

Why is academic freedom important for Ontario colleges?

“Academic freedom means that academic staff play the predominant role in determining curriculum, assessment standards, and other academic matters.”

- Canadian Association of University Teachers Policy Statement

Academic freedom is a broad-ranging issue that extends throughout the work done by college faculty members. It affects teaching, research, professional development, course materials, teaching style, delivery modes, and evaluation methods.

More and more, academic decisions are made in accordance with management’s non-academic priorities. This includes not only the major college-wide issues, but also the everyday decisions about what is happening in the classroom.

One of top three issues at pre-bargaining conference

Academic freedom ranked among the top three issues at the October college faculty pre-bargaining conference. This issue has been steadily gaining momentum with college faculty as they recognize the need for contract language to protect the academic process.

The 2008 Workload Taskforce concluded its formal recommendations with this: “Given the rise of applied degrees, college/university partnerships, and collaborative programs, Ontario’s Colleges are clearly expanding and developing as complex institutions of higher education.

We recommend, therefore, that the parties consider mechanisms that will enhance collegiality, professional development, and academic freedom.”

NEGOTIATIONS 2012

COLLEGE FACULTY



Protecting academic process

Increasingly, the colleges' decisions on curriculum, new programs, resource allocations, delivery mode, etc., run contrary to this recommendation. There is less and less input from faculty, if any.

Ontario colleges have matured over the past 45 years, but they have failed to incorporate collegial decision-making practices. Even as colleges develop degree programs, articulation agreements with university partners, and change their names and mandates, the collective agreement between the colleges and faculty still lacks academic freedom protection.

“Most important, the academic freedom of the faculty and instructional staff serves students well—in fact, it is the hallmark of excellence in education... Professionalism and free exchange are at the heart of education, and academic freedom is the mechanism that allows them to flourish.”

- The American Federation of Teachers Policy Statement

Your bargaining team

- Carolyn Gaunt, Cambrian College (Co-Chair)
- Ted Montgomery, Seneca College (Co-Chair)
- Rod Bain, Algonquin College
- Gary Bonczak, Fleming College
- Benoit Dupuis, La Cité collégiale
- Lynn Dee Eason, Sault College
- JP Hornick, George Brown College

Contact your team: negotiations2012@gmail.com

Please post and circulate.

This publication is authorized for distribution by:
Ted Montgomery, Carolyn Gaunt (co-chairs)
and Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, OPSEU.

