

Dear Dr. Mercer,

Thanks for taking the time to share your thoughts on this matter. Without wading into the specifics of this particular case, let me assure you that my colleagues and I at Wilfrid Laurier University firmly uphold the principles of free speech and strive to provide an environment that protects the right of all people to engage in critical and respectful dialogue. Free speech and difficult discourse are alive and well at Laurier. We must, however, balance the exercise of free speech with the need to support individuals who may have experienced real harm related to the subject being discussed. I do not see these twin obligations as mutually exclusive.

Laurier is not alone in this regard. Universities the world over are experiencing similar challenges related to free speech and civil debate. It is important to note that the underlying issues that give rise to columns such as the one in the National Post are complex and highly emotional for many people. Unfortunately some participants in the discussions and debates portray the issues simplistically, often in a one-sided and polarized manner, and may present inaccurate or incomplete arguments which can then carry over into media reports. Clearly it is important in such charged environments that we acknowledge that people on all sides of the political and ideological spectrum can be intimidated by how others respond to their points of view. Laurier deplores such intimidation and intolerance.

Please be assured that we continue to examine and challenge ourselves on these important issues to ensure that we can accommodate and encourage the exchange of competing ideas in a safe, principled and respectful manner.

Yours truly,

Max Blouw

*Dr. Max Blouw, President and Vice-Chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University*