



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs et professeurs d'université

www.caut.ca
acppu@caut.ca

2705, promenade Queensview Drive
Ottawa (Ontario) K2B 8K2

Tel\Tél. 613-820-2270
Fax\Télec. 613-820-7244

BY EMAIL: presidents.office@ubc.ca

February 28, 2019

Professor Santa J. Ono
President and Vice-Chancellor
Office of the President
University of British Columbia
7th Floor, Walter C. Koerner Library
1958 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC
V6T 1Z2

Dear President Ono,

Thank you for your letter of February 8, 2019 in response to concerns raised by CAUT surrounding recent developments at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies (PWIAS).

I very much welcome your stated commitment to ensuring that academic freedom principles are fully respected in all UBC donor-funded programs. I also note that UBC Policy 114 on Fundraising and Acceptance of Donations provides that, "UBC values and will protect its integrity, autonomy and academic freedom, and will not accept donations when a condition of such acceptance would compromise these fundamental principles."

However, I do respectfully disagree with your assertion that academic freedom principles are in practice being upheld by UBC in its donor agreements. The PWIAS is a case in point. The Deed of Trust for the Establishment of the Peter Wall Endowment (1991) in our view clearly violates one core tenet of academic freedom. The Deed provides the Board of Trustees, composed of a majority of non-academic staff, with the power to "implement and manage programs" and to select scholars and research projects. It appears that academic staff may have some additional representation on what is an "advisory body" only – a body that apparently has not been active for some time.

It is our conclusion that this governance structure is contrary to principles of academic freedom insofar as it grants decision-making power over programs, research, and personnel matters to non-academic staff. As you are aware, it is widely understood that academic freedom includes the right of academic staff to make decisions regarding academic matters. This includes but is not limited to decisions on curriculum, program standards, research, appointment, tenure, and promotion.

I would again strongly urge you to review the PWIAS Deed of Trust, and any other donor agreements, and amend those agreements as necessary to fully align with principles of academic freedom and with UBC Policy 114.

I would be very pleased to discuss this matter further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Robinson
Executive Director

cc: Bronwen Sprout, President, University of British Columbia Faculty Association
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee
James Compton, President, CAUT