



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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29 May 2019

H.E.A. (Eddy) Campbell, PhD
President and Vice-Chancellor, University of New Brunswick
3 Bailey Drive
P.O. Box 4400
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

Dear President Campbell,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

It has come to our attention that the University of New Brunswick is reviewing allegations or complaints against Ricardo Duchesne, a tenured UNB sociologist. According to a Global news report published on 22 May, your university, having received these allegations or complaints, is investigating Dr Duchesne's views and his choice of venues in which to express his views. (https://globalnews.ca/news/5303810/unb-professor-white-supremacist/?utm_source=GlobalNews&utm_medium=Facebook.)

Academic freedom protects professors from institutional sanction for holding the views they hold, however unpopular or misguided those views might be, and for expressing those views, however publicly or insistently. It also protects professors from institutional sanction for expressing those views where they wish, however disreputable the venue. Because the complaints, at least those publicly available, seem to be entirely about Dr Duchesne's views, his expressing them, or his expressing them where he has expressed them, an investigation based on those complaints is inconsistent with respect for Dr Duchesne's academic freedom.

Investigating Dr Duchesne for what he has said or where he has said it cannot but have negative effects on the research and learning culture of UNB. Researchers may fear asking certain questions, pursuing certain lines of inquiry, and drawing certain conclusions. Teachers may fear speaking openly and candidly to their students. Students may keep their questions and thoughts to themselves.

Further, the main reason the public trusts university research more than it does research

conducted by industry or government is that the public thinks university researchers are constrained in their investigations by nothing other than the desire to understand things as they are. But if a university is perceived to be concerned about the results of its professors' research, the public may conclude that researchers at that university must adhere to a party line. Their trust of university research may evaporate.

Of course professors, students, and members of the general public should be free to take issue with any view of any professor. Dr Duchesne's views and choices are fair game for criticism and disparagement. Disputation gives a university its unique ethos. UNB itself, though, should not side with any substantive position on the matters under discussion but instead maintain an environment in which people can themselves engage openly and fearlessly with the issues at hand. Bringing Dr Duchesne under investigation does not work to maintain such an environment.

We are puzzled why UNB did not reject out of hand calls to sanction Dr Duchesne, as they were based only on the content of his views and the venues in which he expressed them. UNB could have taken the opportunity to explain the nature of and reasons for academic freedom rather than put at risk the goods academic freedom serves.

We respectfully request that you respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,



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Ricardo Duchesne, Social Science