

Laurier profs launch petition for free expression

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Wilfrid Laurier University has apologized after a student and teaching assistant was bullied by three staff for failing to condemn University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson during a class debate about gender-neutral pronouns.

Lindsay Shepherd was severely chastised for sharing a TVO clip featuring Peterson debating the issue with another professor. In response to the “oppressive treatment” of Shepherd, a group of Laurier professors issued [an online petition](#) calling on the university to adopt a resolution supporting “unfettered inquiry and maximal freedom of expression on campus.”

Here are some excerpts from the petition:

- “It is axiomatic that intellectual inquiry, critical reflection and scholarly integrity are NOT POSSIBLE in an institution that prevents some ideas from being articulated. Any censorship of ideas, no matter how repugnant some may deem them, prevents Wilfrid Laurier University from meeting the chief values, or ‘cornerstones,’ required to function as a university.”

- “It is for the individual members of the Laurier community, not for Wilfrid Laurier University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the Laurier community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of our institution’s educational mission.”
- “...this policy clarifies that Wilfrid Laurier University’s fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the Laurier community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed.”
- “Wilfrid Laurier University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.”