



Free Speech on Campus: Diversity and Expression in Post-Secondary Education

February 22-23, 2019

Radisson Admiral Hotel, Toronto

Campus free speech, including the expression of controversial ideas and views, has long been seen as central to the teaching and learning mission of universities and colleges. Today, the notion of free speech has itself become the centre of an increasingly polarized debate. On the one hand, there are demands that expression that is seen as hurtful or disrespectful be prohibited in order to ensure an inclusive, safe, and harassment-free learning environment. On the other side, critics deride universities and colleges for violating free speech by censoring opinions and views that some find uncomfortable or offensive. This conference will explore this debate by assessing the state of free expression on campuses in Canada and abroad, identifying the main challenges, and suggesting ways that academic staff, students, and institutions can build inclusive learning environments without restricting free speech.

Draft Agenda

Friday, February 22

08:00 – 09:00 **Registration**

09:00 – 09:15 **Welcome and Overview**

- Penni Stewart, President, Harry Crowe Foundation
- David Robinson, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers

09:15 – 10:30 **The State of the Debate**

Concerns about campus free speech have led some politicians in Canada and the United States to legislate or propose laws to punish institutions that purportedly restrict free speech. Is there really a free speech “crisis”

on campus? Is it necessary or appropriate for governments to intervene?
How is the debate about free speech on campus being framed by
different actors? Are there other perspectives?

- Penni Stewart, Chair

Panellists:

- Jeffrey Adam Sachs, Acadia University
- Yves Gingras, Université du Québec à Montréal

10:30 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 12:30 **Does Campus Free Speech Still Matter?**

Is unhindered freedom of expression on campuses still essential, or have other principles and values become more important? What has been the history around campus free speech struggles? What lessons, if any, are applicable to today?

- David Johnson, Chair

Panellists:

- James L. Turk, Centre for Free Expression, Ryerson University
- Alison Hearn, Western University
- Ira Wells, University of Toronto

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch (*provided*)**

14:00 – 15:30 **Challenges to Free Expression on Campus**

What are the main challenges to free speech on Canadian campuses today?
How can these challenges be addressed? How do we reconcile free speech principles with the need to ensure that all voices can be heard without discrimination and harassment?

- Len Findlay, Chair

Panellists:

- Momin Rahman, Trent University
- Francesca Holyoke, University of New Brunswick
- Paul Barrett, Concordia University

15:30 – 16:00 **Break**

16:00 – 17:30 **You Can't Say That, Can You? Controversial Speakers on Campus**

How should universities and colleges deal with controversial speakers invited to present on campus? How can institutions manage protests and security concerns, while neither suppressing speech nor sanctioning the heckler's veto?

- Valérie Dufour, Chair

Panellists:

- Samir Gandesha, Simon Fraser University
- Henry Reichman, American Association of University Professors
- Lucie Lamarche, Université du Québec à Montréal

18:00 – 19:30 **Reception**

Saturday, February 23

09:00 – 10:30 **Free Speech and Its Limits**

What are the limits, if any, of free speech on campus? What legal obligations do campuses have to uphold or limit free speech? How do hate speech and human rights laws place legal restrictions on free expression? When does offensive speech cross over into being prohibited hate speech or harassment?

- William Bruneau, Chair

Panellists:

- Sarah E. Hamill, Trinity College Dublin
- Richard Moon, University of Windsor
- Pierre Trudel, Université de Montréal

10:30 – 11:00 **Break**

11:00 – 12:30 **Free Speech in the Classroom**

Do free speech rights extend to the classroom? What free expression rights do students have? What rights and obligations do academic staff have?

- David Robinson, Chair

Panellists:

- Penni Stewart, President, Harry Crowe Foundation
- David Newhouse, Trent University
- Elizabeth Hodgson, University of British Columbia

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch (*provided*)**

14:00 – 15:30 **Free Speech and Academic Freedom**

What are the relationships and distinctions between freedom of expression and academic freedom? Can academic freedom exist if free speech is curtailed?

- Françoise Naudillon, Chair

Panellists:

- Michael Lynk, Western University
- Louis-Philippe Lampron, Université Laval
- Mark Gabbert, University of Manitoba

15:30 – 16:00 **Break**

16:00 – 17:00 **Conclusions: What Campuses Should and Shouldn't Do**

What principles or policies should guide universities and colleges with respect to free expression on campus? How should institutions handle free speech controversies? What role should academic staff play? What best practices exist?

- Penni Stewart, Chair

Panellists:

- Catherine J. Ross, George Washington University
- Peter McInnis, St. Francis-Xavier University
- RM Kennedy, OPSEU College Faculty Executive Chair