

March 1, 2023

Dear SFUFA Executive:

We are SFUFA members, and we write in connection with concerns about academic freedom at SFU.

As you know, academic freedom is guaranteed in our Collective Agreement. However, the "SFU: What's Next?" survey identified "academic and intellectual freedom" as the most important priority for SFU faculty members. Additionally, your email of September 9th, 2022, reported that the bargaining survey identified academic freedom as one of the "significant issues" that requires attention and concrete proposals. These findings make clear that SFUFA members are concerned about the state of academic freedom at SFU.

We share this concern. We are aware of several recent incidents in which members of SFUFA have had their academic freedom infringed upon, if not outright suppressed, by students, staff, and/or other faculty members. More generally, the climate on campus for free speech and academic freedom is souring. Based on numerous conversations with colleagues, faculty members with controversial, unpopular, or even just novel opinions feel themselves to be at serious risk of 'cancellation', leading to widespread self-censorship. This climate is unhealthy at the personal level and is contrary to the spirit of the academic freedom section of the Collective Agreement. Needless to say, the guarantee of academic freedom in the Collective Agreement has little meaning if members of SFUFA feel like they can't exercise it.

Given the foregoing comments and the fact that the main purposes of SFUFA per the [Societies Act of 1998](#) include "to assert the integrity of the academic profession"; "to defend academic freedom in teaching and research"; and "to promote the welfare of all faculty members," we are writing to request that you establish an **Academic Freedom Committee** alongside SFUFA's existing committees. This new committee should, in our view, help to implement the principles pertaining to academic freedom in the Collective Agreement, advise the SFUFA Executive in cases where academic freedom may have been violated or is under threat of violation, track instances of such violations, educate faculty about the importance of academic freedom, and develop proposals for SFUFA policies and initiatives that enhance academic freedom on campus.

Sincerely,

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