



October 2020

Report to CAUT Council

Since our last written report to Council in April 2020, the Committee has met twice, once in August and again in October of 2020. Our major focus has been on the alarming number of academic freedom cases across Canada in the wake of COVID 19. The Committee reviewed and discussed no less than 15 such cases at its August meeting and, in October, reviewed and debated the current case at the University of Toronto Law School, which Council will discuss at this meeting. These cases are in addition to the on-going investigation into the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of British Columbia, and lingering concerns surrounding the Dr. Derek Pyne case at Thompson Rivers University. Discussions in Committee have focused on the reasons behind the rising number of these cases, and include: the perceived conflict between equity issues and academic freedom in the classroom and across campus; the threat of performance-based funding on bench science and autonomous research; the erosion of collegial governance and an increase in administrative overreach in the wake of COVID 19; the impact of privately-owned forms of educational technology on the privacy rights and academic freedom of faculty members; and escalating work demands and scarcity of resources for faculty members dealing with emergency remote teaching.

The Committee has had to prioritize and scale back some of its activities due to COVID 19. The academic freedom workshop is still in the planning stage, but our planned review of research ethics requirements is on hold. We are working with members of the Equity Committee to compose an Equity and Academic Freedom 'explainer' that will be circulated to member associations soon. In addition, the Executive Director is working on an interpretive guide to the legal issues surrounding academic freedom rights for member associations. We have also approved a first draft of a policy statement on security costs for outside campus speakers, which will be circulated to other committees for review.

The Committee is grateful for the continued insight and support of our colleagues at the American Association of University Professors.

Policy Statements/Model Clauses

New Documents

- Outside Speakers and Campus Security Concerns

Ongoing Cases

The Committee reviewed cases undertaken by the Executive Director. He will report to Council on these many cases.

Current Committee Members

Alison Hearn (Western) Chair, Sally Gunz (Waterloo), Lorelea Michaelis (Mount Allison), Michelle Weber (Brock), Kevin Kane (Alberta), Dennis Fitzpatrick (Regina), Alain Viau (Laval), Michael Arfken (UPEI), Kent Donlevy (Calgary) and Observer, Hank Reichman (AAUP). Ex-officio: CAUT President Brenda Austin-Smith (Manitoba); CAUT Vice-President Peter McInnis (St. Francis Xavier), and CAUT Executive Director David Robinson.

CAUT Staff Support for AF&T

Justine de Jaegher (Education Officer), Margaret McGovern-Potíé (Executive Assistant to the Executive Director) and Monique Cooke (Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director) have been most helpful in organizing and tracking our deliberations and the related documentation.

The Committee wishes to thank members of Council and our colleagues nationally for their work defending our collective academic freedom.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Hearn, Chair