

# President's message to the Laurier community

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<https://www.wlu.ca/news/news-releases/2017/nov/presidents-message-to-the-laurier-community.html>

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,

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