

University had more to say on controversy over suspension of economics professor

Thompson Rivers University has complained to the *Vancouver Sun* over its reportage on the suspension of Derek Pyne

Dale Bass / Kamloops This Week

<https://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/news/university-had-more-to-say-on-controversy-over-suspension-of-economics-professor-1.23401561>

AUGUST 15, 2018 04:33 PM



Thompson Rivers University has formally complained to management at the *Vancouver Sun* about a story on one of its faculty members.

TRU executive communications manager Darshan Lindsay said the specific concern is a decision *Sun* reporter Susan Lazaruk made to not include an explanation in full from the university on a recent suspension of economics professor Derek Pyne.

Lindsay said due to legal constraints and the university's policies and procedures it must follow dealing with the privacy rights of its staff, faculty and students, it cannot go into details on the suspension.

The *Sun* stories linked Pyne's suspension to his concern over the legitimacy of the journals where other academics were publishing articles.

TRU provost and vice-president academic Christine Bovis-Crossen sent an email to the university's faculty after a UBC professor called on the provincial government to investigate the matter. However, the University Act precludes this, mandating a minister "must not interfere in the exercise of powers conferred on a university, its board, senate and other constituent bodies by this act, respecting any of the following: a). the formulation and adoption of academic policies and standards."

The letter sent by the provost to the Vancouver Sun said:

"TRU can confirm the faculty member at the centre of your coverage remains employed; the headline had indicated the individual was dismissed.

"Additionally, TRU provided a brief statement to reporter Susan Lazaruk on Aug. 13, of which only a portion was included in your story. We are disappointed the *Vancouver Sun* chose not to include comment on our unwavering commitment to academic freedom, and hence, misrepresented TRU in its coverage.

"For the benefit of your readers, we have included the full statement of what was provided to Ms. Lazaruk, as we feel this is critical information for the public given the debate that is occurring:

"TRU is not commenting on this matter directly for the same reasons provided to Douglas Todd. We are legally bound to protect the personal and private information of employees.

"However, it's important to know that TRU is committed to academic freedom and the independent research activities of its faculty. This is the bedrock of Canadian universities – that we provide and promote an environment where the thoughtful exchange of ideas and research is cultivated."

The *Sun* stories also said Pyne is on an unpaid suspension however he is still being paid by the university.