

A FAIR DEAL

Protecting the University



ACADEMIC FREEDOM

from the NUFA CC: Wendy Peters, Susan Srigley & Richard Wenghofer

WHO OWNS OUR RESEARCH?

<http://www.academicmatters.ca/2012/05/tenure-and-academic-freedom-the-beginning-of-the-end/>

“Academic Freedom is all well and good but you can’t pay your bills with it.” This was the surprising statement made by a non-academic friend of mine during a recent discussion about issues currently facing university faculty. He voiced the familiar perspective that, in the end, most issues fall into either/or choices and that academic freedom should be sacrificed at the altar of compensation. I think this is a false dichotomy and a deeply problematic perspective that fails to recognize the complexity of universities, academic work and bargaining positions.

Let’s face it, it is difficult to get wound up about something as abstract and amorphous as ‘academic freedom’. It all seems so remote. Yet it is this abstract concept that is at the very heart of

academia, setting us apart from instructors in colleges, researchers in government institutions or technicians in labs. University professors have earned the right to set their own path and make academic decisions about their teaching and research. However, it hasn’t always been thus nor should we assume it always will be. Everything from tenure and promotion to sabbaticals to academic freedom is bargained at the table and those concepts and processes can be weakened or even eliminated with a stroke of the proverbial pen.

As NUFA Members, we cannot risk undermining or losing our hard-won academic freedom due to neglect.

What remaining issues concern our Academic Freedom?

- the *custody and control* of our personal and academic files (i.e., who owns our research?)
- evidence of a grant application AND the possession of the grant in order for sabbaticals to be approved
- ill-defined notions of "academic bullying" which could, if put in place, bring forth a chill on academic discourse

Currently there are a number of proposals remaining on the table related to academic freedom. But whether it is a sabbatical plan that must “benefit Nipissing University” in order to be approved or the administration’s stony silence on NUFA’s proposals to address university policies that can and sometimes are encroaching on our academic freedoms, let’s send the clear and unambiguous message to the administration that academic freedom IS a high priority for us and NOT for sale in any either/or proposition.

Let’s protect Academic Freedom as part of a *fair* deal for you!

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