

Policy Manual

Issues Policy

Issues Policy 07 (IS-07): Academic Freedom

Adopted by: Board of Directors

Adopted on: September 09, 2014

Summary:

Public institutions of higher education serve the common good of society through searching for, and disseminating, knowledge, truth, and understanding and through fostering independent thinking and expression in students, faculty members, and researchers. The intrusion of proprietary or third party interests into the classroom and research environment places pressure on public institutions of higher education to alter their mission in order to secure and retain funding from private sources, pushing public institutions to become dependent on private sector funds and therefore private sector goals.

Restricting academic freedom leads to many negative consequences including: researchers critical of industry, university, or government practices having their employment threatened; courses and research not considered commercially relevant being under-funded or eliminated; and, in general, dissent becoming increasingly silenced. For universities to remain true to their mission to pursue knowledge for its own sake, the tenets of academic freedom must be held as indispensable.

Policy:

- I. The Union supports:
 - a. The right of students, faculty members, and researchers in all forums to exercise academic freedom;
 - b. A respectful attitude towards others and the right of all people to express their views and opinions in a safe and collegial environment;
 - c. Collaboration and consultation on academic research matters between the academic community and community at-large where it respects academic freedom;
- II. The Union opposes:
 - a. Academic freedom used to perpetuate hate and discrimination against others;
 - b. Any agreement, decision, or contract that infringes upon a student, faculty member, or researcher's academic freedom including, but not limited to: unilateral decisions to publish results or papers, to withhold the release of controversial findings and stifle academic debate, or to limit ethical questioning of institutional policies or procedures;
 - c. Policies of the federal and provincial government designed to limit the academic freedom of students, faculty members, and researchers.