

Laurier responds to recent media articles

Nov. 16, 2017

<https://www.wlu.ca/news/news-releases/2017/nov/laurier-responds-to-recent-media-articles.html>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE LAURIER COMMUNITY

To the Laurier community,

Our university has been in the headlines this week. The situation at the heart of the news stories and social media commentary is complex.

As president and vice-chancellor, I have a broad responsibility to balance the many and often-competing demands that come into play in these circumstances.

Let me deal first with the personnel and privacy issues. As a responsible employer, we are obligated to abide by government regulations, human rights legislation and our own university policies. To this end, we need to gather the facts of the situation and assess them in a deliberate, fair and respectful manner. To do this, we are in the process of engaging an impartial third-party professional. Given the personnel and privacy issues involved, this process will be confidential.

Related, but separate, are the important principles so closely associated with the mission of any university. I am confident that those associated with Laurier believe strongly in upholding the important principles of academic freedom, diversity of opinion, critical thought, the civil debate of competing ideas, free speech, and freedom of expression. The real question, however, is how do we encourage and implement these fundamental ideals in a world that's more aware of the importance of inclusivity and yet, at the same time, is growing more polarized?

I am encouraged by the many people who have been moved by the events of the past week to share their points of view. These issues are clearly important to a great many people at Laurier and beyond.

I believe that as a university community we need to have more conversations about how academic expression happens throughout our institution. To be focused and constructive, these conversations should take place outside of the specific contexts that, for good reason, are often constrained by privacy legislation, employer regulations, and other legal requirements. Both rights and responsibilities have to be included in these conversations.

To this end, I will be striking a task force charged with a mandate to explore and consult on how we encourage and protect these important principles at Laurier. My goal is that we work together as a diverse community to build on the many best practices already underway here and share our made-at-Laurier solutions with ourselves and the wider community.

In the coming weeks I will be seeking input on how best to populate the task force and refine its mandate. I look forward to hearing from all of you as we work together to illuminate the many positive ways in which we live and implement these important values and principles at Laurier.

Sincerely,

*Deborah MacLatchy, PhD
Wilfrid Laurier University*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR SENT NOV. 16 IN RESPONSE TO WATERLOO REGION RECORD ARTICLE

“WLU censures grad student for lesson that used TVO clip” (Nov. 15, 2017)

Wilfrid Laurier University understands the public interest in this matter. The issues involved are complex and worthy of discussion as indicated by the media attention.

The university is constrained from commenting on the personnel matters involved. As a responsible employer and educational institution, we are determined to gather all of the facts and then assess them in a deliberate and fair manner. To this end, we are engaging a neutral, third-party professional to speak with those involved and gather the facts of the situation.

All parties involved have access to a variety of university supports normally provided for students and employees.

Laurier is committed to fostering a learning environment that is open and challenging, protects academic freedom and freedom of expression, as well as being welcoming, supportive and respectful of human rights. Supporting these values in a world that is changing and increasingly polarized is a challenge that Laurier welcomes and, along with many other universities, is working hard to address.

Signed,

*Dr. Paul Jessop, Vice-President: Academic (Acting)
Wilfrid Laurier University*

STATEMENT BY THE UNIVERSITY POSTED NOV. 11 IN RESPONSE TO NATIONAL POST COLUMN

“Thought police strike again as Wilfrid Laurier grad student is chastised for showing Jordan Peterson video” (Nov. 10, 2017)

The National Post recently published a column that referred to Wilfrid Laurier University. The university is committed to fostering a learning environment that is open and challenging but also welcoming and supportive of all students. The university is engaging a neutral third party to gather facts regarding the situation referenced in the column. Because of the privacy issues involved, we will follow established internal processes. It is important to understand that the issues involved in this matter are complex and affect all universities.

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