



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

BY EMAIL: sdiamond@ocadu.ca

May 19, 2020

Dr. Sara Diamond
President and Vice-Chancellor
OCAD University
100 McCaul Street
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear President Diamond,

I am writing to express the concerns of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) regarding your administration's commitment to collegial governance in academic decision-making.

CAUT well recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic demanded institutions enact emergency measures to protect the safety of students and staff. However, as institutions now begin planning for the 2020-21 academic year, it is imperative they follow widely accepted principles of collegial governance. It has been well established that academic staff, through their participation in Senate and other academic governance bodies, exercise the primary responsibility for decision-making on all academic matters, including curriculum, subject matter, and methods and modes of instruction.

It is my understanding that OCAD's Academic Emergency Response Committee (AERC) is comprised of a majority of non-academic staff, and yet is making decisions that are rightly within the purview of Senate. Any proposal modifying academic policy and practice, even when temporary, should continue to require approval by the Senate. In no case should the administration use the current situation to bypass collegial processes or assume final authority for academic decisions. It is imperative that regular Senate meeting schedules be maintained in virtual form, with special meetings called as necessary to deal with time-sensitive consultations, deliberation, and approvals.

In addition, academic freedom must be respected in all decisions affecting the fall semester. Academic freedom includes the right of academic staff at OCAD to determine the most appropriate way to provide alternatives to in-class instruction and studios, subject to policies set by academic governance bodies.

For these reasons, CAUT fully supports the OCAD Faculty Association in recommending the following:

1. Senate articulate term limits and clarify scope and accountability measures for the AERC;

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2. Full discussion and a vote by the Senate be required to modify class sizes/capacities during the pandemic; and
3. That the Senate convene as a full complement through the summer months to best prepare for the fall term.

I urge you to respect fully the principles of collegial governance and academic freedom. Decisions related to modifying classes or holding them on-line fall within the faculty's area of primary responsibility. These decisions must never be made unilaterally by administrations, governing boards, or parallel administrative decision-making bodies that function outside of academic governance structures.

Sincerely,



David Robinson
Executive Director

/mmp

cc: Min Sook Lee, President, Ontario College of Art & Design Faculty Association (OCADFA)
Brenda Austin-Smith, President, Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)