

NOVEMBER 19, 2019 [CAUT News Article](#)

Report: Academic Freedom Breached at Thompson Rivers University

(Ottawa – November 19, 2019) An investigation into the suspension of Dr. Derek Pyne by Thompson Rivers University (TRU) has concluded that the administration's actions breached academic freedom.

The committee of investigation, established by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), found that TRU "appears to suffer a broad institutional weakness when it comes to understanding academic freedom."

The investigation looked into actions taken in July 2018 by the administration to suspend Dr. Pyne and bar him from campus. Dr. Pyne found himself at the centre of controversy for his research into the use of deceptive journals by administrators and academics at TRU, and for his public criticism of the University and his department, the School of Business and Economics.

The committee notes that the right of academics to criticize their administration and their institution is a widely recognized feature of academic freedom. However, the committee found that at TRU there was a failure to understand academic freedom beyond a "narrow application to support faculty members' freedom to pursue what they expect to be fruitful avenues of research and publish their results."

"Our investigation finds that the TRU Administration's approach in managing workplace complaints against Dr. Pyne failed to properly consider his academic freedom as it applies to his...criticisms of the School of Business and Economics, its administrators and its faculty," the committee concludes.

The committee makes a number of recommendations, including removing the constraints placed on Dr. Pyne's speech as a condition of his continuing employment as a faculty member.

The members of the investigatory committee were Dr. Mark Mac Lean, Professor of Mathematics, University of British Columbia (Chair); and Carla Graebner, Librarian for Data Services and Government Information, Simon Fraser University.

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Media contact: Lisa Keller, Communications Officer, Canadian Association of University Teachers; 613-726-5186 (o); 613-222-3530 (c)