

Faculty union claims they face ‘violent speech and actions’ daily, but won’t specify – to protect members

COLLEGE FIX STAFF • DECEMBER 15, 2017



*‘Threats against our members have escalated’ when they answer media queries*

<http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/40068/>

As controversy swirls around Canada’s Wilfrid Laurier University for its **investigation of a teaching assistant** who showed a debate on gender-neutral pronouns in class, its faculty union has been relatively silent.

Until Tuesday, that is, when Faculty Association President Michele Kramer **released a statement** explaining why the union has not publicly interceded or made “public statements along various, diametrically-opposed, lines of support,” as requested by its members.

Her statement makes sweeping claims about members facing threats to their “physical safety” and the “violent speech and actions” that now happen “daily” on WLU’s campuses:

In particular, the harm that has been leveled at our Trans Community and its supporters is unacceptable. WLUFAs stands in solidarity with our LGBTQ2 [“two-spirited”] community as they continue to battle their way through walls of ignorance

and oppression — walls that seem to have been disproportionately fortified in the last few weeks.

The union is also assisting with “workshops and training” to help faculty deal with “increasingly difficult classroom atmospheres over the past number of weeks.”

*The College Fix* asked Kramer to provide specific instances of physical threats and distinguish between in-person threats and the kind of cyber trolling that now confronts **faculty of all ideological stripes** across North America. (In a comprehensive *Maclean's* profile of WLU since the classroom incident, the only specified medium for threats was the LGBT center's Facebook page, while one transgender student claimed to experience harassment or “sexual assault” every day.) *The Fix* also asked Kramer to explain specifically how “classroom atmospheres” have changed. (The TA at the center of the controversy, Lindsay Shepherd, has claimed one professor **banned laptops** to prevent her from secretly recording in class.)

**MORE: Law prof gets death threats for ‘Russian princess’ remark in trans hearing**

Kramer responded in an email:

While I appreciate your interest — and know that many people want these kinds of details — what we know for certain is that any time information has been given to the media throughout the course of this incident, threats against our members and others on campus have escalated.

I cannot, in good conscience, supply any further information to you.

Kramer's Tuesday statement drew similar reactions about the lack of specificity in the threatening incidents, including from Shepherd herself and allies. (“WLU3” apparently refers to Shepherd's supervising professor Nathan Rambukkana, department chair Herbert Pimlott and diversity office staffer Adria Joel, whose **meeting with Shepherd** about her gender-neutral lesson that day is under investigation.)



**Lindsay Shepherd**@NewWorldHominin

WLU Faculty Assoc. press release. They condemn the "violent speech and actions that have...become a daily occurrence on our campuses."

Daily violent actions? What are they talking about? Nothing is filed with police. They make a mockery of serious crimes.<http://www.wlufa.ca/2017/12/12/wlufa-statement-on-recent-events-at-wlu/> ...

[4:32 PM - Dec 14, 2017](#)



**Dr. Oren Amitav**@docamitav

I would further like to know if there have been \*any actual\* incidents that would give the two profs of the #WLU3 any \*genuine\* "concerns regarding their...physical safety on campus." Do you know of any, @NewWorldHominin or @DMillardHaskell? <https://twitter.com/ZUCKERKJ/status/941553170513215489> ...

[2:52 AM - Dec 15, 2017](#)

Journalism Prof. David Haskell, who has championed Shepherd's cause and taken on colleagues for what he calls their Orwellian language, said he also asked Kramer to specify incidents. She apparently gave him the same statement given to *The Fix*.



**DavidMillardHaskell**@DMillardHaskell

This week WLU's faculty assoc described "all the violence and hate-speech that has taken place on the [Waterloo] campus." We asked for evidence. Was told by faculty prez: because it could lead to more threats "I cannot, in good conscience, supply any further information to you."

[8:35 AM - Dec 15, 2017](#)

### **MORE: LGBT center was behind complaint against Shepherd**

While the Faculty Association is staying silent on what exact threats its members have faced, and why they have reason to fear for their safety, Kramer's statement offered more information about the role it's playing in the Shepherd investigation and the school's task force on freedom of expression that resulted from the controversy.

Its priorities include:

[T]he provision of WLUFA consultation, guidance and representation at all meetings between our members and University Administration and/or Robert Centa (the lawyer hired to gather facts around the incident);

Ensuring that WLUFA maintains lines of communication with the Administration as it moves forward toward the finding of solutions/repairing of campus relations and university reputation. This includes, but is not limited to, WLUFA's role in helping to draft the composition for the Task Force. It is essential that WLUFA be a primary stakeholder in any actions that arise from the Task Force, or the Report that will be issued by the fact-finder, Rob Centa. To ensure WLUFA's effectiveness, it has been necessary to refrain from certain public statements, while continuing to press the Administration out of the public eye.

This means that the Faculty Association – which claims that the campus LGBT community has faced increasingly strong “walls of ignorance and oppression” since the Shepherd incident – will likely have more sway on the task force than Shepherd and her faculty allies who have warned that the school is threatening freedom of expression and intellectual inquiry.

**[Read the union statement.](#)**