

Happy Holidays



Free Speech: A Costing

Ever sit back and think, *my classes have a free speech crisis and what this college needs is a stronger policy to fix the problem?* No? Didn't think so.

Yet one of the first things Doug Ford did after taking power was to make post-secondary institutions make free speech policies by this January. What's this really about? Not free speech

Colleges Ontario has embraced the University of Chicago Free Speech Code. This university states that it is not their job to shield students from ideas that are offensive. We can debate this, but there is a much more at play here in the bigger picture.

The American Association of University Professors calls free speech legislation "a solution in search of a problem."

It's no accident Colleges Ontario chose the University of Chicago's speech code. The university's Committee on Freedom of Expression in effect proselytizes: dozens of colleges have adopted its speech code. There's big bucks behind this. Follow the money.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education champions the University of Chicago's speech codes. Funders such as libertarian billionaires the Koch brothers and the Dick and Betsy Devos Family Foundation Capital Fund reveal the end game of this free speech ruse.

Donors Capital Fund gave money to the Committee on Freedom of Expression. They also funded a campaign against Islam and are major funders of anti-climate change initiatives. Now we're in Doug Ford territory.

Jim Turk (head of Ryerson's Centre for Free Expression) calls Ford's policy an "unprecedented abuse" of institutional autonomy. He notes it is ironic that a government that set up a snitch line for parents to use against teachers (and a government that wants to end demonstrations critiquing Israel) would champion free speech.

But free speech is a fig leaf, a cudgel to sow division. It is foisted on us to cause polarization, to sow a discourse highlighting a liberal elite that wants to stop the far right from "telling it like it is, folks" when it comes to contentious issues such as race and gender identity.

Colleges Ontario's embrace of University of Chicago speech codes aligns colleges with organizations and beliefs that the majority of Ontarians reject.

Here's the rub. If we take the bait and argue for the safe spaces the University of Chicago rejects, we are "snowflakes" and help create the division and victimization that populism thrives in. We're stuck between a rock and a Ford place.

I'm not against free speech (frankly, I'm torn about the issue), but we're played for fools if we merely argue for or against free speech. Look at the bigger picture and address the larger context. Why was this policy foisted on us, with such urgency? Who gains, and who can lose?

Thanks, team 352, for the fantastic chili entry in the United Way great chili cook-off !



Wage Freeze at Hospital: Who's Next?

OPSEU has filed a bad-faith bargaining complaint with the Labour Relations Board over the wage freeze management is trying to impose on the (mostly female) clerical workers at Peterborough's hospital.

In September, an arbitrator ruled that members of the local deserve a contract with a wage increase. However, management used a secretive and dodgy job evaluation process to get out of this: they re-classified the jobs and froze wages!

OPSEU Vice President Eduardo Almeida notes that "This is an attack on women, pure and simple. OPSEU Local 345 is 98% women, and it's the only local at the hospital being targeted with a wage freeze."



The hospital CEO, however, saw his wage go up by 21% between 2015 and 2017.

You've won academic freedom: What are you going to do with it?

Martin Devitt, Local 242

For years, faculty have been forced to do more with less. Respectful protests within our system have had little effect. The increasing corporatization of the colleges, along with the proliferation of administrative positions, have made our working conditions more challenging, and also de-professionalized faculty as the true experts in our fields. As we take on more and more responsibilities, we must still uphold the quality of what we do.

With the additions of Article 13.02 – 13.05 (the articles on academic freedom) to our 2017 – 2021 College Faculty Collective Agreement, we now have a protected ability to speak out; however, it is not a passive safeguard like so many of our other rights. Rather, academic freedom is a call to action to fully and actively exercise our rights and expertise. For example, academic freedom gives faculty, the content experts, the right and the responsibility to decide how best to educate and evaluate students.

Consider some of the actions of faculty since academic freedom was enshrined in our latest collective agreement:

Despite pressure from managers, publishers and even colleagues, faculty have fought for the right to determine the type of evaluation and the materials used in their classrooms. Academic freedom ensures that course outcomes are evaluated in the manner deemed most appropriate by the faculty.

Program faculty have come together to write letters describing how poor management decisions, such as increasing class sizes, overusing technologists and contract faculty, and utilizing supplemental testing, have led to a decrease in the quality of education for students. Bringing such issues to light can help parents, students, and community members understand more clearly the reasons why faculty are speaking out against management's operation decisions.

Faculty have filed grievances on arbitrary grade changes by management. Faculty have openly criticized some of their institution's unjust policies and practices, such as Durham College's restriction on speech during the provincial election. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) joined with our Divisional Executive in condemning this policy and the College had to respond.

Whether in your day-to-day teaching or in college-wide practices and policies, we as faculty now have the right—and indeed the duty—to speak up and defend the integrity of our profession, and what we know to be best for our students and communities. The forces of management have shaped the increasingly corporatized environment in which we teach. Academic freedom gives faculty the power to correct these injustices. If you have an issue concerning academic freedom, contact your union local representative to find out how you can take action.

A Pain in the AES: Would You Like Fries With Your Feedback?

I recently looked at a MOOC put on by the Ontario government. I clicked on the sign-up sheet and then clicked to get more information from the "[Anatomy of 21st Century Education](#)" link.

Slide 8 about disruptive technology caught my eye.

A graph about automated essay scoring (unfavourably) compared "human performance" to automated essay scoring.



A click [to the source](#) provides rationalizations for automated essay scoring. The writer is sincere, witty and clearly extremely intelligent, caught up in the fetishization of a techno-future that ignores the political struggles in our workplace.

We can see which way the corporate wind blows. Here's the "AI and the gig economy" that Don Sinclair dreams of. Despite the slide title invoking disruptive technology, there is no mention of replacing professors with bots. It's all about pre-scoring, customization and helping to "identify students who might need teacher intervention." Who can argue with that?

Heads up. This is the kind of thing we can expect from management when they want to farm our work out to machines:

" AES [Automated Essay Scoring] is used as a way to give students iterative feedback before submitting a final draft to a teacher for a full evaluation. Does this help learning?

AES systems experiment with giving teachers information, and allowing them to regrade and customize grading.

Automated systems pre-score essays, and automatically identify students who might need teacher intervention.

A teacher scores an essay, then is given the score the same essay received via AES, and can update their score if they believe that the AES brings up useful points.

Small group discussions and peer grading are tried in combination with AES.

Automated scoring of alternative types of media, like videos, begins to emerge."

And quality education (and the payroll budget) starts to disappear.

PD Time on SWFS

Did you know that each year full-time faculty members are allowed 10 Professional Development (PD) days during a normal academic year? The collective agreement guarantees that at least five of these days can be taken as consecutive work days.

Following the 2017 strike, the Kaplan agreement saw the number of PD days reduced to 9 for the 2017-2018 academic year. However, any unused PD days from 2017-2018 carried over to the 2018-2019. This leaves many members with 19 PD days that can be used prior to the end of the 2018-2019 academic year.

The Union has been working with the College to develop guidelines on how these PD days should be recorded. These guidelines should be sent out early in 2019 prior to the May/June work loading period. The number of PD days available to full-time faculty will reset to 10 at the start of the 2019-2020 academic year.

Approval of PD begins with a discussion with your supervisor. The union supports developing a PD plan based on your personal professional development needs.



“Strikingly, the new Ontario policy obliges colleges and universities to adopt free speech policies based on the so-called Chicago Principles. The Chicago Principles are a set of principles about freedom of expression created by a University of Chicago ad hoc committee and adopted as a vision statement for that university. They are the product of an elite American private university; they are not the product of collegial governance; and they are not even policy at the University of Chicago. And yet, the Ontario Government wishes to impose them on all postsecondary institutions in the province. What a massive encroachment on institutional autonomy! Not only is the government forcing all institutions to toe the same line, but it is imposing an American document created for a very different sort of institution than we have in Ontario” (Dea, 2018).

Faculty launch charter challenge on cancellation of Provincial Task Force

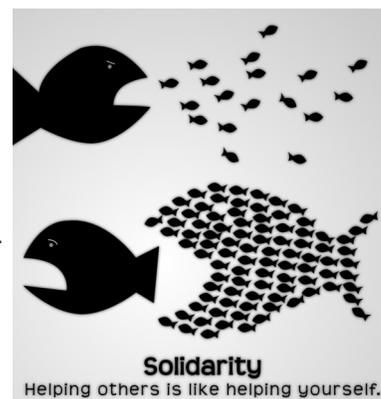
JP Hornick, Local 556

As many of you are aware, the Ford government cancelled the Provincial Task Force on June 29 as part of his extensive rollback of Liberal initiatives and appointments. Task Force members were notified on July 13, and faculty immediately began work on a coordinated response. Students and faculty members were prepared to issue a joint statement condemning Ford's decision, while the college appointees declined our invitation to join.

Since then, college faculty and OPSEU have worked with expert legal counsel to file a Charter challenge, asserting the government has interfered with our bargaining rights.

In addition, the colleges and the College Employer Council have engaged in a coordinated effort to make faculty feel that our strike was meaningless.

Efforts to undermine the intent of the partial-load registry and challenges to academic freedom are underway at many, if not all colleges. Faculty, however, are fighting back and winning. We are also coordinating our efforts provincially through the local presidents and the College Faculty Divisional Executive to strategize for the next three years.



The election of the Ford government is an obstacle, but it is not insurmountable. It is crucial for us to push back, as mobilization has forced Ford to retreat on several of his decisions already, and court challenges are piling up around him.

Public opinion remains firmly on the side of college faculty, and the significant gains we did make last round will last if we keep steady in our enforcement. Standing together is the force that led to our success, and continued solidarity is our only means for continuing along that path.

Niagara College Calls for International Student Re-Testing

Choosing action over denial, Niagara College is supporting students and faculty. [Click here to read](#) how the college is making 400 students in India re-do their English language test due to "inconsistencies" in officially reported (IELTS tested) language proficiency and what was experienced at the college. It's a fascinating article about what can be a corrupt process. Bravo, Niagara, for making this difficult and ethical choice.

Low Enrollment Numbers: A Window of Opportunity

Victoria Maystruk

Winter 2019 enrollment numbers are lower than normal. The reason(s) for this have not been shared, and it has led to widespread speculation and gossip – is this fallout from the Winter 2018 international over-enrollment debacle? Is this a consequence of the on-going construction projects that continually compromise quality learning spaces? Is this a system wide problem where the public is losing faith with Ontario Colleges?

Regardless of the cause, the concerns faculty have for the aftermath are real and are not being quelled by management. With only 25 students entering into a common first semester in some Schools, what will third semester classes feel like that only have 4 students in them? How will contracts be awarded when fewer sections are needed? Will we lose quality faculty who are forced to take employment elsewhere to pay for food and housing?

Low enrollment numbers for a single semester, or even a short succession of semesters, don't have to induce this type of fear and anxiety if our leadership encouraged a wider view window.

By focusing on the short-term, we see all the bumps along the way. If we were more focused on the long term vision, the unexpected can be viewed as opportunities --- what if we employed the same number of faculty and had more engaged in program and course development given the reduced course hours?

Jeff Bezos has notoriously run huge deficits to gain Amazon market share – few companies are profitable every quarter. I'm far from an investment maven, but when markets are down it is time to invest.

Our core business is delivering quality education to our students – and our path to achieving this is through our faculty. The college needs to invest in faculty now more than ever!

