



November 19, 2018

Dr. Mark Mercer
President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS)
PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre
Halifax, NS B3L 4T6
Via Email: Mark.Mercer@smu.ca

Dear Mr. Mercer,

Thank you for your letter of Nov. 15, 2018 of which I am responding as interim president at Thompson Rivers University. Your letter provides us an opportunity to correct media coverage about TRU as the coverage to date has either been inaccurate or oversimplified the situation. Additionally, our attempt to provide clarity for the public through a letter to the editor in response to Gary Mason's column in the Globe and Mail was denied as the paper elected not to publish its contents.

I am including below the content of my recent public statement made on this matter, which is also posted on TRU's website.

"In light of recent media attention that has focused on Thompson Rivers University, the publishing activity of its faculty, and on academic freedom, I feel it necessary to provide this public statement.

Much of the media attention has incorrectly stated that faculty member Dr. Derek Pyne was disciplined for his research. This is not the case. The discipline imposed is related to matters which I am unable to comment on due to both employment and privacy law. But I do want to be clear, to set the record straight, that academic freedom is fully protected at TRU under the collective agreement with our faculty association. Action taken against Dr. Pyne was not related to his specific research, the dissemination of his research, or the exercising of his right to academic freedom.

Additionally, it is important that I convey to you, to the public, my confidence in the calibre and quality of the faculty at TRU. We have a strong faculty complement committed to excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship. Any faculty member hired or promoted at TRU goes through a robust process which involves a review of research activity and publishing credentials. This is a process led by peers, hence, any faculty member at TRU moving through the promotion and tenure process is doing so with the endorsement of their faculty colleagues provincially, nationally, and internationally.


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Regarding disputes involving faculty, our focus is on resolving such disputes through the appropriate internal processes and in a way that is respectful of all individuals and their right to privacy.”

I trust that you can conclude from the above statement that TRU remains fully committed to the academic freedom of our faculty. As you note in your letter, academic freedom is protected under our collective agreement with the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association and we have not received a complaint from them that Dr. Pyne’s academic freedom has been violated.

I thank you in advance for posting our letter, and giving your members the opportunity to draw their own conclusions on this matter rather than relying on media coverage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Bovis-Cnossen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "C".

DR. CHRISTINE L. BOVIS-CNOSSEN, PhD, FRSA
President and Vice-Chancellor (Interim)