Mount Royal University. The two main reasons for wanting to make Mount Royal a University had to do with serving the needs of students by providing access into Mount Royal and pathways after graduation. There was a clear and urgent need in Calgary for more student places in undergraduate degree programs and, with a range of new degrees, Mount Royal could help to meet that demand. We were also adamant that these new degrees be delivered off a legitimate university platform so that our students would have real opportunities to go on to graduate or professional programs after they completed their degrees at Mount Royal. Our students clearly understood that these objectives were in their interest and, through the student organisation, gave them strong support. Representatives of the Students' Association of Mount Royal College worked enthusiastically on all the internal transitional committees and they also lobbied the provincial and federal governments to support these outcomes for students.

Our abiding commitment to students has been reflected in the fact that teaching and learning has always been job one at Mount Royal. Our current

mission statement proclaims that we are about “creating exceptional learning experiences for a world of possibilities.” Faculty members were, and as a university they still are, hired primarily on the basis of their ability and commitment as teachers. Recognizing that teaching and learning does not happen only in the classroom, Mount Royal has constantly striven to improve learning in the broadest sense for all students. During the final stages of the transition to university we confirmed this core value by establishing the first ever Faculty of Teaching and Learning in Canada. Included in this new Faculty are the Academic Development Center, the Department of General Education, the Department of Education and Schooling and the Institute for the

our extended families. In these formal, and in many informal, ways we keep in touch with our communities. We knew that we had a high level of support among our stakeholder and communities for the development of baccalaureate degrees and the move to university status. Indeed, towards the end of the transition, but before 3 September 2009 when we were officially named a university, people would look confused and say to us “aren’t you already a university?”

The determination to maintain, and even strengthen, the values of high quality teaching, student success and community connection through the process of major cultural change at Mount Royal actually assisted the

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Mount Royal University was built on the firm foundation of its past as a College.

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Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Collectively, these elements in the new Faculty champion the teaching and learning mandate of Mount Royal and the establishment of this Faculty was a clear signal that our commitment to teaching and learning would not merely be maintained, but would be strengthened, through the transition to university status.

True to its community college roots, Mount Royal has also continued to develop close relations with the communities that it serves. One of the most effective vehicles for maintaining connection with community are the business and industry advisory committees that we have for our degrees in all professional programs. The feedback from these committees on the relevance of our curriculum was particularly valuable as we developed and implemented our new baccalaureate degree programs. We conduct regular surveys to gauge how we are perceived as an institution in our community. The findings are evaluated and changes are made to the way we do things. We also hold annual events on campus for our immediate neighbours and

transition. Colleagues could be reassured that, while many things changed, the fundamentals that had defined us for many years would not. We would not, that is to say, throw out the baby with the bath water. This commitment meant that Mount Royal would become a university that was different in the Canadian context and that could be difficult to explain externally in a system where there is less diversity among institutions than in the United States. But the fact that we could agree on these core values and agree to maintain them reassured colleagues within Mount Royal and many of our community stakeholders. Thus continuity through change made the change less alarming for many.

Collegial Culture

In my view, Mount Royal is a remarkable institution because of its collegial community culture. I was struck by this atmosphere at Mount Royal from the first time I visited to be interviewed for the position of Vice President Academic. I had by that time worked in six different universities, though two were for short periods in visiting positions. Mount Royal struck me

Dave Marshall thanks Premier Ed Stelmach. The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman Kwong (far left), a Mount Royal Alumnus received the university's first honorary degree at the ceremony.



as different from the start. After a day of interview process I attended the Faculty Association's end of year barbeque and chatted with a number of people who later became colleagues. One faculty member said to me, "You know Robin, we have our disagreements and debates at Mount Royal, but we all love working here." I was hooked. I had never heard a remark like that at any other institution. Mount Royal sees itself, and it is, very much a community. This sense is reflected in our "Face to Face" brand and the fact that a higher than usual proportion of our faculty and staff are Mount Royal alumni. And, as a community, there was a high level of support for the effort to become a university.

This sense of community is also part of the reason why debates among faculty, and between faculty and administration can be spirited, but are usually respectful. We are not perfect! There are exceptions and some hot spots around the institution where interpersonal relations need some work. But, by and large, institutional discussions are conducted in a cordial manner. This institutional characteristic was particularly important because, for faculty members, the

transition to university status involved major changes in their working lives. Not only were they asked to put a great deal of time and thought into such things as the transition committees and the development and implementation of many new degrees, but they were also asked, if they wished, to become scholars as well as teachers. The introduction of a new tenure process, academic rank, and the criteria for both, along with a more robust system of career long evaluation, all involved more time and effort and, more importantly, a willingness to engage with a new emphasis on peer review. Collective bargaining was intense and required a prodigious amount of work as well as a commitment between the parties across the table to agree on mutual interests and to the ultimate institutional goal. The most recent version of the Collective Agreement at Mount Royal includes the usual criteria for tenure (teaching, scholarship and service) along with an additional one that requires "evidence that the duties have been carried out in a responsible and professional manner." That stipulation is but one measure of the interest in maintaining a collegial culture at Mount Royal University.

In the midst of all this change, particularly in the academic life of Mount Royal, the strong working relationship that, as Vice President Academic, I had with the Mount Royal Faculty Association and particularly with its president, David Hyttenrauch, was a major factor in the successful transition. I have seldom worked with a more principled individual and the fact that he believed in Mount Royal becoming a university was hugely influential. Together, we were successful in greatly reducing the number of faculty grievances by resolving most of them at an early, less formal, stage. Based on this work, we moved on to co-chair a number of task forces where major aspects of the change for faculty were raised and debated and then recommendations made to the academic community. The most significant of these was the Task Force on Faculty Roles and Responsibilities. This group did the initial thinking on faculty work, evaluation and rank. It established guiding principles and then made recommendations on how the changes to faculty roles and responsibilities might look and how they could be achieved. This was a nuanced, diplomatic process to advance the institutional conversation and build consensus without imposing vision. We had to be clear, for example, that the recommendations were advisory, particularly in relation to collective bargaining, but this Task Force certainly raised big questions and generated much discussion. Later David and I chaired a Task Force on Faculty Recruitment and Retention and another on The Role of Part Time Faculty. To work in this way with the President of the Faculty Association was unique in my experience and, I believe, an important factor in the success of the transition.

Leadership

While colleges and universities are collective institutions where students, faculty and staff all contribute to institutional culture and success, we all know that leadership matters. That fact is equally apparent when leadership works as when it does not. At Mount Royal the leadership of President Dave Marshall was a huge factor in the success of the transition. He was appointed President in the fall of 2003 on the assurance that university status for Mount Royal was a done deal. He very soon wished that it were so because, in fact,

it took another six years of careful planning and hard work to make it happen in the face of internal, and particularly external, challenges.

Dave Marshall was the perfect fit for Mount Royal at this moment in its history. He had been President at Nipissing University for thirteen years and had transformed that institution from college to university. So he knew where the goal line was, what it looked like and how to get there. He always believed, and reminded colleagues, that the transition at Mount Royal's was a team effort and yet, in my view, he was the first among equals. He kept his eye unwaveringly on the ultimate goal even when it seemed to be getting more distant. As President he, of course, called the plays, but he was also able to adjust the strategy when the opposition seemed insurmountable or the goal posts seemed to be moving. A large part of the strategy was to make Mount Royal look like a university in as many ways as possible and assume that, in due course, it would be named a university. This strategy was an effective one under the circumstances of great support for the transition to university within the institution in spite of sources of opposition from without. In fact, external opposition likely served as a catalyst for a common sense of purpose and collegial cooperation internally. Towards the end of the process we were visited by an AUCC review team comprised of three university Presidents and they wrote a report on Mount Royal's eligibility for membership in AUCC and, therefore, for university status. That report reads like a blueprint after the fact for Dave Marshall's strategy to make us a university. Dave was fond of saying to colleagues through the process that we would become a university because "if we walked like a duck and talked like a duck then, eventually, we would be called a duck."

The tone and direction of leadership was set by the president, but Mount Royal is blessed with experienced and capable leaders at all levels. The senior executive is an exceptional group of five individuals with very different personalities and different roles to play and yet who have formed a great team that works very effectively together. Deans Council is a larger group of Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors who are all

highly capable and committed to Mount Royal and the kind of institution that it has chosen to be. This was the group that got the job done at the academic level because there was no problem for which they could not, together, work out a solution. Department Chairs always form the front line of academic leadership and Mount Royal has developed its own professional development program that is designed to move the Chairs from being administrative assistants to academic leaders. So leadership, and the development of leadership, at all levels has been crucial to the transition at Mount Royal.

which we were working. The President, who chaired the Transition Steering Committee, concluded each meeting by asking the question, “Is there anything that we have missed?”

We worked hard to be transparent within Mount Royal throughout the process. All of these committees consulted frequently with the wider Mount Royal community. We developed a communication plan called “Mount Royal in Motion” so that everyone could understand what was happening and thereby relieve

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If we walked like a duck and talked like a duck then, eventually, we would be called a duck.

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Planning and Process

We know that process is fundamental to successful change, particularly in post secondary institutions. Indeed, it is often said that a good outcome can be undermined by a bad process. Fortunately, this pitfall was avoided at Mount Royal where the process of transition from College to University was planned, thorough and consultative. That the plans were well conceived owed much to the fact that the President had been through the same process at another institution. Of course the existing College governance bodies, Academic Council and the Board of Governors, were fully engaged in the transition. In addition there were a number of committees with representation from across the institution that looked at the gaps that needed to be bridged if we were to become a university. At one point there were eleven task force groups working on different aspects of the transition: from institutional governance to academic planning to student recruitment and retention. Overarching all of these task forces was a body that began its life as the Transition Steering Committee but later changed its name to the University Implementation Committee. This committee reviewed the work of all the other committees, did the gap analysis and kept its eye on the changing context in

the stress of change. The President held regular town halls for the entire Mount Royal community. Often his presentations would include a power point slide with a check list of major things that we needed to do to become a university with those items that were completed checked off. Everyone had a clear sense of the progress made and the challenges ahead. In the Academic Affairs division we held consultations with all faculty and staff on major planning initiatives such as the academic plan and the work on faculty roles and responsibilities. These consultations were to get discussion and feedback on draft recommendations but they were also the source of unexpected developments. When I first came to Mount Royal I was assured by faculty leaders that we would certainly not be entertaining the idea of moving to academic rank during the transition to university. Then at a community consultation one faculty colleague stood up and spoke forcefully in favour of looking at rank. It became apparent that others agreed. So the Faculty Roles and Responsibilities Task Force worked on a model for rank which was taken back to the community and eventually fed into collective bargaining. The result is that we now have academic rank at Mount Royal. To be effective, consultation must be a two way street.

External Factors

No matter how determined we at Mount Royal were to become a university or how logical and compelling our arguments were, there were external forces, over which we had little control, that would have a large bearing on the outcome. Some were positive and others were not, and the latter meant that remaining optimistic was sometimes difficult but always essential.

One of the positive drivers in Mount Royal’s transition, at least in the final analysis, was a growing sense in Canada that there was the need for a revival of undergraduate teaching and learning in the university system. It was not so much a factor early on when Mount Royal’s position on the primacy of teaching and learning for students was swirling around in a back eddy of debate. Later on this view became, if not main stream, at least a strong counter current. For twenty years in Canada a great deal has been said and written, though little done, about the need to revitalize undergraduate education. Levels of student engagement and satisfaction are not strong particularly in the large universities where the emphasis is on graduate education and research. So there has been discussion of the need for a new model of an undergraduate only university. Such an institution would place a greater emphasis on teaching than on scholarship and that would be reflected in the faculty reward structure. It would also feature a strong element of general education and experiential learning, an emphasis on learning outcomes and an investment in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In other words, the model that Mount Royal was advocating. In 2010 a book entitled Academic Transformation on the Ontario university scene advocated a renewal of undergraduate education along the lines that Mount Royal was proposing. As the universities continued to provide evidence of the need for change, for some, though certainly not all, in the post secondary system finding a better way to deliver undergraduate education seemed like an idea whose time had come.

Another reason for making Mount Royal a university was the rapid growth of the city of Calgary. Fueled largely by an oil boom, Calgary grew very fast over

the last decade and its population surpassed one million in 2007. It was the only city in Canada with a million people and only one university. There was a clear, if not always clearly perceived, need for more student seats as the Calgary post secondary institutions regularly turned away ten to twelve thousand students every fall. The demand for and shortage of, student seats in Calgary institutions should have been a positive force and, in the end, it was. In the early stages though, it appeared more important, given its power base, for the provincial government to develop excess capacity in rural areas than to meet the demand in Calgary. Nor was the fact that Alberta has the lowest post secondary participation rate in Canada a compelling motivation to create more student places in Calgary. In the final analysis, however, a growing realization of the need for more student access and choice was a factor in our success.

The greatest obstacle that Mount Royal had to overcome was the initial opposition of the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Advanced Education. Seven years ago that opposition seemed adamant and insurmountable. The succession of four different Ministers of Advanced Education in five years made it



MRU celebrates.

difficult to build a relationship with any one of them and the people in the Ministry were either opposed to or cautious about, our aspirations. Nevertheless, the President and our very well connected Vice President University Advancement, Hunter Wight, were persistent and persuasive in keeping the Mount Royal agenda before the Government and the Ministry. So gradually the tide did turn. We were able to introduce some elements of a university starting with the introduction of our own baccalaureate degrees, approved by the Campus Alberta Quality Council and the Minister of Advanced Education. We began with Nursing in 2007

Royal became what it already was – a university. On 3 September 2010 the Premier of Alberta, Ed Stelmach, came to Mount Royal and bestowed upon us the name “University.” The following month Mount Royal became a member of AUCC and thus a university by national standards. We will be a university with a difference. As soon as the Premier made us a university, President Dave Marshall said it clearly by asserting in his speech at the announcement that “Mount Royal will become Canada’s top ranked university when it comes to every measure related to the success and the satisfaction of undergraduate students.” And so the course is set for

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We will be a university with a difference.

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and then twenty-two new majors in Arts, Science, Business, Communication Studies and Justice Studies in 2008. It was also very important that these degrees were funded by the government at a level that enabled us to hire new faculty in behind those who were moving portions of their workload to the scholarship stream. The degrees were a huge step forward and could not have been implemented without government support. One significant barrier was the view that, since all post secondary education, including program quality and institutional accreditation, is a provincial matter in Canada, there is no need to meet AUCC’s nationally recognized standards if the Campus Alberta Quality Council had already approved our baccalaureate degrees. In the end though, the Minister under whom Mount Royal became a university, Doug Horner, did not oppose, even if he did not wholeheartedly support, our intention to become a member of AUCC. He made it possible, through legislation, for Mount Royal to establish bicameral governance, approved more degrees and provided the needed level of funding. Under his leadership we were able to implement the elements that made us a university.

All of the factors and all of the effort culminated, amidst great excitement, in the fall of 2009 as Mount

the foreseeable future. We are now working to follow that course and it will certainly take some discipline to maintain the direction. It had been at times a demanding, but in the end an exhilarating, process of transition. Earlier in my career, at the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George, I was involved in building a new university from scratch. Transitioning and existing college to a university is a quite different and, in some ways, more challenging exercise. Change still remains constant of course, and how Mount Royal University evolves in the longer term future will be for time, and others, to tell. [h](#)



Dr. Robin Fisher has been Provost and Vice-President Academic for the last five years of Mount Royal’s transition from College to University. He is a historian by discipline and was also at the University of Northern British Columbia when it was being established as a new university. He is a member of the Chair Academy’s International Advisory Board.

He can be reached at:

Dr. Robin Fisher
 Provost and Vice-President Academic,
 Mount Royal University,
 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW,
 Calgary, Alberta, Canada. T3E 6K6
rfisher@mtroyal.ca
 403-440-6854