

Chipping Away at the Foundation of the University: AUCC's 2011 Statement on Academic Freedom

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Queen's University
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Univ. of Toronto, *Purpose of the University*

“Within the unique university context, the most crucial of all human rights are the rights of freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of research. And we affirm that these rights are meaningless unless they entail the right to raise deeply disturbing questions and provocative challenges to the cherished beliefs of society at large and of the university itself.

“It is this human right to radical, critical teaching and research with which the University has a duty above all to be concerned; for there is no one else, no other institution and no other office, in our modern liberal democracy, which is the custodian of this most precious and vulnerable right of the liberated human spirit.”

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/mission.htm>



What should be included:

- Freedom in teaching, research, creative and scholarly work, and service without restriction by prescribed doctrine;
- Freedom of academic staff, including professional librarians, to acquire, generate, preserve, and share knowledge resources;
- Freedom to participate in collegial governance without reprisal;
- Freedom to comment on institutional policy and practice;
- Freedom to exercise freedom of expression & other civil liberties outside university without academic penalty.

What should be excluded:

- Respectful workplace discourse that curtails academic freedom;
- Claims that peer review or disciplinary convention guarantees or trumps academic freedom;
- Any conflation of academic freedom with institutional autonomy;
- Claims that institutional “mission” or “leadership” or “autonomy” limits academic freedom;
- Claims that institutional “loyalty” or “reputation” require the infringing or abridging of academic freedom;
- Claims that the law is an absolute limit to academic freedom.

October 25, 2011

MONTREAL – Canada’s universities have adopted a new Statement on Academic Freedom that clarifies the importance and definition of academic freedom on campuses across Canada. The new Statement on Academic Freedom was accepted unanimously by university presidents at the centennial meetings of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada today in Montreal. It replaces the statement members had agreed to in 1988.

<http://www.aucc.ca/media-room/news-and-commentary/canadas-universities-adopt-new-statement-on-academic-freedom>

AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom

“Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment. Academic freedom is fundamental to the mandate of universities to pursue truth, educate students and disseminate knowledge and understanding...”

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What should be excluded but AUCC includes:

- Claims that peer review or disciplinary convention guarantees or trumps academic freedom;
- Conflates academic freedom with institutional autonomy;
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- Qualifications of academic freedom such as “ensuring that pressures from funding and other types of partnerships do not unduly influence the intellectual work of the university.”

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AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom 2011

Division within the AUCC family?

University of Toronto *President's Comment
on AUCC Statement on Academic Freedom*

<http://www.president.utoronto.ca/Page31.aspx>



What to do?

- Ask Daniel Woolf how he voted on AUCC 2011 Statement
- Review your academic freedom language and plan for strengthening it for 2014
- Encourage your colleagues to exercise their academic freedom & recommit QUFA to support them

Resources

- CAUT Policy Statement on Academic Freedom
<http://www.caut.ca/pages.asp?page=247&lang=1>
- CAUT Open Letter to AUCC
http://www.caut.ca/uploads/CAUT_to_AUCC_Academic_Freedom.pdf
- UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel
http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- QUFA Collective Agreement Language on Academic Freedom
<http://www.qufa.ca/ca/2008-2011/CAFinaleditsMay252010.pdf> & www.qufa.ca