



This file lists all the feedback received regarding the draft Freedom of Expression statement. Slight modifications have been made to mask identity, unless the original post explicitly contained deliberate self-identification (and in these cases permission to publish “as posted” has been given). The order below reflects the order in which comments were received. Comments on the draft statement or on this feedback can be submitted, until December 8, at:

<https://academic.ubc.ca/freedom-of-expression-statement>

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| 1 | Bravo. I think the draft prepared by the committee is very well done indeed. |
| 2 | Looks like a bunch of rhetoric. |
| 3 | <p>"Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned."</p> <p>It's good to see this said plainly and clearly. Too many universities have lately been criticized for 'stifling' freedom of expression or free speech when denying hatemongers a platform to speak. Milo Yiannopoulos and Richard Spencer come to mind. Academic institutions are no place for hate, whether it is a foaming, raging hate, or one that pretends to use the language of reason and presents a false, gentle face.</p> |
| 4 | This document looks good to me. Basically, we are free to explore our ideas, even if uncomfortable or unpopular, but we must do so in a professional and respectful way. |
| 5 | Freedom of expression - to express your opinions; views; ideologies without the intent to cause harm. Expression of self in a free environment is a gift that deserves respect and in so being shall be expressed in a way that does not contain intentionally harmful words or aggressive behaviour towards any other group or individual expressing alternative views or opinions. Freedom of expression should exclude any preconceived notions or prejudices of value based on gender, race or socioeconomic status. Freedom of expression should not in any way intentionally de-value or degrade energy beings external to ones self. |
| 6 | The Pro-Life group that was set up outside the Nest for a week should absolutely not be allowed to do so. I felt uncomfortable and scared to go to school for a week as a result. Students should NEVER feel unsafe at their own place of education. Freedom of expression does not mean giving a platform to people who spread lies and misogyny. |
| 7 | The parenthetical is awkward. Why not just say "as said in the UBC Respectful Environment statement"? |
| 8 | <p>I agree with most of the above, however I think clarification is necessary as to what constitutes "making brash conjectures". A conjecture is an opinion formed with incomplete information.</p> <p>In many cases, complete information is impossible and so almost anything said could be considered conjecture. However, it could also mean being uneducated on a subject. Being uneducated is by no means a crime, but to make a brash (self-assertive, arrogant, bold, strong, etc.) and uneducated opinion can be dangerous. In many ways, this could be a definition of a stereotype. I think further language in this statement that clarified the University's policy of not condoning harmful expressing made some strides in avoiding this interpretation, but perhaps different word choice could be used in that section.</p> |
| 9 | Thank you for your work on this statement. Given that UBC already has an academic freedom statement, I would like to see a clarification who the intended audience for this statement is. It seems to be intended as a broader scope statement covering all people affiliated with the university. However, the choice of terms, such as "scholarly community", "intellectual exchanges" and the overall language seems more targeted at faculty and maybe students. How do staff fit into this statement? Would staff see themselves as scholars or part of the community of scholars? If this is intended to be inclusive of all members of the university, I believe that should be made clear in |



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| | <p>the introduction and should be acknowledged in the choice of words throughout the document as well. Thank you for your consideration.</p> |
| 10 | <p>I think this is a good, well-written statement, and I basically agree with all of it. One concern is that it is rather long and a bit unspecific about how it would be interpreted. Given its length and complexity, I think different people might interpret it differently. Hence you might give some thought to shortening / simplifying it. Having said that, I do like it. I just wonder if it is meant to be taken as sort of a philosophical statement or rather more as a specific statement of policy. If the latter, I think it might benefit from being shorter and less subject to interpretation.</p> <p>I thank the committee for working with this difficult topic.</p> |
| 11 | <p>freedom of expression is restricted in some communities at ubc, such as the almighty st. john's college. we are not allowed to discuss topics such as cheating, because the admin is afraid that this would be offputting to the mainland Chinese students living here. the admin also monitors our Facebook pages and would ask us to delete posts about cheating.</p> |
| 12 | <p>I don't see why it is necessary to make this a two-part statement. I believe it weakens the impact of the first phrase. You seem to think that all "good" universities are fueled by a value of freedom of expression, but it you are creating a standard that is weak. Most people would agree that universities are a place to inquire and ask questions, but you are suggesting that universities are a place to be heard, catering to our egocentric human nature. We should agree that human nature demands looking past ones selfish ambitions to be esteemed in the eyes of others. This statement is very inward focused. Please consider revising.</p> |
| 13 | <p>I fully support this draft statement. I am alarmed that it should be necessary. The following is a quote from the Charter.</p> <p>1. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.</p> <p>Fundamental Freedoms</p> <p>2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association. |
| 14 | <p>Well this stands out:</p> <p>"First, pursuing ideas freely and openly moves us closer to truth, allowing all ideas to be criticized and tested, accepted and revised."</p> <p>All ideas? We're going to revisit all of them? I can't wait to revisit the following: whether slavery was good; whether genocide is good; whether women should be part of the academy; whether non-white people should be part of the academy; and countless other ideas. Because that's what you're putting on the table here. No, not all ideas are worthy of exploration in the same way, and we know that. We wouldn't consider a good discussion of eugenics, for example to include exploring whether it was right in the first place because that would be reprehensible and also not defensible by any academic standard beyond wanting to be offensive.</p> <p>I just can't reconcile that statement with this later one: " Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper</p> |



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| | <p>working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned."</p> <p>This was depressing to read. I am sorry because I suspect a lot of effort went into this, and I want to acknowledge that. And the fact that we start with all ideas being okay to explore and then only later move onto toxic forms of speech says a lot for who and what ideas we're trying to protect with this.</p> |
| 15 | <p>Thank you to all the committee members for this important work, and to Neil for his leadership here. This document is important to how we envision and position ourselves as a university. I like much about this document, and was heartened to see a connection made to our commitment to truth and reconciliation efforts.</p> <p>Nonetheless, I am writing this as a researcher in higher education and a teacher at this university who has become increasingly disturbed by the curtailment of free speech across US campuses in recent months in the name of diversity, equality and inclusion. (And I write this also as someone very much concerned with equality, equity, inclusion and social justice). Preventing academic speakers from coming to speak on university campuses or shouting them down in the name of social justice (akin to silencing) is undemocratic and anathema to concept of academic freedom. I found this Op-Ed in the NYT quite compelling: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/23/opinion/fascism-protest-university-oregon.html (and post it here for the committee to read--it is University of Oregon's president's response to being shouted down by students accusing him of being a fascist--I think he captures a lot of what I care about). (As an aside, consequent 'anti-protest policy', enacted, for example, by the University of Wisconsin, is equally disturbing and undemocratic).</p> <p>So, while I get that the above statement is trying to balance different rights and responsibilities I feel that, while the first part of the statement really gets to the fundamental values of what a university stands for with regards to academic freedoms and freedom of expression, the last section appears slippery and, in part, can undo the value of the first part. Specifically, I question the following: "Most fundamentally those policies and practices recognize the importance of freedom of expression, but they do so in the context of everyone's fundamental right to equality. Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." I think freedom of expression is often curtailed in the name of equality, inclusion or due to accusations of 'hate speech.' I think your use of 'deliberate' in an earlier section of hate speech is important here in thinking about what gets to be constituted as 'hate speech', but again, question who gets to decide what is and isn't a deliberate speech-act of hate...</p> <p>Overall, I think a university thrives in an environment where 'objectionable opinions' can be debated and debunked, not where they are prevented or shouted down in the name of social justice--e.g., I find Charles Murray's research questionable and racist, but he is an established scholar and we should rather debunk his line of inquiry, methodology, his racist and narrow-minded assumptions, rather than preventing him from uttering a word. In short, I wonder if the last section of the statement can either be more concrete about what it means to protect freedom of expression within a context of consideration of equality, social justice etc. or be deleted entirely? My two cents...</p> |
| 16 | <p>I like how this charter attempts to balance the importance of freedom of expression and the consequences of that expression. while I feel there are significant arguments for freedom of expression, this charter could be improved by including more about the restrictions of that freedom, i.e., in what contexts/situations is that freedom detrimental to our community?</p> |
| 17 | <p>I am disturbed to find the proposed statement on freedom of expression to be equivocal about the value of freedom of expression, and vague about the circumstances in which other deemed rights are considered to outweigh this freedom. The term "speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community" would seem to be an open-ended and amorphous concept that could be used to justify stifling a wide</p> |



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| | <p>variety of expression. I would not have much confidence that a publicly funded university, subject to political and societal pressures, would always interpret this clause narrowly and wisely.</p> <p>I would instead recommend that UBC consider adopting the Statement of Principles on Free Expression put out by the University of Chicago:</p> <p>https://freeexpression.uchicago.edu/</p> <p>These "Chicago principles" in my view correctly balance freedom of expression vs. other principles, while recognizing the limitations on this freedom must be narrowly construed and generally limited to cases where illegal behaviour is being advocated. Other universities in North America such as Princeton University, Purdue University, and Johns Hopkins have signed onto these principles, and I would be proud to see UBC assent to them as well.</p> |
| 18 | <p>I think this text has a lot to offer and it is evident of the hard work that has been put into it. I see, however, despite a lot of very good points in the current text, a danger that some unpopular thoughts would not get voiced and thus that the statement would hamper discussion if the following statement is taken literally, i.e. that freedom to explore and express ideas is *not* the highest good we have at UBC (that is, within the legally allowed and mandated room):</p> <p>"Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion."</p> <p>While I clearly understand the motivation behind this clause and welcome where it is coming from, I am worried that, legally, it might open up a door to where we do not want to go, i.e. that opponents of a given thought get to suppress it based on what may by some be considered equality rights.</p> <p>Can we put in any safeguards against this danger? Voltaire is reported to have said (though there is no historical evidence for this statement) that while he might not agree at all with a certain statement, he would ensure that it may get uttered. I think I see it likewise, because in the end it is the discussion, i.e. the response to a given idea, that is crucial. I think the above statement might just prevent this from happening: this is my worry. I think within the existing legal framework (libel, slander etc.), UBC should refrain from statements limiting freedom of expression. That this freedom may be abused, is clear, but it would be up to us, a vibrant community, to call this out in our responses. I think the phrase that I quote from the text above is prone to being misunderstood.</p> |
| 19 | <p>All of this is well and good on paper but how will UBC effectively handle this situation when faced with tension between two highly divided communities? Will UBC allow nazis, segregtationists, xenophobes, homophobes, sexists and racists to present their ideas publicly on campus on the basis of freedom of speech? Will such harmful ideologies be considered merely a differing opinion, and thereby threaten the emotional and physical safety of marginalized groups on campus? Will the university listen to marginalized groups on campus regarding their own safety and not merely dismiss them as "offended"? Who will decide what can be freely expressed and what cannot? In a world growing more and more divisive, will UBC take a centrist's approach and give minorities and right wing nationalists an equally credible voice? Are both sides of all political debates truly equally valid? UBC already permits scientifically inaccurate, emotionally manipulative, highly sexist pro-life demonstrations to occur in public on campus. Will UBC undermine its reputation for equity, inclusion and science-based decision making in order to seem nonpartisan? This draft needs to be less vague about what constitutes freedom of speech and what are the actual threats to freedom of speech that exist on campus. It needs to clearly state how UBC plans to advocate for freedom of speech without harming the freedom of people's right to exist, to be be respected and to be safe.</p> |
| 20 | <p>This letter is 100% on point. Undergraduate students need to learn that safe spaces don't exist in the real world and that they could do themselves a lot of good by thickening their skin a little. Further, their "liberal" politics</p> |



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| | <p>undermine free speech, which is the most fundamental liberal value one can hold, and the only value that can lead to "error correction" in public policy and discourse. Further, these same sorts of people are perfectly fine silencing others while wearing communist symbols, and fail to see the short-sightedness of their position...a position that will only benefit them while they're the majority, and which will punish them the second the power flips. Freedom of expression is the one and only way to protect citizens (regardless of their political leaning) from governments becoming oppressive, and there is no reason that babysitting 18-22 year old children and worrying about their feelings - when the world that they will be entering in a couple years certainly doesn't - should be even the slightest concern of a public university. Let professors teach without fear of repercussions from overly sensitive "triggered" students, let controversial speakers speak without fear of physical harm or silencing, and let open and respectful conversation/debate let us hear all sides of an argument and help us to seek objective and rational truth. If you limit any speech beyond blatant inciting of violence, you are creating an authoritarian environment which historically has only ever led to terrible atrocities. If you think an opinion is wrong, silencing it is not the answer: putting forward a better, more rational, more convincing opinion is the answer. I am extremely happy this letter has been written, and am thoroughly disappointed that the school I give so much of my money to has let this absurdity escalate to the point that it has.</p> |
| 21 | <p>Speech must be protected, including hate speech - it is not the place after all, for the university to decide what is and is not permissible speech. Unless this position is reflected in the academic freedom of expression statement, the bounds of what is and is not permissible is far too vague, and open to abuse as has occurred prominently in other universities.</p> |
| 22 | <p>It is heartening to read a clear statement from UBC that it intend to regard and uphold intellectual freedom - and the freedom to engage in discussion and exploration which is more than what is 'politically correct. It is also heartening to hear the standard for a courteous and civil academic environment.</p> <p>Over the past several years I have seen various acts of thuggery and incivility in the name of ideology coming from campuses in the U.S. and Canada. It is not common to hear a university come forward and define its own stance on intellectual freedom and civility, rather than allow the most vocal of its members to de facto define the university's stance by the violations they commit without reprisal.</p> <p>I commend UBC for this, and I am more proud to be a student of UBC than I have ever been.</p> |
| 23 | <p>Thank you to the working group for taking the time to prepare this statement, and to the university for allocating the resources for the group to do this important work.</p> <p>This is an issue I have been grappling with while teaching courses ... within the Faculty of Education. A core concept that I tried to communicate to my students (who were training to become secondary and elementary teachers) was reflected in the draft statement - namely that it is ok to feel uncomfortable when you hear opinions that are different or in direct contradiction with your own, and that it is precisely this feeling of discomfort that is at the root of all learning. To see this truth reflected in draft statement on freedom of speech is gratifying to this early career scholar.</p> <p>The question that remains in my mind after reading the statement is how will the university determine when to stifle speech that seeks to stifle the rights and freedoms of others? Put another way, when is speech simply uncomfortable and when is it a violation of another's freedom to live and work in a safe environment?</p> <p>I recognize that the university's statement is meant to govern decisions made at the level of the university community. Yet I would appreciate some guidance within the statement as to how to handle conflicts arising from diverse opinions that occur in the classroom, department, and faculty levels. For example, how to determine whether a department should host a speaker whose views are not consistent with the (generally) liberal views of</p> |



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| | <p>the university community and a liberal Western society. How do we communicate to members of our community that giving such people airtime is not the same as condoning their statements? And how do we determine when to pull the plug if their views are taken to extreme?</p> <p>These might be questions that are too finely nuanced for a broad university position statement to address. Nevertheless, I think further work and discussion around how to empower faculty, instructors, and campus leaders to facilitate these kinds of conversations is needed.</p> |
| 24 | <p>"The university works assiduously to create a place where people are physically safe. However, when confronting challenging ideas, ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!), it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended."</p> <p>This is so encouraging! As a current student at UBC, I get tired when people complain about having their "intellectual safe space" violated. Encouraging people with different viewpoints to have a voice is important. As a Christian with some more conservative values, a liberal university campus feels like a place where I have to stifle myself from entering into conversations where I know I will be a minority. I strive to be respectful of everyone regardless of what I believe and I recognize that my religious beliefs should not get to dictate how the general population live their lives.</p> <p>The minute we start suppressing viewpoints that differ from our own, we run the risk of shutting out the voices of the oppressed, underprivileged, or mistreated.</p> |
| 25 | <p>This statement is all well and good, and contains many admirable ideas, but doesn't really offer any concrete ideas on how to approach these issues.</p> <p>Though perhaps that's out of scope for such a preliminary statement - perhaps there's more to come?</p> |
| 26 | <p>I appreciate the effort put into the development of this statement. It is good to hear that freedom of expression is of utmost importance in our university community. However, as a vocal member concerning one of the events that likely contributed to this statement, I would like to see more addressing the concerns voiced by many. I believe that the right to free expression should be held in high regard, but therefore should be the mental health of our community. I believe that the methods employed by some groups on UBC campus in expressing divisive beliefs are unhealthy. I would suggest a more thorough review of methods of visual display and graphic imagery, especially in cases tied with such emotional trauma for some. If an individual were to display billboards of profanity and slander would these be regarded in the same manner of "freedom of expression" and be allowed to remain? I encourage putting thought to how opinions are expressed on our campus, and what creates a healthy atmosphere for academic discussion and review of political issues. Thank you and I look forward to your response.</p> |
| 27 | <p>This statement is very calming and thorough, as well as inclusively, expansively and carefully written - thanks!</p> |
| 28 | <p>To whom this may concern,</p> <p>I am an exchange student at UBC for term 1, and I would like to share my experience with respect to freedom of speech at UBC because of a particular situation I was in. I thought it would be interesting to see the view of a European on this matter, as UBC is a very international university.</p> <p>The situation I am talking about is the pro choice/pro life rally a couple of weeks ago at the AMS Students Nest. I was absolutely shocked by the propaganda they brought forward, displaying large pictures of unborn or stillborn babies, bloody fetuses and similar things I cannot even describe. I do not understand why this is allowed or tolerated. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with standing there, conveying your views to others and engaging in a useful discussion with people who might have different opinions. It's wrong (in my opinion) to display those images, to "force" them upon innocent people. Any passer-by just has to move his eyes in that general</p> |



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| | <p>direction and they are confronted with this image. They have no choice, they cannot forget this image, it is to a certain extent even traumatizing. What about the kids that might walk by? You wouldn't display a photo of a nude man or woman in public, so why is this allowed?</p> <p>Freedom of speech goes further than speech alone. It relates to all that has to do with sharing ones views and opinions. I personally believe you are free to share opinions and discuss, but always keeping in mind that for a useful discussion, there needs to be a fundamental respect between the people in that discussion. If you use brute force like shocking pictures (which are not even accurate, pure propaganda) you take that away.</p> <p>Bottom line, live by the golden rule: treat others as you wish to be treated.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention.</p> |
| 29 | <p>Freedom of expression is so crucial right now, especially in educational institutions. There is the growing trend on campuses around Canada to silence and deplatform speakers. I understand the desire to silence hate speech, and other offensive ideas. However, silencing will only make the hatred go underground. I think we need to allow all speech in the public domain, so that we can address it and talk about it.</p> |
| 30 | <p>Freedom of expression is a treasure: it must be earned and nurtured.</p> <p>As teachers (as well as scholars) our job truly is to take our students out of their comfort zone and train them for -real- critical thinking. What I specifically mean here is that political correctness is no longer an option if we are serious about confronting what we deem objectionable or noxious. By the same token, the university must remain an arena for open debates, either among ourselves or with outside guests. For example, I would find it offensive if UBC officially invited the prime minister of Israel, yet I would never attempt to challenge the decision.</p> <p>There is no doubt in my mind that the best approach to confront and deflate say, unacceptable viewpoints ("white supremacists; Islamophobes; homophobes; climate change deniers; etc.") is to challenge them on intellectual grounds. Furthermore, censoring forms of speech we don't like (including bigoted) is a sure way to see the problem reassert itself elsewhere in more dangerous forms. But there is no condoning hate, slurs, and violence, because by definition they do not belong in speech. The latter calls for reason and arguments. When violence is the only form of speech, then the university must come to the fore and protect its student body, from physical harm as well as a reminder that violence is not and has never been a tool of learning.</p> <p>In conclusion, it takes courage to apply freedom of expression, and to steer clear of double standards and the political correct mantra. The right to equality never meant to silence dissenting voices, nor does it mean accepting violence disguised as speech.</p> <p>PS: One strategy to understand better the issue of academic freedom of expression, for both students and faculty members, would be for instance to establish debate societies, like what they have at Oxford.</p> <p>PPS: On a personal note, I resent the word "terrorism" in the first sentence of the statement; in our days this is an ideologically loaded word. "Political violence" could apply better. Thank you</p> |
| 31 | <p>This statement is, overall, very strong. I do find the end of the opening paragraph to be rather vague and trite, however: "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others."</p> <p>The term "wellbeing" in this sense is so subjective that it could mean anything, thus it is useless, and potentially a tool to shut down debate as someone could claim their "wellbeing" is affected by your speech.</p> |
| 32 | <p>It was really important to me to see the following included:</p> <p>"Words can be used as weapons, aimed deliberately in pejorative ways to taint or stain the reputations and authority of others. Deliberate attempts to create a toxic environment must remain anathema to the practices of</p> |



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| | <p>the university community. Freedom of expression rests on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community. Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned.</p> <p>UBC policies and practices work to promote the smoothest functioning of this scholarly community. From our academic freedom declaration, to our statement on a respectful environment, to our policies on harassment and discrimination, there are in place mechanisms intended to ensure that freedom of expression flourishes at UBC. Most fundamentally those policies and practices recognize the importance of freedom of expression, but they do so in the context of everyone’s fundamental right to equality. Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion."</p> <p>Since a number of undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and visiting scholars also live at UBC, it might also be valuable to acknowledge that for many, UBC is more than a professional or academic community - it is home. When a student visited one of our colleges in the middle of the night and left flyers with links to viciously misogynist material at the doors of the residents, he was doing more than harming "the proper working conditions of the academic community." He was damaging the sense of safety, security, and community residents living anywhere should be entitled to in their homes.</p> |
| 33 | <p>I should preface my statement by contextualizing it. This is my first semester at UBC after a 20 plus year career in universities elsewhere. One of the reasons I left elsewhere is that the current political climate became uncondusive to research, especially my current work on narrative and sustainability, as well as dangerous to me personally as an immigrant, a lesbian, and a member of a religious minority.</p> <p>I very much appreciate the perspective on freedom of speech offered by this statement. Freedom of speech is a treasured value that is intrinsic to the pursuit of research in a university, as well as to an open society. Nonetheless, all freedom must be balanced by the rights of others. Freedom of speech does not mean anything goes; it ends when it interferes with the rights of others to be free from fear of attack, persecution, stigmatization, or libel.</p> <p>A recent incident at a California university will illustrate my point. Flyers appeared yesterday on that campus printed with "It's okay to be white," accompanied by nooses. Angry students reported them to campus police, who replied that because of freedom of speech, there was nothing that could be done about them. I disagree, and I can see that according to this draft statement, such acts would not be tolerated on the UBC campus. The problem is not with the words themselves; it's okay to be whatever race or ethnicity you identify with. The presence of the nooses, however, with their allusion to lynching, gave the words a white supremacist flavor, and could be read as a threat towards people of color. It may be okay to be white, but it's not okay to threaten other people.</p> <p>"Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned."</p> |
| 34 | <p>Freedom of speech is the most important right to any individual. Living especially in Canada, a country proud of its freedom, suppression of opinions and thoughts is a crime. People don't always have to agree, but to be able to grow up to be capable level-headed humans, people need to be able express themselves and see other opinions.</p> |
| 35 | <p>Fantastic, very well put. The theme that discussions between groups with different or contradictory opinions can difficult, but very beneficial to steering us towards the best course of action is something I could not agree more with. Only through confronting our differences head-on can we make progress towards a strong, unified solution that will stand the test of time. Freedom of expression is well-characterized and well-protected under this statement.</p> |



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| 36 | <p>In today's very divisive political climate, I am very encouraged by UBC standing up for the free expression of ideas. So many other institution today are seeming to try and censor certain view points that they find offensive, and this deeply disturbs me. We can only move forward as a society by listening to the ideas of others and collectively deciding what course is best, but that cannot happen when questioning and debating certain idea is not allowed, or certain ideas are censored. I believe that a University is a place where you have your core beliefs challenged and held up for scrutiny, not a place where they are never challenged. If what you believe is never challenged, how can you grow as a person? Again I thank you for holding up one of the things that make our society such an amazing one, and I pray that in the years to come your dedication to liberty never wanes.</p> |
| 37 | <p>Freedom of expression is the most important foundation for our society today. Each generation must fight for their freedom and the battle that today's generation face is the battle for free speech. It is unfortunate that free speech and intellectual growth is now replaced by the desire to feel comfortable and the fear of offending any particular groups. Identity Politics have gone too far in today's culture, by grouping everyone into members of a certain collective instead of seeing people as individuals. Individuality is what makes our country great. We need to continue valuing Western values, and freedom of speech is what will get us there. Freedom of speech is not just a right. It is the ways in which we communicate all other issues in society so that people won't strangle each other to death. In order to truly value diversity, we must also respect and appreciate a diversity of opinions based on facts, not feelings. The University is a setting where students can freely exchange ideas so that human dialogue can continue and civilization can continue. If UBC is going to continue to set an example for other universities and be consistently ranked as one of the greatest universities in the world, freedom of speech must be placed above all else. Intellectual growth is needed to breed greatness and great thinkers. Freedom of speech is so much more than just the ability to speak. It also includes the ability to think. Because if I can't say what I think, then I don't get to think. Restricting speech is restricting thoughts and intellectual development, and that is bad for democracy, that is bad for freedom.</p> |
| 38 | <p>I would like to kindly say that I think this statement may indirectly contribute to Islamophobia on campus. UBC is not facing a problem of terrorism. Rates of depression among students are much more prevalent. And although the word terrorism does not exclusively encompass acts of violence done by Muslim extremists, people have unfortunately applied the term disproportionately to Muslims. I think the word "terrorism" should be removed or else there is a risk of increasing Islamophobia on campus.</p> <p>In regards to the content of the statement, it is difficult to discern exactly what UBC's policy is on freedom of expression. I think students, staff, and faculty would greatly benefit from having specific guidelines about what is okay and not okay to say. Examples would also be greatly beneficial.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and willingness to consider my opinion.</p> |
| 39 | <p>"Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature are foreign to the intellectual exchanges that strong universities must support and protect. This is so because such statements are, at root, attempts to stifle or prevent the freedom of expression of others, to dissuade any response or discussion. "</p> <p>The draft seems to imply that all statements inciting hatred are "at root, attempts to stifle or prevent the freedom of expression of others, to dissuade any response or discussion." Isn't this where a fundamental issue lies? Is it not possible to make a valid statement that can be viewed as inciting hatred towards a certain group? There seems to be a fear to say what one truly believes because it may be brushed aside as an attempt to dissuade any response or discussion. Surely it is better [in at least most cases] to face any perceived 'regressive' comment with consideration and respect rather than dismissal, as such an arguably patronizing retaliation would increase tensions?</p> |



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| | <p>Apologies if I was incoherent or missed the point entirely - I should be studying right now. I just picked up on that part of the draft which seemed to me to be a bit ambiguous and undiplomatic.</p> <p>Also: How do you know when someone is just being hateful or is genuinely trying to make a point that they wholeheartedly believe in?</p> |
| 40 | <p>"Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condone" Are you kidding me? This is an affront to the UBC community, in no meaningful ways whatsoever has UBC ever taken steps to protect the "working conditions" (mental safety? or do you just not care at all?) of students in the face of speech which could be considered hateful. My only advice is to actually follow through in terms of respecting your community enough to not protect or condone certain forms of speech. My experience with the university is that it is absolutely unwilling to directly engage with it's community directly in terms of issues which affect it greatly, so the mention of this stipulation in the broadcast I am replying to is a direct insult to me.</p> |
| 41 | <p>Hello,</p> <p>I am thrilled to read this draft and have deep respect for each member of the committee involved. My one concern is with this comment: "Freedom of expression rests on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community." Though I fully agree in principle, I am concerned that interpretation of this comment could interfere with freedom of speech or expression on campus based on what portions of the general public believe is "positive" or "constructive". For example, though I am not part of the pro-life group on campus, I do not believe that their biannual presentations should be restricted, as they are intending to communicate a message that, in their minds, is helping save lives by exposing truth. I approached them this year and asked them what their response would be to women who, for example, feel triggered by the photos, and they explained that though this is not their intent, triggers can come in many forms: the date of the abortion, etc. Thus, if this action (or one similar to it, I'm sure that there are an exhaustive list of examples) is interpreted by some as not "positive" and "constructive," I am concerned that it will interfere with freedom of speech and expression. In short, my question is as follows: WHO determines what is positive and constructive and what is hateful? What if there is no consensus? Alternatively, there are some demonstrations of "free speech" that seem outright hateful and utterly destructive... Threatening posters towards LGBTQ+ students, for example. Yet some of my colleagues view the pro-life protest to be "hateful" while I perceive it to be potentially helpful and am glad for their contribution. Who, then, decides?</p> <p>All the best and thank you for your remarkable work.</p> |
| 42 | <p>" One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others."</p> <p>The ability to freely and honestly speak one's mind is distinctly more important to protect than the emotional "wellbeing of others", with regards to speech. Hurt feelings from a rash comment is a vastly preferred scenario to: a) political radicals being silenced and subsequently pushed underground to fester and multiply in online communities, never experiencing push-back or correction because they never feel free to express their potentially reprehensible ideas, and b) all out physical violence in the absence of a mechanism for verbal negotiation.</p> <p>This is fine, if not great:</p> <p>"First, pursuing ideas freely and openly moves us closer to truth, allowing all ideas to be criticized and tested, accepted and revised. Universities are communities of scholars where the free and open exchange of thought, belief, opinion, and expression is highly valued because it promotes better knowledge and understanding. Second, our scholarly community is composed of people with diverse histories and cultural viewpoints while also encompassing a wide array of disciplinary perspectives. "</p> |



"This necessitates scholarly spaces where critical thinking and incisive reasoning knows no bounds but is allowed to flourish unrestricted by who you are or to which social groups you might belong."

Bravo. As I hope you are aware, other universities are in the process of dismissing this kind of idea.

"...when confronting challenging ideas, ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!), it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended."

Excellent.

"Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion."

This took quite a turn. Just delete this portion and the statement will be quite respectable. Sticking these three terms under the umbrella of "equality rights" is dishonest and manipulative. 1) What exactly do you mean by equity? And why exactly is this needed for freedom of speech? Equality of outcome? 2) Diversity of WHAT, exactly, and why? Are you claiming that diversity of race is necessary for diversity of opinion to arise? If you mean diversity of opinion, then surely freedom of speech itself will allow this, will it not? 3) Whose inclusion into what? The inclusion of dissident ideas into the discussion? Or the inclusion of "marginalize groups" into the general populace? And how exactly is this, or any of this unholy trinity, more important than--or even necessary for--freedom of speech? When you say "...can only thrive constructively when accompanied by" other rights, what seems often insinuated by this claim is "...can only be allowed when constricted by...".

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I read the statement on Freedom of Expression with a mix of encouragement and trepidation. On one hand, I was encouraged to find strong language recognizing the importance of allowing expression of varied perspectives, including ones that differ from the current mainstream. This continues to be an essential (an in my mind, THE essential) function of the university: the pursuit of truth through scholarly study. Every new development in any field of knowledge must necessarily challenge, to some degree, what has come before, and the ability to do so without fear of reprisal is therefore crucial to the proper functioning of a university. However, it is worrying to read in this statement language that, although certainly well-intentioned, is vague and malleable enough to put at risk the very principle which this statement is trying to affirm. For instance, consider the following: "Freedom of expression rests on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community. Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned." Without defining, clearly and exhaustively, what is meant by "positive, constructive contributions", "harming the proper working conditions of the academic community", or even the word "hate", these are all phrases that can easily be used to enforce a particular moral or political viewpoint as normative. All that needs to obtain for this to happen is that a particular viewpoint is viewed as harmful, hateful, or simply "not a constructive contribution" by those who are passing judgement on the appropriateness of speech in the case of a complaint. For example, consider two controversial topics, and two responses generally found on opposite sides of the political spectrum: the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the pro-life/pro-choice debate. In the first instance, the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions movement is a controversial activist movement whose platform was recently rejected by the UBC AMS. They claim to be acting against gross human rights abuses by the Israeli government, and their message is viewed as "toxic" or "divisive" by some Jewish groups. In the second instance, UBC is home to an annual protest and placard display by a pro-life organization (I believe it is the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform). This protest inevitably brings out counter-protesters, and tensions run quite high. In both cases, you have groups which are acting due to rectify what they perceive as a grave moral abuse, and their methods involve speech which could easily be perceived by some as hateful, hurtful, or violating the dictum of "positive, constructive contributions". Nonetheless, it seems clear to me that it what be a grave abuse to limit the speech of either one of these groups,



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| | <p>and by so doing limit their ability to pursue what they see as justice. The problem, therefore, is this: depending on who is interpreting this policy at the time of judgement, it seems to me that either or both of these groups (and many like them) could have their speech limited under its aegis. While I agree that it is important that UBC be a place where people feel safe both to speak and to be themselves, I do not believe that this policy, as it stands, will properly ensure this. There needs to be stronger language affirming the right of every student and faculty member to speak their mind and seek the truth (both publicly and privately) on every issue, no matter how contentious, without fear of personal, academic or administrative reprisal.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> |
| 44 | <p>Hi!! I would love to see a wall where students are able to write freely (except for negativity)! I've noticed that students write on the E block, but I think it would be constructive to have another place where students can share their ideas for all to see!</p> |
| 45 | <p>This is a good start. A couple of items that I think need to be more prominently called out would be academic freedom and freedom of expression in a professional context (as a UBC employee, for example).</p> <p>Regarding academic freedom, this issue came to the fore (and in part resulted in this draft statement) in part because of a statements and conversations between a UBC professor and members of the university executive over the departure of the previous university president. That an individual with any affiliation to the university cannot express their opinions about happenings on campus is wrong. It should be allowed and supported to express opinions freely without threat of repercussions that occurred. Too often these days, the communications and honest expression is co-opted by the drive towards (excessive) political correctness, and worse, the perceived "needs" of university donors and others who seek to not make the university look bad. Any action that takes this guise should be frowned upon and this really need to be called out more within this statement.</p> <p>Regarding the second point, freedom of expression seems to be more enshrined for faculty members who are afforded significant leeway in their day to day dealings. For staff, however, UBC is no different than any other employer. Even though some people have not attained doctoral degrees or can be considered faculty, I don't think the conversations should be limited to these folks. The idea of academic freedom should apply to all, and if it can't be called that, then we should all have the same rights to express our opinions without prejudice. I know of many people who feel silenced by their managers or the university apparatus because of the threat of repercussions. AAPS/M&P staff in particular can be removed for any reason pursuant to Article 9 of their collective agreement with UBC. This is extremely limiting to freedom of expression and in my opinion the university will never achieve it so long as this article exists -- be default. Perhaps another clause if needed for all that outlines very clearly that all university affiliated staff, faculty and students need to have the same rights of expression afforded to faculty, without the threat of removal.</p> |
| 46 | <p>Freedom of expression that is legal under the Criminal Code of Canada must be allowed. We already have laws in place that deal with legally actionable expressions such as slander or libel, or expressions that can be demonstrated to actually incite an action or actions against a person or persons. There is an inconsistency in logic when it is stated that the freedom of expression does not trump all other rights, but it is subservient to considerations of equity, diversity and inclusion. It must be held in the same regard and given the same protections as equity, diversity and inclusion. Just as the pursuit of equity leaves people excluded, the pursuit of diversity leaves some with an inequitable outcome and the pursuit of inclusion can lead to a reduction of diversity, the pursuit of free expression can lead to hurt feelings. The bad must be accepted with the good.</p> <p>University is a place to grow up, it is not a daycare for young adults.</p> |
| 47 | <p>I am a student at the Okanagan campus. I wanted to first express my appreciation for allowing student opinion on this topic; I hope that a diverse set of opinions will allow UBC to come to a decision that encompasses all</p> |



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| | <p>backgrounds, values, and beliefs.</p> <p>An issue our campus has dealt with is the pro-life group Kelowna Right to Life Society. Public controversy has arisen from their displays, particularly trying to balance student safety and the right to free speech. I don't think it is right to deny anyone the right to speak freely about their beliefs in a democratic society, let alone an academic setting that values debate. My concern lies with the methods they use to display their opinions. Let me preface by saying that Jehovah's Witnesses regularly set up in common areas and peacefully stand there and allow students to enquire if they please. Nobody on campus has an issue with a display conducted in this way.</p> <p>The Kelowna Right to Life Society uses extremely graphic and triggering images as a fear mongering tool. They want to illicit emotion and anger in passerbyers, not a peaceful debate. I understand that you wish to remain impartial, but please consider prohibiting images of this sort from demonstrations on our campus. Not only do they make students feel uncomfortable, upset and triggered but it makes them feel unwelcome on THEIR campus.</p> <p>When backlash arose surrounding these demonstrations, administration responded by saying that to remain impartial and unbiased, they had to allow the demonstrations to occur. What they don't realize is that they chose a side right then and there. If your students feel unsafe, and they're telling you why, maybe you should listen. Nobody is asking for these demonstrations to stop, they simply would like these images to be prohibited.</p> <p>From what I can see from your proposal above, you value productive academic conversation and debate. As far as I'm concerned, this images do not illicit that whatsoever. That is not their purpose, and the administration needs to take that into account.</p> <p>If you are committed to allowing these images on campus, please do not allow these demonstrations to happen in areas that are unavoidable to all students. Instead I would propose holding them in a designated classroom and students can visit if they wish to engage in conversation.</p> <p>Please prioritize the health and safety of your students and put policies in place that protect them from unnecessary images that are only meant to upset people. As I said above, you are taking a side when you allow them to protest in such a way.</p> <p>Thank you for reading my opinion, I hope that everyone is represented in the final document.</p> |
| 48 | <p>The majority of this statement appears concise, and well-articulated. However the third-to-last paragraph gives rise to concern. It would be worth considering striking the word 'weapons'.</p> <p>Words can only be used as weapons insofar as they are perceived as weapons by some individual. Enshrining such a phrase in a statement about freedom of expression seems to almost entirely defeat the purpose of producing such a statement (a laudable goal, which I fully support if done correctly). I am by no means defending speakers of reprehensible ideas, but I believe it is important to support their right to vocalize their idiocy. By giving words the alleged power of weaponry, I fear that this statement may set the precedent for punitive actions against individuals who's words are deemed harmful, the degree of harm being subjectively decided by the recipient.</p> <p>I never imagined I would one day invoke the old, yet increasingly relevant 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me' in university discourse, but it appears worth reiterating here. I would be absolutely thrilled to see UBC take a strong stance on Freedom of Expression, though only if expression is allowed to remain truly free.</p> |
| 49 | <p>Thank you for putting together this wonderful statement. I think it's no question that the flourishing and progression of ideas depends on the ability of fruitful dialogue in the university setting. The statement is well put, but I think there is one clause that is worrisome: "Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace ... are foreign to the intellectual exchanges that strong universities must support and protect." While I agree with the sentiment and intent behind this statement, I foresee an</p> |



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| | <p>interpretive battle on the horizon. For example, when a pro-life group holds a sign that says "abortion is murder," or "2/3 of aborted babies are females," is this likely to incite a breach of the peace? Will some say that this is 'hate speech'? I would say, possibly (in fact likely), but that depends on the intellectual maturity of the ideological opponent. I think it is important that an advocacy group be able to defend their views in the public arena, as unpopular as they may be, given the fact that they do not violate any classical exceptions to constitutional freedom of speech (i.e. hatred, obscenity, etc.) When these controversies arise, we need to be diligent in scrutinizing whether the advocates are, in fact, proposing a truly hateful or obscene message and not simply label it as such because it is offensive. Thank you again for allowing this conversation to take place and for the efforts to ensure freedom of expression in the university setting.</p> |
| 50 | <p>To the UBC administration, I plead: Please, stop treating us like children; We want to be treated as adults; We want to be treated as intellectuals; We want to be treated as students of one of the top universities not just in the country, but in the world.</p> <p>We are intelligent enough to not blindly subscribe to bigotry or speech that encourages violence and hatred: So allow us to destroy bigotry with debate, allow us to fight homophobia with discourse, and allow us to combat racism with intellectualism.</p> <p>The ending of the statement is absolutely correct. "Tuum est - it's up to you!"</p> <p>Yes, it is up to us, the students; it is not up to the administrators.</p> <p>Silencing hateful speech will only make people who are making these comments more resentful and dig deeper into these beliefs; Let the students win them over with excellent arguments and brilliant discourse and if these individuals are indeed so stubborn and chronically unresponsive to reason, we, the students, will be able to ostracize these individuals on our own.</p> <p>We don't need you to coddle us.</p> <p>I absolutely despise bigoted speech but I absolutely also believe that these individuals have the right to present their stupid ideas in a university setting.</p> <p>If there was ever a place to be offended, the university is that place; Universities should be a place of ferocious debate and exciting clash of ideas, no matter how idiotic or offensive they may be.</p> <p>Please, let the University of British Columbia be a place of debate and a place that encourages not only a diversity of skin colour but also a diversity of ideas.</p> <p>Let UBC be a place of mind.</p> |
| 51 | <p>For me, it is about creating that safe environment where all perspectives are treated with respect and open dialogue is encouraged.</p> |
| 52 | <p>So.. will the UBC community be different from today and tomorrow? The Freedom of Expression beautifully illustrates what needs to happen, but physically, what are the actions for change that are going to take place?</p> |
| 53 | <p>As long as we don't use freedom of expression for hate or violence, I am good.</p> <p>Some people are just tired of not being able to freely express hatred of religious minorities, indigenous people, or ethnic minorities. We should not give these kinds of people any room in their toxic endeavours. We must especially be cautious as they try to do so under the guise of supporting freedom of expression, as many of them are doing.</p> |
| 54 | <p>UBC should work towards creating as open a campus as possible. As such we should ENCOURAGE students,</p> |



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| | <p>especially those who wish to study further than a bachelor’s degree, to participate in uncomfortable discourse and debate. To interact with reprehensible and terrible annals of history, and to pursue any interest in research as long as it is done in an academic sense and is open to scrutiny. To hide any aspect of history is to open history up to revisionism. The approach to history should be as open as to include a broad overview and not leave anything out. We must confront our uncomfortable past in order to learn from it. The essence of higher education and academia is the free and open exchange of ideas and discourse. If there are limits or rules that prevent that from happening then at what point is it still academia. At UBC we must stand up to academic principles, and we must create and environment where all students feel safe, even if they dissent from the mainstream campus ideology, in expressing their ideas and voice. If we silence people who make uncomfortable points, then we are not providing a comprehensive psychological safety net, because there is no way that someone with a dissenting opinion will feel safe.</p> <p>I truly urge UBC to adopt a resolution to protect speech, expression, and research, and to uphold principles that keep academia open.</p> |
| 55 | <p>Thank you, especially to members of the working group, for advancing this discussion about freedom of expression on our campus. Clearly, this conversation is important not only because of the precarious nature of the political and social environment we presently live in, but our approach to this issue – and the decisions we make – would play a role in shaping the future of higher education in the province and beyond.</p> <p>In regards to this statement, I would like to comment on two issues in particular. First is the notion that "pursuing ideas freely and openly moves us closer to truth" (para. 5). I do not intend to embark on a lengthy discussion about the nature of "truth", but I believe due care should be taken in any declaration regarding the "truth". It is perhaps striking that the statement does not point to "the truth" or the "Truth", but we should be mindful that the pursuit of "truth" has subjected many peoples (including members of our community) to intellectual and even physical violence both in the past and present. In fact, it could be argued that many disputes concerning the freedom of expression on-campus and elsewhere stem from the supposedly irreconcilable perceptions of "truth" that individuals in a diverse community hold.</p> <p>The second point I wish to comment on is the nature of "intellectual richness" (para. 7) and "scholarly spaces" (para. 8) in our community. Much has been said about the value of scholastic exchange and discussion, of "critical thinking", and "incisive reasoning" (para. 8) that is the cornerstone of the university, and for good reason. But inasmuch as the act of expression involves (obviously) expressing our thoughts, perhaps there should be just a little more emphasis placed on "listening"? In our desire to express ourselves, to make ourselves heard, have we forgotten the virtue and importance of "listening" to what others have to say?</p> <p>Note that I used "listening" rather than "hearing", because listening may also a process of comprehending and reflecting upon the words of our counterparts. In this arena, perhaps we could also learn from the character for "listen" in Chinese: 「聽」. This character, if broken up, could be construed as follows: use one's ears to listen 「耳」; pay attention to your counterpart, as if s/he is king 「王」; observe as if one has ten eyes 「十 / 目」, listen attentively with one heart 「一 / 心」. Incidentally, the right hand side of the character also appears in "wisdom".</p> <p>I have perhaps spoken too much on "listening", but my point in conclusion is this: perhaps the virtue of "listening" should also form part-and-parcel of our idea of expression and what it means to be part of a university community?</p> <p>Thank you very much for reading, and for listening to my comments.</p> |
| 56 | <p>Dear Members of the Working Group on UBC’s Statement on Freedom of Expression,</p> <p>I want to thank you for putting the time into engaging the larger student body about this important topic. In my attempt to articulate a coherent comment, I want to share with you my concerns with the current discourse used around "freedom of speech". I also want to mention that I will be working on a joint-teamed research project under</p> |



Dr. Wendy Roth next summer investigating UBC student perspectives on the topic of freedom of speech.

In my observation of people who are concerned that their freedom of speech is threatened because university campuses have become too 'liberal', I want to acknowledge that I share a deep understanding for where they are coming from. It is my belief that the rise of white supremacists, anti-feminists, anti-trans(gender) advocates, and anti-social justice warrior (SJW) advocates are in response to a disagreement with the ways in which so-called progressive ideas are articulated. That is to say, it is the way that people disagree, not what people disagree with, that is a problem worthy of attention.

Let me provide an anecdote that demonstrates this claim I am making. Last year when Dr. Mary Bryson debated Dr. Jordan Peterson at the University of Toronto, I asked one of my friends/acquaintances at U of T (who had previously disregarded the legitimacy of gender nonbinary people) if he believed Dr. Peterson actually disagreed with gender nonbinary people, or if he was merely stereotyping all gender nonbinary people as emblematic for a larger "social justice warrior" (SJW) populace of people who are aggressive in how they articulate their ideas about feminism or gender. My friend agreed, and that was mind-opening for me.

With that being said, I also want to acknowledge that I am deeply concerned that factual knowledge is becoming less meaningful in a post-truth society where emotions guide people's hearts more than facts. I am also deeply aware that this idea has been thrown around to criticise people on all sides of political spectrums and beliefs. With that being said, I want to first interrogate how we think of facts, what counts as facts, what knowledge is seen as legitimate, and what knowledge is often dismissed.

I also want to acknowledge that issues concerning freedom of speech and expression of more conservative viewpoints could be reflexive of previously held-beliefs being challenged. With that being said, in particular to the social sciences, challenges to commonly-held beliefs surely will cause discomfort. I want to return to the idea of gender. I will openly state that in my view our idea about gender is radically being challenged to be conceptualized beyond the binary of male and female. The plethora of evidence that demonstrates gender is socially constructed and exists beyond a binary of male and female is tough to comprehend not because of a disagreement in its factual underpinnings, but because of the way that its factual underpinnings are communicated in hostile ways (at least how people like Dr. Peterson see it be).

With that being said, I am also curious to see how historical precedents on the freedom of speech being challenged on university campuses might inform us in the present. Furthermore, what is unique about our current society that makes discussions about freedom of speech uncomparable to the past? In my observations, I am curious to know if researchers have studied the effects of social media and freedom of speech? I am assuming that because social media and particularly text messaging has become the main medium of communication among students in my generation, this surely is having an effect on how people are communicating with each other about controversial issues that would have otherwise been confronted face-to-face in the past. It is my assumption that social media nowadays dehumanizes people, dehumanizes our interactions, and prevents people who may hold countering perspectives to recognize a common humanity shared among all.

To give one last point, I want to acknowledge that words can be damaging. Words socialize people, and words construct meanings, ideas, discourses, and emotions that can incite violence. Yet, words are among one of the few mediums we have to express our thoughts. At what line does the freedom of speech or expression become used to legitimize hate speech? Last month at Cleveland State University, posters from self-identified fascists encouraging LGBT youth to kill themselves were defended by the university President under the notion of "freedom of speech".

On a closing note, I want to thank Dr. Mary Bryson for putting yourself in a vulnerable position alongside Dr. Brenda Cossman to debate Dr. Jordan Peterson at the University of Toronto last year, especially the day before the International Trans Day of Remembrance. I am sorry and concerned at the backlash you received, the death threats, and indeed, ironically, the silencing of your freedom of speech. Indeed, I too saw striking parallels in this



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| | <p>debate with that of Dr. David Suzuki and Dr. Philippe Rushton concerning notions of the validity of race and IQ. I am hopeful that UBC can act as an academic role model for upholding the freedom of speech for students and faculty while also ensuring a commitment to recognizing how various forms of discrimination are materialized in ways that are not always readily apparent.</p> <p>"One can disagree without being disagreeable".</p> |
| 57 | <p>I think each faculty/school/department can hold an annual event of some sort that allows students to voluntarily sign up and speak about interesting/powerful experiences that they have had in front of other students or faculty/staff. Such events can also allow the students to describe how the perspective that they currently take in their disciplines is affected by their experiences. Right now at UBC, I think people perceive the description of powerful/disturbing experiences as appropriate if it is presented in a prepared way in a themed meeting in front of many people, but do not really appreciate talking about such experiences in a spontaneous way during every-day conversation. Needless to say, many UBC students have had highly valuable experiences living under different types of governments, different cultures, and different norms. Therefore, I think creating the events that I have described can really bring in those powerful experiences and perspectives that are muted during everyday conversation and have so-far found no medium of expression except for in creative writing.</p> |
| 58 | <p>Respectfully, this statement is troubling on several levels. The language is vague and elusive and, from my reading of it, displays an ideologically driven agenda. The gist of this statement as I read it, is in short that freedom of expression is encouraged as long as you're espousing left-wing politics. And anything that a conservative or centrist might say that disagrees with left-wing viewpoints will be considered hate speech and not tolerated. Also there is not even a reason given for this statement being written in the first place. What is the aim?</p> |
| 59 | <p>Based on the repressive direction of this draft statement, this is most likely one of the last times that I will be able to freely express myself. This statement fails to recognize the true importance of freedom of expression, a mistake that will prove detrimental if the draft statement is adopted in its current form. In the statement, it is stated that "[f]reedom of expression does not trump all other rights". This claim is wrong, freedom of expression should trump all other rights, as the other rights themselves only exist due to freedom of expression. The committee assembled either failed to recognize the true importance of freedom of expression in education, democracy, equality, equity, human rights ect., or recognized it, but underplayed its importance so the University can continue to suppress voices in order to give the appearance that it wants to portray.</p> <p>You need to ask yourselves when you throw around buzz words such as equity, what equity actually is. The answer to that is simple, equity is not one thing, it changes, people views on equity are different. Freedom of expression is essential so that people can talk about what equity is. Under the system that would exist if this statement is ratified, if I had a different view on what equity is, you would bar me from expressing that view, as it could interfere with someone's right to equity. The problem is, who is deciding what equity is, what diversity is, what inclusion is. By baring freedom of expression you are preventing these conversations from happening, as they could harm your idea of what equity is, what diversity is and what inclusion is.</p> <p>I get it, freedom of expression has its downsides. When I scroll through facebook and I see hurtful comments I get upset, but I find solace in the fact that if I were to be on the other side, if I were to hold an unpopular view that I thought was right I would be able to express it, without fear.</p> <p>Freedom of expression should be guaranteed to the extent that it interferes with another's freedom to express themselves, or their ability to live. Accepting the statement in its current form will pave the way for tyranny at UBC, in Canada, and the World. You look at all of the regimes in the past with horrific human rights records, they all start by removing freedom of expression. DO NOT TAKE THIS STEP DOWN A DARK DARK PATH, YOU THINK</p> |



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| | <p>YOU'RE DOING IT FOR THE GOOD OF PEOPLE, BUT ITS NOT.</p> |
| <p>60</p> | <p>The statement as drafted seems appropriate. It places a very strong emphasis on the importance of open discussion and debate to the intellectual mission of a university.</p> <p>I would agree that "...Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature..." exhaustively sets out the only sorts of speech the university has a legitimate interest in limiting. It is crucially important that no opinion or worldview is off limits at UBC, except if it is incitement or clear targeting of an individual rather than their ideas. Importantly, this separates the ideas expressed from the person expressing them. This is what we should be doing - recognizing that reasonable people can and do disagree in good faith, and that we can debate vigorously without resenting or suppressing others. To have our views challenged is core to why we are here, and the best discussion targets ideas, not the people who hold them.</p> <p>In my view, the statement is very reasonable in supporting these caveats, but not going beyond them. We need to take a very broad and robust view of what free expression includes, and this statement strikes me as doing just that.</p> |
| <p>61</p> | <p>Thank you for putting this together and for allowing the rest of us to contribute to this process. I think fewer exclamation marks and parentheses might be in order, but that is more an issue of style rather than substance. I do have a couple of substantive issues that I would like to raise - I have reworked two of the paragraphs to capture a little more concretely what I think we should say.</p> <p>Suggested changes to paragraphs:</p> <p>The educational benefit of exposure to diverse understandings, views, opinions, and thoughts, when done appropriately, comes in developing the skills of intellect and character, the inner resources and personal resilience, which allows one to successfully and constructively engage with a tumultuous and at times unsafe world in which our own intersecting positionalities of privilege and marginalization are challenged. This necessitates scholarly spaces where critical thinking and incisive reasoning know no bounds and are allowed to flourish unrestricted by who you are or to which social groups you might belong. The university works assiduously to create a place where people are physically safe. However, when confronting challenging ideas, ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that advance social justice, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!), it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended. Providing comfort or restitution at this point is neither the responsibility of UBC nor of the persons whose reasoned ideas have offended your sensibilities.</p> <p>UBC policies and practices work to promote the smoothest functioning of this scholarly community. From our academic freedom declaration, to our statement on a respectful environment, to our policies on harassment and discrimination, there are in place mechanisms intended to ensure that freedom of expression flourishes at UBC. Most fundamentally those policies and practices recognize the importance of freedom of expression, but they do so in the context of everyone's fundamental right to equity, justice and fairness. Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights and should not be confused with an inalienable right to offend from a position of privilege. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the rights of equity, justice and diversity in the service of academic inquiry.</p> |
| <p>62</p> | <p>There is something in there that I am having trouble with. "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others."</p> <p>This statement in quotations could be used to curtail the freedom of expression of an individual based on the perception that the individual's position on an issue interferes with the freedom or wellbeing of others. The statements of many a trailblazer could have been snuffed out based on the sentence in quotations. But freedom of</p> |



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| | <p>expression must be just that. Freedom to express ideas which may run counter to the prevailing attitudes. It follows that any statement, made freely, which is incorrect will ultimately fail in the light of analysis and healthy debate. But individuals must be allowed the freedom to make statements without restriction. In this way, some avenues of thought which, considered offensive by the politically correct, may be proven correct and I hope that a university would defend the right for unpopular statements to be made.</p> <p>If a professor publicly states that the World War II holocaust did not happen; I imagine many individuals would arise to dispute this statement with passion and evidence. And so the incorrect idea dies. I would not stop the professor from making any statement. That is their freedom of expression. And it is our resultant freedom of expression to debate and show any freely made statement to be correct or incorrect. That's healthy and it underlies the very reason why a university exists. To challenge ideas. Discover new knowledge and in the process better our way of life. The random repression of certain ideas and support of other ideas is vulnerable to winds of the politics blowing at that time. Freedom of expression, to my way of thinking, is a universal concept not cowering in fear of the next rebellious/offensive statement but instead welcoming different points of view. Is there a risk? Oh yes, but the interchange runs both ways and the academic community has a duty of allow (even encourage) outlier positions on many topics just as long as we equally have the right to respond. This is how truth is discovered. No doubt, some people reading my opinions will be offended and feel their freedom is being threatened. Not at all. Please read over my thoughts on this issue again.</p> <p>Anyway forgive my ramblings. You asked for my thoughts. I gave them.</p> |
| 63 | <p>I would like, firstly, to thank the members of the working group for their efforts toward the creation of this draft statement.</p> <p>I do not claim to have any especially relevant experience or knowledge with this type of issue, but if it's more voices you seek, here are my ten cents.</p> <p>I like it. I must admit that though I consider my views to align more-or-less with those of the majority of students here at UBC, the way my peers and colleagues express their views has made me uneasy. Specifically, I have become aware of an ever expanding practice wherein majority-aligned members of our community, be it online or in person, deride, shut down, and ignore with a sense of entitlement the discourse and expression of others. To be frank there are many cases in which I too find myself uncomfortable with what someone is saying, but as you rightly mention this is appropriate and the academic forum should strive to promote this sort of worldview-shifting encounter. The entitlement gets to me, the sense that political view is tied to morality and goodness; judgements which inhibit discourse and growth on both sides of the equation.</p> <p>I think making the statement perhaps a little harder-hitting on the side of freedom of expression is what the community needs; I trust that the institution and its community members, of which a staggering fraction would consider themselves socially progressive, will remember and agree with the importance of equity and diversity. It is the reaffirmation of minority view holders right to expression I feel needs stressing. We should stress that the appropriate response to such regressive views is rigorous discourse and subsequent enlightenment with a pinch of all-around underlying respect. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has noticed this superiority complex amongst those with progressive leftist views, views I align with, and it is, to say the least, unsavoury and unacademic.</p> <p>Finally I think it would be useful to spend more time explaining the concept of an academic forum, and how while all lines of inquiry must and can be followed, the privilege of academic fora comes at a certain cost which is the understanding that academic practices and due diligence have been done on the subject at hand. One mustn't, in my view, abuse the fragile privilege of a university forum by spewing un-researched random garbage into the community, and that unless one is using the forum in an academic context the rules and privileges of this special environment don't really apply.</p> <p>P.S. There is interesting literature on the perils of comparing words to weapons, and offence to injury, that would be</p> |



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| | <p>worth reading. It has its merits as an analogy, but is I think delicate, and any analogy with weapons comes with much unwanted baggage. I would not be upset to see that section of the text reworded.</p> <p>I appreciate that you have asked us, and that you have listened. Thank you again.</p> |
| 64 | <p>I think that its not just freedom of expression but freedom of speech. Firstly: Who gets to decide what is hate speech? Speech that induces violent behavior should not be allowed but speed that is discriminatory should still be part of a person's freedom of speech. For example: Saying "I dislike Jews" should not be punished because it is the freedom of that person to say their opinion. However, saying "Everybody, let's go kill Jews" would be speech inducing violence and should be illegal and punished. You need to understand that not everybody agrees on everything and if you are also promoting freedom of religion then there are certain things you cannot label as "hate speech" without taking away someone's freedom of religion. People need to learn to not be so sensitive all the time. Stop protecting college students from "hate speech" because in the real world nobody really cares about your feelings and will say things to hurt you and you just have to ignore it. Stop protecting students from "hate speech" and teach students how to have civilized debates and real conversations where each can express their opinions without labeling people a racist, sexist, white-supremacist, etc. before they have a chance to say their opinion and give their reasons. It's not a shouting game to see who can speak the loudest, its about bringing all sides of an argument and laying out all the facts before making a decision. It's great that UBC is promoting freedom of expression but please allow EVERYBODY, not just people who are protected by your liberal ideologies, to say what they want to say. It's not really freedom if you are limited to only saying positive things about people and are not allowed to criticize.</p> |
| 65 | <p>One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others.</p> <p>Define wellbeing? This word is too open to interpretation. People have strong emotional ties to opinions, particularly in matters which are closely tied with their identity - ie. religion, gender identity, etc. Valid criticisms of these topics can and will result in people claiming their wellbeing is at stake, but the truth is that they suffer at the hands of their own ego.</p> <p>To quote Ryan Holiday "our biggest problems are not caused by external factors such as other people or circumstances. Instead, our problems stem from our own attitude, selfishness and self-absorption. In other words, introducing ego into a situation often prevents us from being rational, objective and clear headed."</p> |
| 66 | <p>"One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others."</p> <p>Freedom of expression doesn't trample anyone's freedom. Only action does that. "Wellbeing" is too subjective. Someone may think their "wellbeing" is only met if they don't hear any views that threaten their belief systems. This is actually happening in Universities around the western world, as more western students reach a neoliberal consensus that individualism trumps collectivism; where "me" is more important than "we". We need to hear opposing views, even if they're not tactful or "nice". We need to challenge these views. Hiding or forbidding intellectual exploration under the guise of protecting others is a pathway to bigotry and disharmony. Creating a collectivist culture that centres community dialogue over individual subjective sensibilities starts with the Universities. It means increasing the economic diversity of its students and redirecting its efforts from industry lobbyists to intellectual integrity and quality academics. It means reducing the focus on the ego of individuals and increasing the focus on humbled collaboration. Freedom of expression is just one manifestation of a cultural interpretation, and you can't change it without addressing the entire culture. Until people stop thinking they are exceptional, because according to the University one must be exceptional to be a student at UBC, they will always feel that their values and opinions should be protected as such. Increase cultural and economic diversity at UBC and watch the dialogue change on its own. Too much wealth and self centredness does not breed healthy, engaging, dynamic, and diverse ideas and exchange.</p> |



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| 67 | <p>Dear Working Group,</p> <p>First I want to express my gratitude to all of you for your endeavours in this most crucial undertaking: the protection of freedom of expression. Freedom of thought and expression are essential for seeking the truth, and this is the foundational imperative of all institutions of higher learning. The day UBC loses its freedom of expression is the day it ceases to be a university, and becomes an ideological backwater.</p> <p>I agree with most of the contents of the letter, but I ask that you take a moment to reconsider the following statement: "Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights". This is a grave error. Though all of our rights are incredibly important, freedom of expression does in fact trump all other rights. The entirety of our ethical framework rests upon freedom of expression. Were it not for this master value, the ideas that led to our currently cherished rights and values would have never been allowed to undergo any degree of proliferation or refinement.</p> <p>All of morality can be boiled down to one principle: achieving conscious well-being for sentient life forms. In order to arrive at this end-point, various heuristics are commonly employed (freedom of expression, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, autonomy, respect for authority, purity, non-discrimination, etc.). Needless to say, different people and cultures emphasize these values to wildly varying degrees. And accordingly, we find wildly varying degrees of well-being between different individuals and populations. So which values should be emphasized in order to achieve maximal well-being? The topic is open to debate, and the only way to make progress is through freedom of expression.</p> <p>Imagine a civilization where authority trumps autonomy. If freedom of speech is the primary value, people are free to wonder if autonomy should actually be emphasized over authority. They can theorize, discuss, conduct research, and advocate for a change in their society if they believe it is warranted. Say they fail to convince the population that autonomy trumps authority. Excellent! Now everyone involved has had an opportunity to affirm their first principles and gather further support for their position that authority is an important ingredient in the recipe for human well-being. Say some people are able to convince the population that autonomy trumps authority because autonomy will lead to greater overall well-being. Excellent! This is now the state-of-the-art moral reasoning in their society. Progress has been made. But in a society where authority trumps freedom of speech, debate will be stifled and the citizens are doomed to languish on these moral questions indefinitely.</p> <p>A society where progress toward well-being and human flourishing will be slow or impossible is a society that does not give primacy to free speech. As long as freedom of expression holds equal or lesser footing relative to other values, it may come into conflict with these other values. When anyone takes a stance against freedom of expression, valuing another ethical principle more dearly, they can never be justified. They will always be in error because to believe a value is equal to freedom of expression is to assert that their society has already reached a peak of perfection, and that the issue is no longer open to discussion. All societal and human imperfections must already be so utterly and completely resolved that this person is comfortable throwing away the society's only mechanism of course-correction.</p> <p>But alas, we all know we are nowhere near this perfection today, and perhaps we will never achieve a state that we believe cannot be further improved. As long as there is still any potential to further human flourishing and well-being, there will be a way to move forward. And the best way forward must be open to debate! We must continually make an effort to progress and seek the truth, rather than rest in stagnation. Until all sentient beings are living in perfect bliss and fulfillment for their entire lifespans, the jury is still out on the best method to achieve that. And as long as the jury is out, freedom of expression must be our primary right, second or equal to no other.</p> |
| 68 | <p>To Professor Neil Guppy and the internal working group. Thank you for engaging with these challenging questions.</p> <p>The university represents a truly unique forum in which to engage with controversial ideas without regard for cultural or political milieu. While I truly believe that we must do everything in our power to make our campus a safe and inclusive space, it is my view that we must be extremely careful to never restrict the free exchange of ideas</p> |



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| | <p>which are expressed in accordance with Canadian law, since this is by far the greater danger at this point in history. I encourage this working group to consider adopting the Chicago Principles for free expression in order to demonstrate that this institution is committed to taking a leading role in protecting our most basic rights.</p> |
| 69 | <p>While the effort is appreciated, I believe the diversity UBC is most lacking is of the political variety. This draft falls embarrassingly short of it's ideal goals, and fails to provide any information, and instead relies on pandering jargon and vague, obvious statements which offer little insight into classifying and preventing the discrimination actually facing the politically right, and non-Marxists of this campus.</p> <p>I would like to see more of an effort to account for the lack of political diversity.</p> <p>Perhaps making these submissions visible to all, but anonymous, so the students could get an idea of what their peers think?</p> |
| 70 | <p>Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature are foreign to the intellectual exchanges that strong universities must support and protect.</p> <p>While I like the letter and what it is upholding in general, I had some difficulty understanding this particular sentence. I think the first clause is understandable, but what is a "breach of peace?" Is it civil unrest, is it protests, is it riots? Because students can and do protest. And how are these statements "judged likely" to incite such a thing? In addition, though I have an advanced degree, I had to look up the definition of "ad hominem." I think, in this section, you should strive to use more accessible language and clearly conceptualize exactly what you mean. The current language is too academic and too vague to be a useful guideline. This part is really the bones of this letter, differentiating what will be supported and what will not be supported. If, as I have assumed, this will be a framework for making decisions in the future, by leaving it vague, even intentionally, you are putting the burden on future administrations to operationalize these definitions and leave the university open to criticism if someone who has violated these tenets offers a different interpretation that is still covered by this vague definition.</p> |
| 71 | <p>I agree with the general tone of this statement and I respect UBCs decision to move ahead and ensure that free speech is maintained on campus. However, I have a few things that I personally think would be important to clarify or include in this statement that will make it more clear in its scope and practical in its implementation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include intellectual and viewpoint diversity in the definition of diversity, these being the most important types of diversity. 2. Include a succinct definition of hate speech. Because what exactly is hate speech against a group? Would it be hate to say that trans gendered people are mentally ill? Would it be hate to say that homosexual parents do not provide the same quality parenting as do straight ones? Is it hate to say that other cultures are inferior to the West? Is it hate to say that Islam is currently the worst religion when it comes to respecting human rights? And most importantly: who defines what hate speech is? 3. Include a definition of equity. Does it mean equality of outcome? Or does it mean equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or any other secondary factor? 4. If there are to be any, include specific examples of how the university plans to regulate speech and include the punishments that any transgressor will receive. 5. I take issue with clarity of the second last paragraph: "Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." The first sentence seems like an unnecessary qualifier that sounds like the start of an excuse that downplays the importance of free speech. Free speech is the fundamental right (if in this context rights are defined human rights as per Canadas Charter) that is the |



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| | <p>cornerstone to all other rights. The second sentence makes no sense. How can somebody have the right to equity? Or diversity? These are values, not rights. Since values are not rights, they should not be enshrined together as one, because there are people with good reasons who do not believe that equity, diversity, and inclusion are good things when defined in the context of this article. It would be better to remove this sentence completely, or change it to something like "freedom of expression is the best tool we have to promote the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion."</p> |
| 72 | <p>I am proud to see the development of policy that encourages freedom of speech and the complexities it brings, while protecting against personal attacks, hate speech, and other measures aimed to suppress alternative opinions.</p> |
| 73 | <p>I am a faculty member elsewhere and a part-time student. I applaud the work that UBC is doing to advance this important but difficult conversation. I thank the many who have laboured over this statement and I appreciate the opportunity to comment.</p> <p>"pursuing ideas freely and openly moves us closer to truth." I appreciate that the concept of truth in this conversation implies that there exist multiple truths and not just "the" truth.</p> <p>Using the example of truth and reconciliation and our colonialist history sharpens/focuses the conversation.</p> <p>"Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature are foreign to the intellectual exchanges that strong universities must support and protect. This is so because such statements are, at root, attempts to stifle or prevent the freedom of expression of others, to dissuade any response or discussion." This is an important idea to state clearly and forcefully.</p> |
| 74 | <p>I agree with the points made in the statement. I think it is also important to acknowledge in places of teaching how little we actually understand, even as experts in a particular topic; and how narrow in scope our understanding actually is. As individuals we speak from our own experience and for many, based on what we have been taught and then think that is the whole. In actuality that is only a tiny slice of reality. I see this in the context of disease research, which is my field, where factors including industry, personal bias, and a desire to simplify have limited research into the causes of disease.</p> <p>I think our desire to be right (or unwillingness to admit we might not understand fully) plays a big role in our inability to hear other voices and comprehend another's experience. Hate speech comes out of a place of fear - especially out of fear of change. I think our educational institutions can do more to emphasize how limited our current knowledge and understanding is and to encourage students to be open-minded and how to evaluate new information.</p> <p>I know this may not be the best place to incorporate this thought but it might be one way to reduce the amount of hate and intolerance we face.</p> |
| 75 | <p>I'm glad to see UBC is putting time and energy into a statement like this. Great job! While I agree with just about everything in this draft, it did feel like the first three quarters was a lot of fluff. Like, just a lot of excessive talk about the role of universities that sort of made my eyes glaze over with boredom. It was the final section (beginning with "Statements inciting hatred...") that felt most relevant to a statement such as this. As a student, I want to know: Is Milo Yiannopoulos (or some version of him) going to be permitted to speak at UBC? It took a lot of reading before I felt you were touching on that subject. My only suggestion would be to shorten the first 3/4 of this or rearrange it so that the document gets to the point much quicker. I understand universities have for centuries held a special place in society, guardians of accumulated knowledge, bla bla, but I don't want to wade through paragraph after paragraph like that in order to get even a sense of whether or not UBC is a place where white supremacists will be welcome to share their messages.</p> <p>I don't mean to be overly critical — as I say, I'm glad to see UBC is addressing this (and that you're inviting</p> |



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| | nobodies like me to share their two cents). |
| 76 | <p>I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my input about my workplace. I would like to inform you that after a few years dedication and hard work of the members of our department to better our unit towards creating a much more pleasant and welcoming environment, we have reached the point that I can proudly say that much has accomplished and I see that the atmosphere has changed to a much healthier work place for everyone. I hope that it maintains that way by having our current director....</p> <p>I also would like to bring your attention that we are having space issue at our clinic. We have shortage of offices and examination rooms.</p> <p>Psychiatrist's rooms are not designed for treatments. They are too are small and do not have windows. In my opinion it is unhealthy and it may have a huge impact on patients especially patient's with claustrophobic issues or even other psychological issues that may feel trapped in these small rooms with no windows.</p> <p>Nurses don't have enough space to move around in their area that there is no space between patient and the nurse and since there is no doors, often patients and nurses don't have enough privacy and I notice that they whisper instead so that they can share their concerns.</p> <p>Often, 3-4 Doctors share one office that the room becomes too crowded and not enough air circulation which is unhealthy.</p> <p>Staff have space issues too. They often don't have enough computers to work on so they use whatever desk is available on the clinic which means they have to work on someone else's desk for 7 hours that the desk and chairs are aren't adjusted to their comfort.</p> <p>We need new printers and upgrading our electronics. I have over 20-30 wires next to my desk tangled and hanging from the desk that can easily be removed and replaces with latest technology to have a more efficient working place. Also according to Feng Shui, having things cluttered in a place can create mood change and fatigue feeling after a while which can lead to further complications mentally and emotionally.</p> <p>I would like to thank you again for reading and reviewing my concern.</p> |
| 77 | <p>It is clear that the draft statement is the result of the contribution of diverse voices who deeply value freedom of expression. The statement reflects well on UBC. I would like to add my perspective on a couple of points in the statement.</p> <p>1) "Our collective lack of a shared knowledge about the lasting effects of our colonial past acts as an impediment to the essential conversations and negotiations that progress on these multiple issues requires." I would add that our colonialism did not just happen in the past but carries on in the present. It's an uncomfortable truth, but one that needs to be acknowledged.</p> <p>2) "Doing it well means holding open the idea that persuasion is still possible, that thought and evidence and reason can lead to solutions for the many grand challenges we face." I particularly appreciate the specifics contained in the paragraph that concludes with this sentence. However, I am uncomfortable with the word "persuasion" in this sentence. To me "persuasion" by its very meaning contradicts the thrust of the idea of the paragraph. To persuade is to stand on one side of an idea and make another give up their position and take up yours. I suggest replacing "persuasion is" with "solutions are." Maybe rewrite it as follows: "Doing it well means holding open the idea that solutions are still possible, that thought and evidence and reason can lead to breakthroughs for the many grand challenges we face."</p> |
| 78 | <p>You use the word "wellbeing" only once and it is not defined. Importantly, it is used as one of the metrics for the restriction of free expression. If you say you want to protect free expression subject to the wellbeing of others then you have said nothing because that term is infinitely vague. The army draws an excellent line when a soldier is</p> |



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| | <p>asked, "Are you hurt? Or injured?" Please realize that when allowed, human beings are capable of feeling hurt in perpetuity. Feelings don't matter, actions do. Acknowledge this and you may yet put a cork in the rampant stupidity that has infected this continent.</p> |
| 79 | <p>This statement is at least ten times longer than it needs to be. It was very difficult to distill its meaning, which I interpret as: all speech is allowed except "statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature." If I have interpreted it correctly, then I support the statement.</p> |
| 80 | <p>I fully support this letter and the position it advances. Thank you to the working group who is courageously taking on this important issue.</p> |
| 81 | <p>This is an excellent statement and sorely needed in current times. The statement strikes a very good balance between freedom of expression and protection of individual rights. Kudos for addressing the issue head-on and in such a clear and balanced way! This statement makes me proud to be a member of the UBC community.</p> |
| 82 | <p>I believe your three-fold mission is extremely well thought out. I appreciate your acknowledgment that discussing intellectual ideas can make those participating feel uncomfortable or offended.</p> <p>I look at other universities, where freedom of speech has been stifled on the basis that others may be offended by opinions they disagree with. This firm stance UBC is taking on the importance of freedom of expression makes me proud to be a student here. Well done. Freedom of expression is the only way that we can advance forward as a university and society.</p> <p>My one question is how the university chooses to define hate speech. Is there a point at which opinions or academic writing are deemed too uncomfortable or offensive? For example, could peer-reviewed statistics theoretically be considered racist, sexist, or "too offensive" in any way?</p> <p>Thank you for reading my comments. I would be interested in providing additional feedback if you are looking to form a student input committee.</p> |
| 83 | <p>It should be reiterated that freedom of expression or freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequences.</p> <p>Also it should be addressed that there is a growing number of instances across college campuses of certain groups of people using their supposed victimhood to silence others' free speech. If this matter isn't addressed, it will spiral into chaos, much like it has at several college campuses in the United States. Freedom of expression is either for everyone, or it is for no one. We cannot choose.</p> |
| 84 | <p>I appreciate the statement's careful distinctions and qualifications. I would make a couple of suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) the use of the UBC respectful workplace statement here, or at least its terminology, is to me somewhat problematic, as that statement has reduced a laudable concern for workplace harassment into a speech-monitoring exercise. Real harassment is not just speech; it is enabled by toxic workplace structures, many of which UBC barely understands, let alone seeks to ameliorate. So tread carefully here!2) I appreciate the recognition of hate-speech and anti-discrimination legislation.3) I think it would be helpful to foreground academic freedom and its correlate, peer review, here. The framework for AF is that its users are subject to life-long peer review of their claims and ideas. Such review is not a limitation on free speech. I think this model of peer review is an excellent one for the university community to espouse: for instance, the controversial invitation of John Furlong to UBC could have been an opportunity for round-table discussions between Mr. Furlong, the UBC Athletics program, and UBC's indigenous scholars, students and neighbours. That is a model of peer review that I think is entirely in keeping with the university's mission and |



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| | <p>purpose.</p> <p>4) I think it would be helpful if possible to speak about the reckless and clearly abusive use of doxxing and online harassment that scholars like Mary Bryson have been subject to; this is a form of violence which the university is seldom adept at addressing.</p> <p>5) It might be helpful for UBC's statement to acknowledge somewhat more explicitly that free expression is embodied; ie., that privilege in the system and power to speak are related to each other. If we wish for an equitable community in which all voices can be heard, we need to acknowledge that those voices are already differentially enabled.</p> |
| 85 | <p>I wish to commend the working group for this thoughtful, balanced, eloquent statement of the importance of freedom of expression to the university community. I particularly applaud the way it recognizes that 'it is appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended' when confronted by diverse perspectives and opinions, whilst emphasizing, at the same time, that 'Freedom of expression does not trump [sic!] all other rights'.</p> <p>I value the clarification - the extent possible - of what lies outside the realm of free expression: deliberate 'hate speech', incitement to commit offences, and ad hominem attacks. Some scholars and students at UBC would argue for the extension of hate speech and incitement to broader categories of statement, such as those that are perceived to reinforce systemic discrimination. I would argue that, while the university community must be open to such arguments, it would not be right to endorse them in a statement such as this. I therefore wholeheartedly support the statement, and thank the committee for its hard work on this important matter.</p> |
| 86 | <p>This statement is thoughtful and insightful! I'm not sure if you're looking for feedback, but I found a grammar typo in paragraph 8: "This necessitates scholarly spaces where critical thinking and incisive reasoning knows no bounds but is allowed to flourish unrestricted by who you are or to which social groups you might belong" should be "This necessitates scholarly spaces where critical thinking and incisive reasoning KNOW no bounds but ARE allowed to flourish unrestricted by who you are or to which social groups you might belong." Also in paragraph 8, to improve readability, I would suggest replacing "However, when confronting challenging ideas, ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!), it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended" with " However, when confronting challenging ideas--ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!)-it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended."</p> <p>I'm grateful to be a part of a university that places such a high value on diversity and integrity!</p> |
| 87 | <p>Very well written draft, bravely addressing all the important issues that could prevent employees and students from expressing freedom in speech. It's written in a proud and encouraging, yet firm (where necessary) tone. Well done!</p> |
| 88 | <p>I agree with most things said in the statement. I just don't want " Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights" to turn us into UC Berkeley.</p> |
| 89 | <p>While to the overall attitude of this statement is positive, there are a few points that really rankle me.</p> <p>The first sentence of the opening paragraph includes the word "terrorism", which seems used to instill fear, though from a statistical perspective happens far less than domestic violence, sexual assault, violent crimes or the collateral violence of war. The word "terrorism" encompasses a tiny part of violence as a whole, minimizes the significance of other violent acts and feeds into the common propaganda of fear-mongering, and so I strongly recommend using the word "violence" instead.</p> <p>The second sentence of paragraph two reads "We are entrusted as guardians of the accumulated knowledge and</p> |



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| | <p>wisdom of humanity...", which I feel imparts an attitude of entitlement to the exclusion of other sources, story-holders and keepers of knowledge and wisdom. If this sentence were amended to read "We are one of the entrusted guardians..." it would convey far more inclusivity.</p> <p>The last sentence of paragraph four, relating to Truth and Reconciliation, reads "an engagement that can only be tackled principally and ethically in a spirit of free and open dialogue and respect." I wholeheartedly agree, but I also feel deeply that it should include the word "humility" on our part for the damage our people have done to the Aboriginal peoples and their lands, which have become lands we all share, for better or worse. Our humility towards them is a vital part of reconciliation.</p> <p>There's a great deal of emphasis on dialogue and thought in this statement, which is good, but I also feel that there's very little mention of people's physical experiences, actions (whether driven by their personal paradigms or responses to other's actions), or emotional states. It's all very well to speak of academic dialogue, but that cannot, on its own, solve the ultimate dynamism that is humanity without also engaging on a level that scratches and plants into the soil of everyone's everyday life.</p> |
| 90 | Perfect! |
| 91 | I support the Freedom of Expression Statement |
| 92 | <p>Our current social climate provides all members of the university community digital space to communicate thoughts, ideas and opinions. These communications, done outside of the realm of the university are often intended to be personal conveyances, separate from the UBC sphere of activity. There are occasions that the thoughts, ideas and opinions expressed are not favoured or do not match those of others within the UBC community. Should these then be considered communications that fall under the umbrella "Freedom of Expression"? Should these communications, offensive or not, to others (but not inciting of hate, violence or intended to silence others), be within the University's purvey? It seems inappropriate that quite often, unpopular opinions or ideas often lead to what I perceive as discriminatory reactionary responses that often call for selective removal or reduction of "Freedom of Expression". This leaves little room for rational, reasoned discussion and debate within the academic realm or outside of it.</p> |
| 93 | <p>Do not attempt to restrain free speech. If laws are broken, then legal action will occur. Short of that academics, staff, and students should be able to raise any idea and others can respond, with reasoned arguments. This is core to our being and cannot be dismissed.</p> |
| 94 | <p>I thank the panel for their careful writing, about which I have a few concerns. They are written below:</p> <p>1) "statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace..." I found this wording to be too vague in its scope and therefore too broad in its potential implications. Judged by whom? How will the judge's moral compass be checked? What constitutes 'the peace'? Supposing that a student group commits to disrupting a scheduled speaker, as seen repeatedly at UofT and Ryerson, is it the speaker who is breaching the peace, or the student protesters? As written, this clause appears to allow UBC to nominally promote free expression while vetoing any invited speaker whose objectionable, but not abusive, statements might be met with protest.</p> <p>2) "Words can be used as weapons." I would like to caution the panel against this kind of comparison. I tend to think that it is appropriate to separate speech from violence. We can be held responsible for the hurt we cause others when we do violence, but we cannot be responsible for the reactions that others have to our (non-abusive) speech. When we obscure the boundary between words and actions, we weaken the protection of speech.</p> <p>3) "Deliberate attempts to create a toxic environment must remain anathema to the practices of the university community." I like this statement a lot. Many of the US' problems with campus speech stem from cynical opportunists like Milo Yiannopolous who are committed to saying nasty things until their ideological opponents are forced to contravene the first amendment, giving them an ideological victory. I believe the only winning move is not</p> |



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| | <p>to play.</p> <p>4)"Most fundamentally those policies and practices recognize the importance of freedom of expression, but they do so in the context of everyone's fundamental right to equality." I find 'equality' to be slippery in this paragraph. Do you mean 'Equality to be heard'? If so, how do you represent minority viewpoints so as to be heard among a loud majority? Further, are you talking about the equality of individuals, or of groups / factions? Equal expression for individuals biases speech towards majority views. Equal expression for representatives from groups / factions potentially allows individuals a platform to express unrepresentative views.</p> |
| 95 | <p>Free speech should be allowed to the fullest extent allowed by law in Canada. The only additional restrictions should be to ensure that learning can physically take place (that is, no picketing classrooms as protest). Free speech is much too important to allow a government-funded body to go beyond Charter freedoms.</p> |
| 96 | <p>Freedom of expression must, by definition, include the freedom to offend.</p> |
| 97 | <p>As the close relative of a trans person, a survivor of sexual assault and a member of a religious minority, of course I am opposed to hate speech, sexism, transphobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, cultural appropriation and etc. I support legislation at the provincial and federal levels to deal with these things. But universities are places where freedom of expression is essential. Without that freedom, it's hardly worth funding universities because then they are simply places where information and ideologies are passed on. The point of a university is to exchange views with people who think differently, and especially with those who challenge you. Discomfort is broadening (if the discomfort comes from realizing that you agree with, even just a little, your opponent, and not from being called a Nazi or asshat). If freedom of expression is not protected, then students and professors may hide their real views even in casual conversations for fear of being labelled or penalized. Students must feel safe to take risks with our opinions so that we can learn from the feedback. The culture on campus is becoming increasingly like a place where people are afraid to say something that isn't perfectly correct and either universally supported, or supported by their camp. Rather than talking to each other, we are falling into groups and calling people in the other groups names. I gave up my creative thesis (a novel) a year into it because it involved sexual assault, and I'd become nervous over classmates' views that I wasn't being hard enough on the rapist. Now I am working in a different genre. What use is a fine arts program if it produces writers and artists who are timid? In the academic and medical community, too, we should encourage people who disagree to share their views and listen to each other. Otherwise, you get closed camps. Take a look at what is happening regarding trans health care. I don't want to go into too much detail, especially in a letter that may become public. But, when you have encampments in health care and academic medical programs, then patients and parents only get information that supports one perspective and sometimes we miss out on medically essential information as a result. Or, information isn't even collected because it's become politically sensitive. Finally, as a person who has walked in many marches and rallies, I want to add that it is a mistake for anyone to assume that just because they care about a group of people, or are a member of a particular group of people -- for example, trans people or survivors of sexual assault-- that they speak for everybody in that group. Only by protecting freedom of speech can we ensure that minority opinions are not suffocated. Universities are places where diversity of opinion should be encouraged, as well as vigorous debate. We should teach the skills of respectful listening and dialogue. Thank you to everyone who worked on this document and committee. It's a challenging one, and important.</p> |
| 98 | <p>Too many words. Cut it to about 200 high-impact words, and then you'll have something worth reading.</p> |
| 99 | <p>I think this is a great step forward. It manages to balance the importance of respecting freedom of expression while protecting groups that continue to be discriminated against. My only concern is that as a statement of principle it could use some trimming.</p> |
| 100 | <p>I think it is dangerous to say that all opinions are equal, because they are not. The hateful rhetoric displayed in the last year by many groups is simply wrong. Saying that we are all equal is not an opinion, it is a fact. Saying racism is</p> |



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| | <p>unfounded is not an opinion, it is a fact. To say that gender does not exist on a binary is not an opinion, it is a fact. To say that anthropogenic global warming is real and one of the greatest threats to humanity is an opinion and not a fact is harmful. So yes, freedom of expression and opinion is important. But the way it is presented is even more important. An example of this is climate debates where they show two scientists with opposing views on the subject, rather than 97 against 3.</p> <p>Racism is wrong. Sexism is wrong. Xenophobia is wrong. There are no ifs and or buts about it, and I do not think people who think otherwise deserve a platform for their freedom of expression. This is not very well worded as I am feeling impassioned at the thought of these things, but I had to write something down.</p> |
| 101 | <p>Thanks to the committee members for their work on this important topic. And a BIG thanks to President Ono for giving the UBC community a chance to offer feedback. If this statement had been accepted, I would have been embarrassed to call myself an alumnus. UBC can do better!</p> <p>While there are passages in the draft that are excellent, they are contradicted by passages that prove at least some of committee members don't understand what free expression is or why it's paramount for universities.</p> <p>Free expression, quite simply, is the right to speak one's mind even if that speech might offend. And why does that matter? Because progress is only ever made in our society when someone chooses to think differently. History has shown over and over again that just because an opinion is unpopular, that doesn't mean it's wrong. Universities must provide space for people to air unpopular opinions so that we can continue to progress.</p> <p>The vast majority of this draft statement is unnecessary and just gets in the way of the parts that really matter. What's worse, some passages are actually harmful to the cause of free speech. The most noxious part is this: "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others." This sentence is simply inviting people to shut down free speech by declaring that their "wellbeing" is under threat because someone else's idea is racist, sexist, Transphobic etc. As I mentioned, Free expression by definition includes the right to state unpopular opinions. All legal speech should be allowed on UBC's campus so long as one is not promoting genocide, which is justifiably illegal under the Criminal Code.</p> <p>The passage citing an "example" of why freedom of expression matters is also downright destructive. While most UBC community members probably do agree that truth and reconciliation is a "core challenge" of both UBC and Canada, not all hold that view. Professors and students who don't believe in that "truth and reconciliation is a core challenge" should not be muzzled... especially by a statement about free expression.</p> <p>There are actually two graphs in here that are worth keeping. In fact, if you did no more than combine them, change the words "highly valued" to "a paramount value" and discard the rest, then you would have a statement I could get behind! In fact, why not just go with this?</p> <p>"Pursuing ideas freely and openly moves us closer to truth, allowing all ideas to be criticized and tested, accepted and revised. Universities are communities of scholars where the free and open exchange of thought, belief, opinion, and expression is a paramount value because it promotes better knowledge and understanding. The university works assiduously to create a place where people are physically safe. However, when confronting challenging ideas, ideas that question your deeply held beliefs, ideas that you might find noxious or offensive (or discovering that others find your deeply held beliefs noxious and offensive!), it is inevitable and appropriate to feel intellectually uncomfortable, even offended."</p> |
| 102 | <p>Hello</p> <p>Wonderful ideas and broadcast letter. Since coming to UBC a couple years ago as a transfer student from elsewhere but a native BCer I noticed upon my arrival at UBC a stark cultural divide particularly in regards to student clubs. As a native British Columbian I actually felt quite alone and in a culturally foreign land. I've noticed that particularly when students come from abroad there is a tendency for everyone to group together in their</p> |



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| | <p>respective "communities" so that they can feel safe. While I understand this is natural I also think it discourages people from feeling comfortable 'walking' outside their visual/cultural "boundaries". I see a "gap" in the UBC community and that "gap" is a place in which ALL groups can feel comfortable coming together and speaking to each other regardless of their "home community". I also think the more UBC can promote this "mixing" the more comfortable people will be viewing the similarities within groups rather than looking for their differences -fostering more genuine social connection and interaction based off of personality characteristics rather than group identity or outward appearances.</p> <p>I think as humans we need to be constantly reminded of our inherent similarities. If there is no venue or celebration for such an event I think the more likely it is that our community divides and crumbles into chronic historical "forgetting" mode. The United World Colleges does a great job of fostering and celebrating cultural similarities. As a kid my parents took me to the annual One World Event put on by Pearson College in Victoria and this had a lasting and dramatic impression on me as a kid, where I learned to deeply value human diversity. I would love (and think others would too!) if UBC began an event similar to this and put it on annually. Proceeds could go to various charities. I think there is a deep need for a physical (not internet) communal event at UBC to celebrate our cultures and histories in an open artistic venue where we can hear peoples stories...upbringings...songs..traditions...favorite foods..etc.! And possibly dispute conflicts... But the emphasis should be on celebration of diversity.</p> <p>Are there United World College alumni that could help in this organization or provide insight? Can we have a UBC version of a "One world" performance? Or even a week of "one world" celebration where we have workshops focused on current cultural events and peace and diplomacy?? THAT WOULD BE AMAZING!!!! <3</p> <p>Thank you for bringing this topic up!!! It certainly needed to be said :)</p> |
| 103 | <p>I strongly dislike the statement on freedom of expression, and in the spirit of the topic, I would like to be as involved as possible in expressing my dissent. In your statement, you have managed to express two entirely conflicting opinions, and obfuscated them in enough indirect language to pass them both off as dearly held beliefs. Let me rewrite your statement for you:</p> <p>"Freedom of expression is the fundamental right of every person on this campus. If you don't like what someone is expressing, express your dissent."</p> <p>The only limits to this right are when expression directly incites violence. It is not a crime stand in the middle of campus shouting "burn this [religious institution], I hate [this religion]." This is a despicable act that should be vehemently condemned by the University, and while the physical safety of this person should be absolutely protected, their ideas should not. When you censor someone, you automatically lose the debate.</p> <p>Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not fundamental rights, nor are they pillars of our democracy. They may be values that the University believes in, and the University should continue to advocate for them, but they do not belong in a statement on freedom of expression. There are no caveats to freedom.</p> |
| 104 | <p>This line "In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion.", I am in disagreement with as it contradicts the entire statement. The rights of equity will only squelch the freedom of expression. If all things must be equal, whatever that means since it is not defined anywhere in this document, then there is no dialogue, hence ZERO freedom of expression.</p> <p>So I am opposed to this document on that regards.</p> |
| 105 | <p>I do perceive a control by certain group to suppress freedom of speech. It has a lot to do with the use of language and how it is perceived by some students. It is possible as well that is a generation gap but there is definitively a</p> |



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| | <p>problem. I don't have the answer and I will follow this extremely important issue.</p> |
| <p>106 107 (comment was posted twice)</p> | <p>To Whom It May Concern:</p> <p>I have been deeply involved at UBC, pushing for freer speech on campus, and I have done a lot of reading, thinking, and talking with others about this during the past year. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that I have been one of the most prominent free speech student activists at UBC. This article ran in the Vancouver Sun, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, and the Province:</p> <p>http://vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/douglas-todd-top-moral-thinkers-defend-free-speech-in-ubc-class</p> <p>I was also recently interviewed by the CBC, and have been mentioned in the Globe & Mail in relation to the free speech situation at UBC. There is only one statement I would add to this draft. I think that a statement on freedom of expression needs to speak about the ultimate purpose of a university, because that is the real matter at stake in the campus culture wars. Discussing this explicitly is a way to help resolve the conflicts. I would add:</p> <p>“The highest purpose of a University is to seek truth, in all its forms, and UBC believes that when we do this together, respectfully, it benefits us all.”</p> <p>This gives a good balance between truth seeking and social justice seeking: I am a strong believer that social justice is most effectively pursued when it is based on truth and evidence-based methods. It acknowledges that there are many kinds of truth, and the job here at the University is to pursue them all and see how they fit together into a coherent, increasingly clear vision of reality.</p> <p>The reason to name a “highest purpose” is because we need a way to resolve conflicts, when truth seeking and social justice aims come into conflict. These ideas are clarified in the document by Dr. Jonathan Haidt (NYU): “Why Universities Must Choose One Telos: Truth or Social Justice”. I believe this document is essential to read while drafting this statement. I cannot recommend strongly enough that committee members read this document:</p> <p>https://heterodoxacademy.org/2016/10/21/one-telos-truth-or-social-justice/</p> <p>My personal preference would be for UBC to adopt the Chicago Principles, though I don't think this is achievable at this time. Regardless, if the statement does not speak about the purpose of a University, and define truth-seeking as the highest purpose (or equivalent words), I will question its ability to effectively resolve the issues we are facing at UBC, because it will not address the real issue.</p> |
| <p>108</p> | <p>This is excellent. It correctly emphasizes the importance of freedom expression to our society generally and the role of universities specifically, but recognizes that it is not and cannot be the only freedom we value, and that in order for the exercise of that freedom to fulfill its intended purpose that universities must be communities free of discrimination and harassment. This sentence is highly significant: "Deliberate attempts to create a toxic environment must remain anathema to the practices of the university community." There is a difference between "shielding students from provocative thought" and fulfilling our obligation to provide that non-toxic workplace; there is a difference between forbidding genuinely scholarly lines of inquiry and restricting bigoted, prejudicial, or harassing speech. This draft statement correctly recognizes and values those differences.</p> <p>To create a framework that embodies the values espoused by this statement, I believe some changes must be made to current UBC policies. For example, Policy 14 (Response to At Risk Behaviour) describes the protocols to be followed if the safety or security of an individual is under threat. However, it doesn't define safety or security, and its intention is probably assumes those things to be purely physical. So we don't have a process to deal with imminent threats to mental or emotional safety and security, such as those represented by aggressive harassment and discrimination. Policy 3 (Discrimination and Harassment) outlines a process to report and address such behaviours, but it's a long, bureaucratic process that does nothing to protect a victim of harassment in the moment.</p> |



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| | <p>We should also consider how these values, and how our obligation to provide a workplace free of discrimination and harassment, can be maintained in the lack of policies that apply to the expression of individuals or groups who are not members of the university community, but who are choosing to exercise their right to expression on our campuses and directing that expression toward our students, staff, and faculty. We must ensure that all of our values, those of tolerance and diversity as well as those of freedom of expression, are fairly balanced and adhered to by all activities on campus, including those carried out by external groups; ensure that the presence of external groups does not constitute a hostile work or study environment, and that the presence of external groups does not compromise the safety or physical and mental well-being of our students, staff, and faculty; and ensure that external groups asking to make use our campus spaces are treated equitably and are all held to the same consistent, transparent, and clearly-articulated code of conduct. We currently have no such policies in place that I am aware of. Policies 3 and 14, and the UBC Student Code of Conduct, do not apply to external groups. We should draft a new policy that extends that same code of conduct to any external groups who would use our campuses as a gathering place or event site, and makes it clear in advance that any group that intends to violate UBC's values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, or intends to harass or target discriminatory speech at any member of the university community, is not welcome to use UBC as a venue.</p> <p>When the UofT media relations director was asked in August 2017 whether that university would consider a request from white nationalist Canadian Nationalist Party hold a rally on university premises, she replied that "We consider any space bookings on a case-by-case basis." That's not a good policy; we should be able to insist that the same codes of conduct to which we hold our faculty and students be extended to external groups. In the absence of a clear and transparent guiding policy that does so, we are subject to lawsuits from such groups that would force us to accept behaviour and expression from guests on our campus that we do not permit of members of our own community. (e.g. The University of Florida didn't want to allow Richard Spencer to speak there this past month, but he threatened to sue them, so they relented and allowed him to hold his event. The university had to spend half a million dollars in security costs as a result.)</p> |
| <p>109</p> | <p>Considering "hate speech" as separate from free speech is dangerous and anti western and anti intellectual, especially when it is not concretely defined. Hate is not a universal evil and is often justified against many identifiable groups, namely ones defined by the ideas they hold. What counts as dehumanizing? What counts as inciting hate? If I raise a fact or even an opinion of an ideological group that others find so troubling that they experience hatred towards said group, why would I be responsible for someone else's feelings? Many groups have in their beliefs, sets of truly evil ideas which are worthy of hatred. By trying to separate out so called "hate speech" from freedom of expression, you show that UBC is spineless and hypothetically. Whoever wrote this either does not believe in or does not understand free speech.</p> |
| <p>110</p> | <p>I write as a past student, having completed degrees, and as a professor of Jewish literature and history elsewhere.</p> <p>I have followed the different discussions that are in the background of your "Freedom of Expression Statement Draft," so I have, I think, both an informed as well as a personal take on what you are trying to do. Statements by committee are not an easy project at any time. Your draft presents aspects of that challenge by remaining somewhat general, or, as Albert Camus might put it, high altitude flying. You are speaking for a huge and varied community, so specificity is not the easiest goal to achieve, but the statement lacks a willingness to speak from specificity, from concrete context, and to relate its goals to the harder facts of Canadian history and daily life. It may be that if I read the university's other statements, like those you list at the end of the draft, the same style would be dominant. I think it's a failed style for the goal you're trying to achieve. The lead theme is, as signaled by the title of the draft, "commitment to freedom of expression." And you make use of past President Toope's account of "tension" between free expression and "respect for human dignity." Toope's language is the most concrete, or placed, in the draft. The rest of your presentation could be being offered at a university in any number of other countries' major universities. Your draft lacks specificity and context as the issues relate to Canada and Vancouver. Toope's law background must, at times, have led him to relate these issues to Canadian law and regulations</p> |



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| | <p>associated with human rights and hate speech. This is an obvious context for statements like the one you are pursuing. Hate speech laws are defined narrowly -- but they come into play in aspects of what you are addressing. The Canadian Human Rights Act lays out broader terms by which infringement or abuse should be recognized. In your province there is a Human Rights Tribunal that hears complaints along the lines of some issues your draft means to address. I wonder why these contexts have not been cited, or at least alluded to, as part of our social contract and even your own social contract as British Columbians. Your students may not know about the broader context for these discussions in the province, and aspects of the argument may come into clearer focus if they do. It seems, too, that you may be addressing two types of "expression": that which scholars pursue, and that which anyone might pursue, whether in public dialogue or an internet post in the university community. By not specifying these (and others you might have in mind) the statement further abstracts its target. If "freedom of expression" is your focus, then its protection and interest in it will be heightened if you are direct about the different kinds of expression, contexts, and speakers you have in mind. The broad claims made in the early part of the statement about "turbulent times" and "dissemination of knowledge" are simply rhetorical place holders. Maybe, too, it would be of interest to your community to raise events and forms of expression relevant to the British Columbian past that help students reflect on our present moment and its specific character. Bring it back home. Concreteness and specificity is all. Generalities will only come back to haunt you.</p> |
| <p>111</p> | <p>I write as an alumna of UBC deeply invested in freedom of expression at both my own institution (the University of XXXX) and UBC — indeed, at all universities in Canada. I find the draft statement prepared by the working group wrongheaded from its opening, underwhelming sentences to its final claims pitting freedom of expression against "other rights." This deeply conservative statement, predicated on universities as special places where professors are 'guardians' of knowledge and 'truths,' works counter to its ostensible ends by imposing limits on freedom of expression. President Ono is right to reject it as a statement of or for the institution.</p> <p>The statement is more interested in asserting what UBC will not "protect or condone" than in standing up in any positive way for freedom of expression. It both blatantly and insidiously imposes limits on freedom of expression. Some of the more disturbing elements imply that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expression of ideas must be "done appropriately and respectfully" (this is a limit imposed, in the immediate context, on instructors and thus a limit on academic freedom) ▪ controversial speech may issue only from those who have developed "skills of intellect and character" and possess "inner resources and personal resilience" or who join the "guardians" of the University in declaring these objectives as the proper ends of education (this is a limit imposed, in their immediate context, on students who by implication must meet certain criteria if they wish to have their speech taken seriously or in no way circumscribed by instructors) ▪ the speech in question must possess "the potential of making positive contributions to the university community" (as both instructors and students are by implication limited by this condition, this too is a limit on academic freedom) ▪ the speech in question does not interfere with the "proper working conditions of the academic community" (this is presumably intended to function most directly as a limit on the freedom of expression of students, but could also limit the work of instructors and thus impinge on academic freedom), and ▪ the speakers cannot be judged (in the view of others) as seeking to breach the peace (this ambiguous claim, inasmuch as it applies to both instructors and students, is also an offense against academic freedom). <p>The writers would be well advised to note that the charge that someone is making a breach of the peace has and is regularly levelled at political activists of all kinds. They could start by reading up on the history of civil rights activism in the southern United States where many arrests occurred under this charge. They might also take note</p> |



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| | <p>of the charges currently being levelled at anti-pipeline activists both in the United States and Canada.</p> <p>Most deplorably of all, the writers would diminish freedom of expression by situating it in antagonistic relation to other rights. No university should issue a statement that arbitrarily imposes limits on freedom of expression as this one does, or place it in a false contest with "other rights." UBC should join other universities in standing up for freedom of expression qualified only by limits set by law. We have mechanisms for contesting laws. We do not, however, have methods for contesting the myriad amorphous and arbitrary judgments upon which the working group's seriously circumscribed conception of freedom of expression depends. All, in short, must be free to breach the "peace" of society, and it is universities, not individuals, who must show "resilience" in meeting the challenge of ensuring they are places for the most capacious forms of freedom of expression.</p> |
| 112 | <p>I strongly agree with the general thrust of the draft, in particular the emphasis it places on the necessity of creating an environment in which all members of the community are able to express themselves without fear. I also concur strongly with its recognition that in truly open and significant exchanges some or all participants may find their ideas and beliefs challenged to the point of feeling offended. Fostering an environment in which profound disagreement and even offence are possible yet respect and fairness are maintained is one of the challenges of scholarly life.</p> <p>In general, this draft recognizes the importance and difficulty of that complex objective. I do, however, take issue with one claim that is made explicitly in the draft and that seems to underlie some other parts of the thinking behind it. The following passage makes a logical leap with which I am uncomfortable:</p> <p>"Statements inciting hatred against identifiable groups, statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace, and statements of a personal, ad hominem nature are foreign to the intellectual exchanges that strong universities must support and protect. This is so because such statements are, at root, attempts to stifle or prevent the freedom of expression of others, to dissuade any response or discussion."</p> <p>I agree entirely with the first sentence, though judgments as to when speech enters the problematic zone described are tricky in practice. The assessment in the second sentence, however, is troublesome to me. "Such statements" often do have the effect of stifling expression and dissuading discussion, but the assumption that they are always "at root, attempts" to do so strikes me as unwarranted. I am particularly uncomfortable with this conclusion as applied to a classroom setting, in which students may be learning how to engage in intellectual arguments in unfamiliar ways. In that setting, a student may make a statement that has some of these problematic characteristics (for example, an ad hominem critique) unaware of the effects it may have and with no intention of stopping others from responding. In that "teachable moment," I would rather encourage reflection on the potential negative effects of that statement than necessarily attribute a negative motive to the speaker. I would urge that in future revisions the assumption that all harmful statements must arise from an intent to harm be dropped. Instead, we could emphasize the need to promote freedom of expression in a variety of ways, including formal and informal pedagogy.</p> <p>Finally, the nature of freedom of expression is such that it will sometimes impede the "the smoothest functioning of this scholarly community" toward which "UBC policies and practices work." Silence is smooth, argument grates. Nor do the other stated goals of "equity, diversity, and inclusion" always promote intellectual, institutional, or even emotional stability or continuity--indeed, when pursued vigorously they typically disfavour them. So I would hope that the policy and all of us who implement it recognize the disruptive nature of these rights and the costs that they entail. In particular, I look forward to a discussion of what practices within the university as an institution currently help and hinder these key rights and whether changes in practices and reallocation of resources are needed to do more.</p> |
| 113 | <p>Thanks for the effort at putting this statement together. I'll cut to the chase—I am terrified by the rise of ignorant hate speech on campuses, and I feel that Jordan Peterson's recent talk on campus</p> |



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| | <p>(https://www.ubyssey.ca/culture/Jordan-peterson-versus-everyone/) is a great edge case for you to consider when thinking through the implications of this policy. Is this statement providing useful guidance on how to engage demagogues and bullies? I don't know if it is. This really doesn't come down to what the University says... you can say what you want. It comes down to whether you back up these words with the power of the institution to call out hate speech when you see it, from the highest office, and not leave it to community members to do the work for you. Is UBC prepared to be a lightning rod for conflict from the alt-right trolls? I don't have easy answers at the ready, but as a (new) faculty member, I am really very worried by what feels like an attitude of ambivalence around me. Being polite and conflict-averse is a deeply held Canadian value, and it may well be our undoing. This statement is a good start, still feels too polite. Thanks for the opportunity to comment.</p> |
| 114 | <p>This statement seemed to support freedom of expression at first glance but there remains a troubling sentence in the 3rd to last paragraph: "Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned." The issue here is that there does not seem to be a clear definition of speech or artistic expression that "cannot be protected or condoned", while I agree that rhetoric aimed at dehumanizing certain groups is reprehensible I also worry that by defining the speech/artistic expression that cannot be protected as "expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community" is too vague. Who interprets what exactly is harmful to the proper working condition? Some opinions or arguments could be made on any number of issues that some perceive as harmful or dehumanizing to any given particular group or individual; this does not necessarily mean that these arguments or opinions are in any way inciting harm to these people - even if some may perceive it that way. This is the crux of the issue really, by assigning unprotected speech this arbitrary definition UBC leaves itself vulnerable to becoming exploited by those who would interpret this statement as a green light to stifle any speech or art that is contrary to their views. Totalitarian pathologies that consume nations do not start by promising the destruction that inevitably ensues but rather by promising protection and safety.</p> <p>As noted in the draft statement free exchange of ideas allows us to move closer to truth. In order for this to actually take place UBC needs to properly and fully protect freedom of expression by implementing a clearer definition of unprotected speech that ONLY includes speech that DIRECTLY incites violence against an individual or group of individuals.</p> |
| 115 | <p>This is amazing! To the people that took the time and effort to create this working document, thank you!</p> |
| 116 | <p>Yes, freedom of expression is crucially important not just for an academic institution, but for society as a whole. However, in order to prevent unfair discrimination we must first have a clear definition of itsomething that bill C16 has failed to do with transgender people as this piece of legislation includes very vague and ambiguous language. With the exception of hate speech, offending people with your words or opinions should not constitute discrimination. Can you imagine a place where everyone agreed on everything? I'll take a few heated yet civilized arguments over herd agreement any day: at least I might learn to appreciate a new perspective from an argument.</p> |
| 117 | <p>In general, I appreciate the readability of this document and its avoidance of too much heavy jargon or philosophical argumentation. But, several notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When quoting past president Stephen Toope, I think that the word "correctly" in the statement "correctly argued" is unnecessary. Adding that word adds additional value-judgement in a value-judgement statement that already speaks for itself. Evidently, the university through this policy is aiming to create a standpoint/platform on freedom of expression, in order to stand upon it, but this word contributes to a defensive, us-vs-you tone, creating a bipolarity of teams in this argument. Is not the entire point of this discussion to suggest almost that no one is right and at the same time, that we all are? That sentiment of willingness to engage with (almost) all sides of argumentation should flow through every word of this document. 2. Near the beginning, the subjects of i, ii and iii questions - These are beautiful questions, and things that |



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| | <p>essentially need to be discussed further especially in a Western context of education, and especially at a university that tends to unipolarity of a particular brand of "liberal." But the context leading into these points, and the follow-up after, are unclear. Are these examples of questions raised from the UBC Respectful Environment statement? Are these general questions we would like to address later? For proper understanding, I think that more contextualization of these questions is necessary if they are to be part of this statement. How might I look into/receive more information about these questions and if there is a discussion happening surrounding them? I am very interested, as the one-mindedness I have perceived in most of my classes over my 5 year degree often concerns me, mostly because I fear that positive "bandwagoning" is just as dangerous as the negative kind - for example, by stifling critical and innovative discussion.</p> <p>All in all, I am pleased with this statement! The main thesis, if you will, of the statement occurs a little late in the document, but I suppose that the main point (that freedom of expression does not trump other rights) is alluded to at the beginning.</p> <p>Thank you!</p> |
| 118 | <p>I find Freedom of Expression increasingly threatened in higher education (not only at UBC). While great advances have been accomplished to diversify the Faculty and Staff population in terms of gender, race etc -still more need to be done...-, the main problem now has become intellectual diversity. It is sad to observe how, for instance, hirings systematically respond to the same political, ideological, theoretical, personal and methodological profile. On the other hand, there is a tendency nowadays to keep students childish, protected from frustration and provoking ideas. I worked with old texts, and I have to confess myself that when I prepare classes I am starting to censor myself -for instance, including classical texts with scatological or sexual- because I do not really know whether I might offend the sanitized student we are promoting or I have institutional support to do so. I guess the decline of a culture and civilization start when it stops believing in the principles -freedom, critical thinking, provoking thought, multiperspectivism...- that shaped it. UBC and North American universities are only the reflection of this.</p> |
| 119 | <p>I have posted my current thoughts on freedom of expression at UBC here: commentariablog.wordpress.com/2017/11/11/freedom-of-expression-at-ubc/</p> |
| 120 | <p>I think this statement draft is super important in these intense times. I especially resonate with this statement: "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others." Of course I support free speech, but when it discriminates, dehumanizes or hurts others, especially marginalized folks, it needs to be shut down.</p> |
| 121 | <p>Hsh</p> |
| 122 | <p>This is a good draft statement. My one big concern though who gets to be the arbiter on whether something said has trespassed on the rights of equity, diversity and inclusion? To leave it to individual students to decide is often problematic as the very fact that people feel offended often means they already feel it has trespassed on the rights of equity, diversity and inclusion. The last one, inclusion, is especially fickle to define and police. Is saying smoking should be banned in a certain area exclusive to smokers? This may seem silly an example but consider the abstraction of it, saying "*insert group/activity* should be banned from *insert place*".</p> |
| 123 | <p>I welcome the opportunity to provide feedback and I thank the members of the working group for their efforts. In my opinion (and I am a Professor of Medicine, not of Law, Arts or Humanities), Freedom of Expression does not allow for expression (at least in the public domain) that would, on the balance of probabilities, be considered defamatory if the statement/comment was challenged in a court of law. The Common Law concept of "Fair Comment" as it is applied to the profession of journalism (ie. "freedom of the press") is probably an appropriate analogy. The concept of "Fair Comment" allows for the expression of opinion in the public domain provided the</p> |



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| | <p>opinion can be seen to be reasonable based in fact and is not made with intent of malice on a third party.</p> |
| <p>124</p> | <p>As a part of the community of scientists who are continually striving to unveil the truth about the universe, I particularly value the freedom to engage in vigorous debate with my colleagues. However, I see a very worrying trend that comes from a misguided attempt by many in the current political climate to try to avoid causing offence at all costs.</p> <p>I find that many professional bodies I belong to or conference I attend have a "code of conduct", and these generally contain many guidelines that I fully agree with. However, they often also contain very vague statements that use phrases such as "I agree not to put down another participant" or "use language that might be considered offensive" or "not antagonize anyone". The problem is that these are entirely subjective and have the potential to stifle debate. I don't believe it should be the case that if someone feels offended or put down, then that necessarily means that the behaviour should be sanctioned. Some people may be offended by any attempt to debate with them publicly, irrespective of whether the comments were purely scientific and not meant to attack them personally.</p> <p>This is the particular aspect of freedom of expression that I see being eroded right now.</p> |
| <p>125</p> | <p>UBC has been faced with serious issues of late regarding infringements of faculty academic freedom. The situation became so dire that a special senior advisor to the provost, Neil Guppy (Professor, Sociology) was appointed in 2016.</p> <p>The events leading up to Dr. Guppy's appointment have been well documented elsewhere. By way of summary they began with the infringement of the academic freedom of business faculty professor, Jennifer Berdahl, by members of the UBC administration and Board of Governors. This led to an independent study by the Honourable Lynn Smith, Q.C. and the subsequent resignation of John Montalbano, the former Chair of the UBC Board of Governors.</p> <p>Since appointment Dr Guppy has been making presentations on academic freedom. Most recently he presented at the UBC Faculty Association Annual Fall Meeting. Observations on the presentation have been posted by one faculty member in attendance. Part of Dr. Guppy's presentation has included a background paper on the history of academic freedom issues at UBC. The origin of the current language on academic freedom at UBC is dated, by Dr. Guppy, to a particular event in the late 1970s that involved the attempted disruption of an on campus speaking engagement.</p> <p>In the briefing paper Dr. Guppy focusses on the irony of the named speaker being called racist and fascist while he was in fact a law and order reformer. Dr. Guppy does not elaborate upon the matter but instead focusses on the fact a Senate committee was set up to make recommendations to the President. Left unsaid was the fallout whereby a member of the university community (Alan Soroka, a law librarian at the time) was first threatened with being fired and then faced a lesser form of discipline.</p> <p>Rather than simply being an issue about the academic freedom of a politician from a regime operating in a manner contrary to human rights provisions this moment in UBC's history also is about the rights of faculty and staff working at UBC to engage in acts of public protest and dissent.</p> <p>UBC's initial response was to discipline Soroka and used the discourse of academic freedom to do that. That is, President Kenny wrote a letter of discipline implying that Soroka's employment was in question. Kenny's letter to Soroka followed the receipt of letters from the University Librarian and the Dean of Arts, both who argued that Soroka had violated Swartz's academic freedom. Neither academic administrator considered that there may be a counterbalancing issue of academic freedom. For the administration the issue of academic freedom went only one direction - the right of a formal speaker to speak. There was no consideration of the right of a dissenting voice to actively protest.</p> |



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| | <p>This is not simply an historical quibble. Across North American and Western European campuses we see a resurgence of these kinds of conflicts. On campus groups invite speakers known for inflammatory rhetoric, questionable science, or just provocative enough to get a rise out of somebody. And somebody does get their back up. Protests are organized and a speaker here or there is disrupted.</p> <p>The idea that all speech is equally valued and has a right to exist within a university is problematic at best. That has never really been the case; it is unlikely that it ever will. Universities, according to the late Bill Reading (The University in Ruins) used be about managing national culture and through that mandate silenced dissenting faculty. The modern university of excellence, says Readings, has shifted somewhat and has paid less attention to the content of faculty research but have paid attention to faculty criticisms of the administration. Today's faculty member might not face sanction over published work, but they will be targeted for speaking out against the actions of their university administration or donors or business supporters. The fact is that the narrow domain of 'within the law' forms of Academic Freedom is that it allows problematic types of research while silencing political dissent critical of how the university operates.</p> <p>Academic Freedom is in reality a small 'c' conservative policy. As it exists at UBC it is framed within the context of what is permissible under Canadian law.</p> <p>"Central among these rights is the freedom, within the law, to pursue what seems to them as fruitful avenues of inquiry, to teach and to learn unhindered by external or non-academic constraints, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion." [emphasis added]</p> <p>It is driven by an ideology of liberal individualism that prioritizes (with modest limits) the right of an individual. All of this makes the doctrine of academic freedom of limited utility for those who try to use it to critique dominant political systems, university administrators, or to advocate for progressive social change. It also would not protect a member of the university community from engaging in civil disobedience or even in acts of protest. We need a more aggressive, progressive approach that safeguards university faculty who have the courage of their convictions to stand up to administrators who pander to corporate interests.</p> |
| 126 | <p>To see my submitted comments with full graphic imagery please go to: http://charlesmenzies.blogspot.ca/2017/09/academic-freedom-at-ubc.html</p> |
| 127 | <p>I have recently felt troubled by a seemingly unchecked swinging of the pendulum regarding policies of sexual harassment and the use of gender neutral pronouns. I am a fierce feminist and abhor discrimination based on sex, but policies that oblige the use of language in complex situations when discrimination (by security) is necessary is problematic. As is the idea that students drinking any amount of alcohol will no longer be qualified to give consent to another student, is bothersome. I applaud the intention of these policies, but am weary of who will be policing them, and this worry of future ramifications is why I write this. I hope and pray for a safe, loving and inclusive campus, please ensure unbiased individuals are at the forefront.</p> |
| 128 | <p>I am encouraged by the working group's strong statement in support of freedom of expression. However, I am concerned about language toward the end of the statement which strikes me as unnecessarily broad, and which could possibly be used to justify restrictions on academically legitimate expression.</p> <p>I agree that freedom of expression does not trump all other rights, and that expression used as a weapon against specific individuals or groups can (and should) be regulated by university polices. My concern is with the second-to-last paragraph of the statement, which includes the following two sentences: "Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." Whether intentionally or not, the juxtaposition of these two sentences seems to suggest that expression challenging the values of "equity, diversity, and inclusion" may be restricted by the university.</p> |



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| | <p>The concepts of "equity," "diversity," and "inclusion" are very broad. They are also susceptible to different interpretations by different individuals. As important as these values are, they are too expansive to be held immune to intellectual scrutiny. To give an example, I can think of a wide range of legitimate (and even innocuous) academic expression that might be considered inconsistent with subjective understandings of the term "equity." By seeming to tie the boundaries of free expression to the values of "equity, diversity, and inclusion," I fear the statement may call into question the expression of defensible ideas.</p> <p>I cannot tell whether the working group meant to suggest that expression challenging or questioning the values of "equity, diversity, and inclusion" should be restricted by the university, or merely that forms of expression actively undermining those value should be restricted. Nor do I fully understand the policy implications (if any) of the statement. In any case, I think the language of the second-to-last paragraph is ambiguous, overly broad, and could possibly chill legitimate expression. I would suggest the working group revise the language of the paragraph to make clear that only expression that actually threatens members of the university community or stifles intellectual exchange is subject to restriction by university polices.</p> |
| 129 | <p>Dear UBC Freedom of Expression Working group,</p> <p>Thank you for your work in ensuring our campuses are a place for dialogue on stimulating and challenging topics. I too believe in a campus where there is opportunity for the diverse values and opinions of our student body to be expressed. In your work on this area, I would love to see more leadership surrounding campus content that verges into the territory of argumentum ad hominem. The yearly Aboriginal Awareness project is one example of a potentially rich area for discussion that has been construed in a way to shock, shame and potentially mislead the student body. In this case, the selective graphic imagery (mutilated bloody fetuses) and language ("stop the killing" , "the insanity of choice") used in the demonstration has been chosen to according to the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform, "to tear away the flimsy facade of "choice" and reveal what is being chosen: the decapitation, dismemberment, and disembowelment of an innocent pre-born child". These inflammatory statements do not create an environment for engaging in respectful dialogue on this delicate and multi-faceted topic. Providing forums that encourage a diversity of viewpoints to be expressed, according to respectful and factual information from both sides, would, I believe, make more positive and constructive contributions to the university community and better equip students to make their own informed choices.</p> |
| 130 | <p>Finding a balance between conflicting concepts is a tricky process. Freedom of speech is juxtaposed against "speech or artistic expression that ... [uses] hate to dehumanize certain groups"; rightly [from my perspective], this is "speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned." Hopefully, not many would object to banning hateful speech, but the problem arises in the operational definition. The general approach we as society [including legally] have taken is to give the definition to the person who perceives the speech as hateful, but this can be problematical when all levels of slights are defined as hateful. From my perspective, many examples of so-call micro-aggressions have gained acceptance because of this willingness to let the "victim/target" define the experience as "hateful" as opposed to some less loaded version of aversive.</p> |
| 131 | <p>This is good work and I think the committee for the thoughtfulness and the principled approach taken. I tried to review it from the perspective of those angry and fearful citizens (whose presence is prominent now) who would not immediately entertain the confidence that the university was relevant to their lives. They may not read this with an openness to engage. I am not sure that anything is likely to help this but wonder about the utility of a small change that might amplify/clarify the elegantly made point you make that everyone gains from clarity and respect. Thus perhaps a brief lead in sentence to the third last paragraph about words as weapons to this effect: "Words are powerful, and like most powerful things, they can be used as either tools or weapons. As tools used respectfully, they can advance everyone's health and existence on our shared Planet. As weapons they can destroy our future and that of subsequent generations. Words can be used as weapons....."</p> <p>Another issue to consider might be a paragraph on the nature of our social accountability. In medical education this</p> |



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| | <p>term has great currency, has been defined in a global consensus <www.healthsocialaccountability.org> and was the focus of a World Summit in Tunisia in April of this year. ... But it may not have currency in the academic community beyond medicine so I leave it to your good judgment as to its utility here.</p> <p>Thank you for all of your work!</p> |
| 132 | <p>I am disappointed that my alma mater has seen fit to release this draft statement. As Margaret Wentse so aptly puts it in this morning's Globe and Mail, this statement is made up mostly of "hopeless, incoherent mishmash". It is difficult for me to believe that university culture could have changed so much for the worse since I left UBC 25+ years ago.</p> <p>Do the right thing: shelve this draft statement and start over. Be courageous, UBC: defend free speech. Period.</p> |
| 133 | <p>I cannot disagree with anything presented in this statement. It covers a lot. Too much. Words are not weapons. They are vehicles to understanding others and being understood. When they are suppressed, they leak out in harmful and reactive ways, creating the toxic environments you intend to avoid. I imagine that everyone in the UBC working group is kind of happy and kind of unhappy. How will this statement be used? Will it become policy? Because its interpretations are endless and dangerous. Boil it down. Then boil it down some more. Then leave it on the burner overnight.</p> |
| 134 | <p>I was impressed by UBC's apparent approach to free speech and reasoned debate, focussed on issues and not on ad hominem attacks, until the last major paragraph, in which you clearly state that the previous paragraphs count for nothing. The words "In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion" will open the door to suppression of civilized argument espousing views that some individuals or groups consider obnoxious. I hope you will delete the last paragraph, which is at odds with virtually every point made in the rest of the document.</p> |
| 135 | <p>I applaud the Committee on developing this statement. I have two suggestions for revisions:</p> <p>(1) "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others." - This statement is not as clear and nuanced as the rest of the document. The term "wellbeing" is vague and general, open to many interpretations (e.g. including one being offended or distressed due to encountering ideas they strongly disagree with or even find repugnant) that are not consistent with the rest of the statement, which, I consider strikes the right balance. For that reason, I'd recommend removing it. The main concepts it is seeking to address are better dealt with elsewhere in the draft.</p> <p>(2) "Second, our scholarly community is composed of people with diverse histories and cultural viewpoints while also encompassing a wide array of disciplinary perspectives." This statement is under-inclusive in terms of the diverse viewpoints reflected on campus. Why limit it to history or culture? I'd recommend the following wording to reflect the full range of diversity that animates freedom of expression: "Second, our scholarly community is composed of people with diverse viewpoints while also encompassing a wide array of disciplinary perspectives."</p> <p>Finally, I'm surprised no one from Allard Law was part of this group. There's a wealth of insights and views that constitutional law and international human rights law provides on the topic. But, as I say, this is a very good statement.</p> |
| 136 | <p>A fairly tepid defence of freedom of expression, with two serious flaws:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Words are not weapons; weapons are weapons. The distinction between words and violence matters. When white supremacists shout anti-semitic and racist slogans in Charlottesville, it makes a big difference if they are |



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| | <p>carrying firearms with them when they protest.</p> <p>2. Saying, "Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights," presents a false dichotomy. Freedom of expression is the fundamental freedom through which all other civil rights are realized and preserved. Those who sacrifice freedom of expression for equality will have neither.</p> |
| 137 | <p>Dear Santa,</p> <p>This policy has the correct focus. Neil Guppy et al are to be commended. Academic freedom would not be interesting unless its exercise makes some groups unhappy. Vigorous discussion can be troubling to some when people state their case in strong language but such vigorous discussion needs to be protected at UBC. There are Canadian laws about harassment to deal with egregious actions. I am not a fan of the UBC statement on respectful environment because it did not acknowledge enough the tenets of academic freedom nor indeed the value of making people uncomfortable. I did speak against it at Senate. I myself do attempt to behave in a respectful way but appreciate the usefulness of open and frank discussion.</p> |
| 138 | <p>While I think that freedom of expression is important, the right to speak one's mind should be limited to areas in which they are "experts" (i.e. area of research) or be linked in some way. For example, academic freedom should prevent a microbiologist from publicly providing their opinion on the ethics of the war in a particular location as it is not their academic right to do so. Persons providing their opinion should have some evidence to back up their opinion or expression. If we do not follow such a limitation, we run the risk of allowing academics to speak their private opinions as representatives of the UBC community. They should be held to the same standard as the average person.</p> <p>Additionally, safety and security should always trump freedom of expression. However, I think that this sentiment is well covered in the document.</p> |
| 139 | <p>Hi there,</p> <p>UBC Graduate student here, and lately, I've been really intrigued by this freedom of expression debate at universities. Unfortunately, I'm not sure if this draft hits the mark in solving the problem.</p> <p>I usually disagree with Margaret Wentz from G&M, but I agree with her sentiments here: https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/whats-so-scary-about-free-speech-on-campus/article36948480/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&. This article too by Deborah Soh https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/we-need-to-protect-free-speech-on-campus/article35476933/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&</p> <p>We need to prioritize freedom of speech above all. Respect and diversity are important, but this draft doesn't address how the institution would deal with a situation where when then conflict. What is the actual mechanism? For example, the whole Jordan Peterson debate (pronouns and freedom of expression) would this be allowed at UBC? I hope so, because not everyone agrees or accepts what's being proposed, 20-30 different pronouns, and forced language. UBC must rally against "safe spaces." UBC and university is here for learning and being challenged, and diverse voices should be blocked because they disagree with other group's beliefs.</p> |
| 140 | <p>I am writing as a member of the wider community of alumni and friends of UBC. (I graduated with a BA (hons.) in philosophy in 1971 and went on to do a PhD in philosophy at the University of Colorado.)</p> <p>The draft statement seems to reflect all the qualities of a document drafted by committee. I don't like it because I think it's dangerous. It combines nostrums about the university and the university community with lofty statements about freedom of expression as the bedrock principle underpinning the university mission, with – and this is what's pernicious – statements that essentially take back the principle by putting it on the same plane as what are described as "the equality rights of equity, diversity and inclusion". Where did these rights come from?</p> |



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| | <p>They are not found in the Charter or the law; they are social policy values or objectives. (And, not that it matters, they are objectives with which I largely agree.)</p> <p>A university is most certainly not a place where a social mission – or particular social values – should determine the extent to which a person may exercise his or her right to freedom of expression. Constraints on that fundamental right (and they are relatively few) can be found in Canadian law governing things such as hate speech. But to say, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Freedom of expression rests on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community”, or ▪ “Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned”, or ▪ “freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion” <p>is basically to make freedom of expression a contingent right. It is to offer a weapon to those who would stifle the expression of views which they might claim offend them or threaten their “safe space”. A threat is a threat, to be dealt with by the police. Views that are merely unpopular or unfashionable or even unfounded cannot be regarded within the university as a threat. There are many ways to deal with them, both in the university community and in the broader society. Any other approach makes a mockery of academic freedom and the privileges attached thereto.</p> <p>UBC is right to address this issue today, because it is one that matters not just to faculty, students and staff but because it is of great concern to alumni and to everyone who cares about the values (and the quality) of what we all had thought was a great institution. The challenge for the entire university is to live up to what the statement describes as “our deep and abiding commitment to freedom of expression”. Let’s see that commitment in action.</p> |
| 141 | <p>Dear Professor Santa J. Ono,</p> <p>Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on this development. I have produced a set of comments on the UBC Freedom of Expression Statement Draft. They are pdf formatted and located on my web site at http://www.martinshub.org/Academic/Freedom/Freedom%20of%20Expression%20Statement%20UBC_comments_MS.pdf</p> <p>I also created an alternative statement on Freedom of Expression, and I submit it too. It is located at http://www.martinshub.org/Academic/Freedom/Freedom%20of%20Expression%20Statement%20UBC_Alternative_Version.pdf.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> |
| 142 | <p>> How can we safeguard the lessons of the past if objectionable parts of the historical record are suppressed?</p> <p>> How can we create significant breakthroughs if entire lines of inquiry are forbidden?</p> <p>> How can we equip students to tackle future challenges, if they are shielded from demanding, provocative thought?</p> <p>I do not have a particular comment, but I am thankful that the university is approaching this topic. It has become quite controversial lately and it is nice to see that debate around this topic is welcomed.</p> |
| 143 | <p>I think the Globe and Mail is correct in its critique of the UBC Freedom of Expression draft (URL below). The list of</p> |



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| | <p>other "rights" that freedom-of-speech does not trump is far too open to politics and pressure. The named "equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion" are far too vague; and "diversity" and "inclusion" have become clichéd, even weaponized -- their definition determined by those wielding power rather than principle. I urge another draft.</p> <p>https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/globe-editorial-why-an-unabashed-embrace-of-free-speech-is-the-best-option-for-our-universities/article36950250/?utm_source=Academica+Top+Ten&utm_campaign=f97693e25c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_14&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b4928536cf-f97693e25c-47751401</p> |
| 144 | <p>In my mind, this statement is far too long, and it would benefit from being tightened up. Please use "plain language" throughout (e.g., no Latin). Why quote a previous UBC President, or if you do, why not allow his quote to speak for itself, rather than declaring his argument to be correct? Do another round of edits for grammar (e.g., "know no bounds" and "equal rights" are better?) and maybe include a little more punctuation! I suggest leaving out the example (i.e., reconciliation), since freedom of expression can be abused in so many ways/contexts, and that particular one seems no more or less important than many others that could have been mentioned. That's my two cents worth!</p> |
| 145 | <p>When we, as an educational institution, support all groups and individuals under Freedom of Expression, how can we ensure that academic integrity is upheld? If students are held to a high standard of academic integrity such as empirical reasoning and importance of not promoting misinformation, how does that standard apply to groups or organizations that promote false or misinformation on UBC campuses but refer to that information as educational material and/or knowledge?</p> |
| 146 | <p>This is a thoughtful statement that engages deeply with a difficult problem for universities. As a feminist legal scholar, I have advocated in my own work for a more nuanced understanding of freedom of expression that takes into account the ways that historic inequalities do not put us on the same footing in terms of our ability to speak. Recently, however, I have become very concerned about claims made by some people who consider themselves members or allies of marginalized groups that speech that they disagree with is "hateful" or "violent". These terms have been wielded to "no-platform" speakers who, for example, argue that men's purchase of sex in prostitution is a practice of sex inequality, or that self-identification as female is not always the appropriate measure for determining who can access women-only spaces. These ideas are not promoting hate or violence, and people should be allowed to discuss them, thoughtfully, in the classroom or in public lectures on campus. Some of those who wish to discuss these ideas are themselves members of historically disadvantaged groups. I hope that the University will not fall into the trap of defining "safety" in such a way that we cannot have these discussions without fear of discipline or related consequences. I am nervous even writing them in response to this call for input. Thank you for taking the time to read these comments.</p> |
| 147 | <p>I have trouble accepting the statement below (directly cut and pasted from the above text): "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or well-being of others." I do believe that a 'person's freedom' is reasonably definable and likely universal. A 'person's well-being' is defined by whom? Can I as an individual stop all expressions by others in simply stating that it threatens my well-being? This would make it a ready weapon of suppression. I support that UBC accepts the Chicago rules about how the discomfort we all have to accept in a university to allow expression of opinion to happen.</p> |
| 148 | <p>The greatest threat that the academy faces today is the suppression of speech and even thought that some people feel justified in suppressing even by violence where the speech involves what you have described as "challenging ideas, ideas that question [one's] deeply held beliefs, ideas that [one] might find noxious or offensive." Too many universities today have acquiesced in this trend, as administrations have manifested cowardice toward it. Shutting people up or preventing them from speaking even after an invitation has been extended by the university is unacceptable. The toleration of such behaviour can lead to a society that is essentially totalitarian and certainly not</p> |



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| | <p>what we have come to understand as democratic.</p> <p>The statement that "[f]reedom of expression does not trump all other rights" and that "[i]n the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion" is a bit troubling. There is inherent in this statement the notion that freedom of expression is limited when it collides with "the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." Freedom of expression does not collide with those rights; it fosters them. If you think these things do collide, when do they and what is to be done about it? Freedom of speech is about nothing more and nothing less than seeking the truth. Truth-seeking and "the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion" are not antithetical and the latter ought never to have to give way to the latter for that very reason.</p> |
| <p>149</p> | <p>Thank you to the committee for this thoughtful statement that seeks to balance free expression and the conditions that enable a university to support and protect free inquiry. I do find the statement weaker than it should be in its defence of free expression. I would much prefer a statement that is direct and unequivocal, even as it affirms the respect for persons necessary for free inquiry to have space to thrive. As it is, the statement leaves much doubt about (a) the limits of free expression, and (b) the enforcement of limits to free expression. The result, I'm afraid, will be to reinforce the chilling effect on free inquiry that tends to result from ambiguity in both rules and enforcement-- and this kind of atmosphere should not be supported, even tacitly and indirectly, by university policy. I would direct the committee's attention to the clear, unequivocal, and thoughtful statements on freedom of expression issued by the University of Chicago. As an aside, I don't think it makes any difference that UBC is in Canada rather than the US, or is public rather than private. The conditions for free expression necessary for a great university are the same everywhere.</p> |
| <p>150</p> | <p>Let me make three observations on the draft statement on freedom of expression.</p> <p>1. The statement is predicated on the assumption that the world is a dangerous, turbulent, and potentially violent place. (See the opening sentence for one example, and the 6th paragraph for another.) First, this assumption is quite false: As any student of International Relations could have informed you the incidence of war is at or near a historical low (see https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace/). Much could be said about the rate of violent crime in Canada and indeed throughout the developed world. The world is as safe a place as it has ever been if not safer. Second, one can speculate that this (false) assumption is rhetorical device that is used to create the impression that we live in such a precarious world that an errant word or speech might well spark social conflict. The further implication is that speech must be carefully monitored and controlled lest it lead to conflict, turbulence, etc.</p> <p>2. The statement declares that "Words can be used as weapons..." What does this phrase mean? Assume X openly castigates Y at a faculty meeting, asserts that Y is lazy for having not published in several years; Y feels humiliated, that X has (to borrow the statement's terminology) stained Y's reputation. Now assume that later that day that Z attacks Y with a screwdriver and injures Y so seriously that Y has to be hospitalized. Am I to take the statement's claim that "Words can be used as weapons..." to imply that X's utterance against Y is -- in the committee's view -- commensurable with Z's physical attack on Y and ought therefore to be treated as such? It strikes me that in drawing this highly charged analogy, the committee makes another implicit argument for the regulation and control of speech in the university. After all, that is what the state does with weapons: it carefully regulates and controls them, does it not?</p> <p>3. The statement contends that freedom of expression coexists and must be balanced against other rights, such as, "the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." What exactly is an "equality right of diversity"? Is this (to borrow Isiah Berlin's terminology) a negative "freedom from" homogeneity (I guess) or is it a positive "freedom to" diversity? This is material to the discussion of freedom of expression in this sense: Assume Prof. X gives a class in which she lecture on theoretical perspective Y and only on Y (which is perhaps her area of expertise). Now has X violated her students' "equality right to diversity"? Ought we to compel X to teach other theoretical perspectives,</p> |



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| | <p>e.g., creationism in a class on evolutionary biology? I worry very much that the committee has in mind that a positive right to diversity, i.e., that it is the university's obligation to provide certain actors with diversity. But this is a dangerous path as Berlin noted because to effect a positive right invariably requires that we impose constraints on one actor as part and parcel of delivering that right to another. But perhaps (and hopefully) I read too much into this phrase, and it is simply harmless nonsense.</p> <p>It is clear that I take a jaded of view of the draft statement.</p> |
| 151 | <p>From the Statement: "Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights."</p> <p>It may not trump all other rights, but it certainly trumps all other claims on expression. If it doesn't, it is not freedom of expression. And please, please don't resort to talking about fires in theatres...hurting someone's feelings is not that.</p> |
| 152 | <p>So, if we can believe your rambling statement, you really do believe in freedom of speech -- unless, of course, it upsets someone. Then, you don't like it so much any more, and want to ditch it . . . in favor of political correctness and the alleged "rights" of diversity and inclusion.</p> <p>The problem is this: Freedom of speech invariably does upset people. So does critical thinking. They are, by definition, unsettling.</p> <p>So you have a decision to make. Do you want to be in the freedom-of-speech business or the soothing-of-hurt-feelings business?</p> <p>If it's the latter, I'd strongly suggest you turn yourself into a giant psychotherapy centre designed to keep everybody calm and well-sedated.</p> <p>But if you want to remain a university, please show some spine and issue a brief, crisply-worded statement noting that, without the strongest possible commitment to freedom of speech, there is absolutely no point in your existence.</p> <p>You might want to add that anybody who's upset by this is free to leave UBC for a higher-education experience in North Korea or other totalitarian state.</p> |
| 153 | <p>The policy statement above is chilling. It is ambiguous, equivocating craven and dismally written. Has UBC fallen this far?</p> <p>Free speech is not easy; there is a cost; it will offend. Show some intellectual courage!</p> <p>Free speech does not "rest on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community." How could a collection of serious scholars say such an insular, ignorant thing? Free speech is more important than UBC or any university.</p> <p>"UBC policies and practices work to promote the smoothest functioning of this scholarly community." You can't mean this, you can't. When has intellectual progress ever thrived on smoothness. Intellectual progress feeds provocation, challenge, passion not "smoothness. Has UBC so lost its intellectual energy that "smoothnes" its mantra.</p> <p>I was a prof at UofT for many years and, till the last while, proud to have been part of the university community. Not so much anymore.</p> |
| 154 | <p>"Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or</p> |



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| | <p>condoned."</p> <p>This is the key clause in this statement. Depending on the interpretation, it can mean very strong or very weak speech protections. Hence, without further detail on what counts as "harm[ing] the proper working conditions of the academic community", this statement is essentially meaningless. Who will do the interpreting? Can you give examples of speech on either side of the threshold for protection? What is the formal procedure for determining which speech is protected and which is not?</p> |
| 155 | <p>As a document, I like the Draft Freedom of Expression Statement ("the Statement"); how could any reasonable person disagree with its core message of promoting free speech on a range of issues while safeguarding the rights of individuals or groups who may feel slighted by such speech? But, therein lies the rub: it is a very delicate balance to strike, promoting free expression and fulsome exchange of ideas while simultaneously protecting the rights of those who may think they are targeted, threatened or harmed by such ideas.</p> <p>While I like and support the Statement, I am concerned with how we, as a University community, will implement it. How will we define acceptable versus unacceptable speech? Notions of acceptability should absolutely NOT depend on whether the majority of the community feels comfortable, or agrees with, the ideas being espoused. In fact, leaders in the University community should defend the right to speak of those who espouse uncomfortable, controversial or contentious points of view, as long as such speech does not incite "...hatred against identifiable groups...", "...incite breaches of the peace..." or attack individuals in "...a personal, ad hominem nature...". We cannot allow those who take issue with a particular message to stifle debate for no other reason than they feel uncomfortable or disagree with the message. To the contrary, the essence of free speech (and of democracy) is to protect the rights of people we do not like, and with whom we disagree, to speak freely nonetheless.</p> <p>As far as defining acceptable versus unacceptable speech goes, I recommend the University be as cautious as possible before branding particular ideas or speakers unacceptable. I think there needs to be some fairly compelling evidence that a message or a speaker is truly harmful before we, as a community, try to abrogate his or her right to speak freely. For example, having a group of students identify a particular message as offensive (which happens fairly frequently) does not necessarily make such a message dangerous to them or to the broader University community; when the group demands that the speaker be silenced or censored in some form, I think the University must tread very carefully before acceding to demands which may run counter to the concept of freedom of expression.</p> <p>Who will be the arbiters of acceptable versus unacceptable speech I do not know, but I encourage the University think long and hard about this. Unfortunately, recent experience suggests that decision-makers have been influenced more by complainers than by the principle of protecting freedom of expression. One need look no further than the past year to find evidence of poor decisions having been made regarding free speech, apparently on the basis of appeasing people feeling aggrieved by the speaker. (I'm thinking of the decision to disinvite Mr. John Furlong to speak at a UBC function, fortunately reversed, and the minor witch hunt aimed at undergraduate student Franz Kurtzke. In both these cases University administrators made what I consider poor decisions based on the vocal clamoring of a small number of people; administrators seemed more invested in mollifying complainers than upholding fundamental freedom of expression.)</p> <p>I commend the University for having the courage to craft a Freedom of Expression Statement which, as written, is balanced and fair. How it is interpreted and enforced will determine whether it acts as a protector of free speech,</p> |



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| | or whether it is used as a cudgel to bully to those whose views disagree with the majority. |
| 156 | The devil is in the details. I doubt any hard and fast rules can be made on freedom of expression. Someone will have to make a decision based on the context. It is all relative. On the other hand, universities should stand by the "truth" and wherever possible, prevent any appearance of support to those who propagate information that has been shown by research or reason to be false. An example would be prohibiting a Holocaust denier from speaking on campus. Sometimes the truth can "hurt" and make some people feel excluded thereby potentially infringing on "equality rights". For example, a reasoned argument supporting the theory of evolution may offend a devout fundamentalist Christian. Look at the reaction to the recent speech by our Governor General to a group of scientists as a further example. Hopefully the "truth" here would trump the "equality rights" of such a person if a complaint was brought forward. |
| 157 | I am very disturbed by this committee's creation and the document it has seen fit to produce. Academic freedom in the context of Western society has, or should be, well understood by anyone literate enough to attend, research or teach at a university. We have managed for 100 years to survive without rules about speech as have many more august institutions. This document appears to regulate speech - who can say what, to whom. That is a tragic mistake. At any point in time there are groups which are in favour or disfavour. The shifting sands of time reveal that we can't say absolutely who is wrong or right. The notion of hiding speech because it might constitute a weapon against another group is itself deeply offensive to me. We are all capable of speaking up and against ideas which are contrary to the notion of Western democracy. We do not need a speech police at UBC. The document you have produced will simply ensure there is a speech police, with all the attendant attempts to stifle and silence those who speak out about controversial matters. Canada has a hate speech law and we do not need any further documentation. We do not need to import the hystronic speech policing debates which are occurring in the United States. Let us stand true to the principles of discovery and inquisition. Please abandon this idea which is inimical and antithetical to the very purpose of our research university. A code to govern speech is deeply offensive to me as it should be to any person seriously concerned with the free exchange of ideas, period. The price of free speech is always worth paying. |
| 158 | If the speech is legal within the law then it should be allowed on campus. |
| 159 | <p>This statement identifies many very crucial elements of freedom of expression, and does a good job laying out the importance having this issue discussed. Freedom of expression is of course vital to the function of the University and should not be restricted without good reason, and UBC has generally done a good job of ensuring this.</p> <p>What is lacking from this statement is further clarification on the interaction of harassment and respectful environment statement and freedom of expression. The rights of the UBC community to be harassment free is extremely important and should be laid out and justified extensively. There are many member of the community currently who argue against this point, and thus it is important for this interaction to be well laid out with appropriate justification so as to prevent calls for unlimited freedom of expression, even when it interferes with a respectful environment. Harassment should never be acceptable at UBC, and we should be very clear in communicating this fact.</p> |
| 160 | <p>It is a 100% right thing for UBC to highlight the importance of freedom of expression. The reason I choose not to study social science discipline in China or Singapore is that government censorship (and consequently self-censorship from teachers and students) exists. Western universities are feeling the treat as well. Let me point out a real example.</p> <p>I want to make clear that I am not trying to create a negative image for Chinese students. Chinese students have</p> |



as many good qualities as any other students from elsewhere. I gave this example only because I am an educator working in China and this was a real case my students and I researched on.

Last year a student from China who made a commencement speech in University of Maryland praising the freedom of speech in the U.S. was widely criticized by her fellow Chinese both in and outside of China because she made some comparison and insinuation of China's situation. She had to make a public apology and chose to withdrew from social media. Please watch the video of the speech and make your own judgment.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/world/asia/chinese-student-fresh-air-yang-shuping.html>

I spent 3 hours discussing this video and relevant reactions from netizens with my students in China. Both my students and I found it was a meaningful analysis and reflection. I believe my students and myself benefit from the discussion more than just abstractly mention the principle of freedom of speech and how to respect others' different opinions. One conclusion we drew was that freedom of speech is threatened more nowadays because of the use of social media.

In this respect, I highly welcome that UBC is making effort to spell out why we should take the freedom of expression seriously. Moreover, I think UBC should not only explain the rationale. Detailed description and boundaries of free speech should be spelt out clearly, as explicitly as possible, though it is difficult task. Maybe it is a good starting point for the students to discuss what should be allowed and what should not be allowed. Only through discussion of specific matters, our understanding of the matter can be more and more clear and synchronized.

Also I think teachers and staff should emphasize and explain principles of free speech to students more often. For students from liberal democratic countries, freedom of speech is taken for granted. But for those who are from countries where freedom of speech is oppressed, this concept may seems abstract and remote. Canadian universities like UBC should not be shy to say that freedom of speech is a unique value cherished by democratic countries. This is UBC's true character that matters the most.

161 Dear members of the working group and Professor Ono: thank you for your work on this issue. It is appreciated. I have several comments concerning this draft. (1) "...statements judged likely to incite breaches of the peace...". First, the word "likely" is much too subjective. Second, recent events, and public opinion surveys, have demonstrated that many individuals are comfortable with the idea of rioting or shouting down speakers (including teachers) with whom they disagree. I can think of several occasions where university authorities have stated that, while they were essentially in favor of free speech, they couldn't guarantee safety at certain events which were then cancelled due to "security" reasons. This is a shallow, cowardly way to shirk the responsibilities of universities to promote free speech. Statements directly encouraging others to "breach the peace" should have no place at an institution like UBC, but given the proclivity of some to respond to the publicly espoused ideas of others' with rioting, insults, and the like, I believe that the draft statement above should be tightened up on this point. (2) "Words can be used as weapons...". True. Perjury, libel, defamation: these are all things that may be prosecuted in court. Hurt or offended feelings? People may use their words to either deliberately or accidentally do these things to others. But we cannot tell people that they have freedom of speech (or expression) only if they use this freedom for UBC-approved activities. Hateful or hurtful speech must be opposed vigorously with our words, not forbidden and driven underground or to more extreme behavior(s). [I believe the ultimately useless fervor with which the Weimer Republic of the 1930s pursued hate speech laws supports my position on this]. (3) "...including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion". What does this even mean? What are these "rights of equity" if not the freedom of expression? How is diversity an equity right: these words pretty much mean opposing things! I would suggest that this sentence should be re-written or the last two (of this paragraph) be eliminated entirely.



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| | <p>My thanks again for your work on this issue.</p> |
| 162 | <p>I can see the thought and effort that has been put into crafting this draft, and I appreciate it, especially given that it is so important that the university adopt a principled position with respect to freedom of speech. In that spirit I have written what I hope is constructive criticism. Thank you.</p> <p>Paragraph 2: "One person's freedom of expression cannot be allowed to trample the freedom or wellbeing of others."</p> <p>The boundary conditions of this statement should be given. When stated unqualifiedly, and more specifically without boundary conditions, it is a priori incorrect. Any freedom, to be a freedom at all, must be respected even if it negatively impacts the freedom or well-being of others. If an act is certainly secret, e.g., silent thoughts, then it does not admit to legal freedom or legal unfreedom, as the law cannot regulate it. If an act is not certainly secret, then there is a possibility that other persons will find out about it, and therefore that it will impact them, in a manner outside of their own control, and therefore impinge on their freedom and well-being. It is therefore necessary to establish boundary conditions on freedoms, e.g., Mill's Harm Principle, in order to address the tension between the freedoms and well-being of different persons.</p> <p>Paragraph 9: "Words can be used as weapons, aimed deliberately in pejorative ways to taint or stain the reputations and authority of others. Deliberate attempts to create a toxic environment must remain anathema to the practices of the university community. Freedom of expression rests on the potential of making positive, constructive contributions to the university community. Speech or artistic expression that harms the proper working conditions of the academic community, by for example using hate to dehumanize certain groups, is speech and expression that cannot be protected or condoned."</p> <p>I am uncomfortable with this paragraph. There are levels of qualitatively different response that the university could apply in response to harmful expression. These could be, roughly in order of least extreme to most extreme: indicating that the speaker does not represent the views of the university, using moral suasion to communicate that the university discourages that viewpoint or expression, refusing to allow that speaker on campus, and suing or seeking the prosecution of the speaker. It is not clear what level of response, to what kind of statement, this paragraph would endorse. I agree that the university can, and should, apply moral suasion against certain speech. And I agree that this includes ways of speaking that lower the quality of discourse, including ad hominem attacks. But this paragraph is ambiguous enough that it could be interpreted to mean that the university should use more extreme means, against any speech, in any context, so long as it is considered harmful. Such an interpretation would undermine the freedom of debate that much of this statement seeks to defend.</p> <p>The phrase "toxic environment" is also ambiguous. It presumably has a much broader definition than legal definitions of harassment or of discrimination, and this opens up the paragraph to extremely extensive interpretation of harmful speech.</p> <p>Paragraph 10: "UBC policies and practices work to promote the smoothest functioning of this scholarly community. From our academic freedom declaration, to our statement on a respectful environment, to our policies on harassment and discrimination, there are in place mechanisms intended to ensure that freedom of expression flourishes at UBC. Most fundamentally those policies and practices recognize the importance of freedom of expression, but they do so in the context of everyone's fundamental right to equality. Freedom of expression does not trump all other rights. In the university community freedom of expression can only thrive constructively when accompanied by other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion."</p> <p>I do not understand the meaning of "in the context of everyone's fundamental right to equality... other rights, including the equality rights of equity, diversity, and inclusion." Neither equality, equity, diversity, or inclusion, taken as such, are rights. They relate to rights, are often furthered by rights, and some level of each of them may be necessary for the actualization or expression of rights. But they are not rights (at least not as I conceptualize the</p> |



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| | <p>concept).</p> <p>Furthermore, I believe that it is somewhat backwards to say that freedom of expression cannot exist without these conditions, namely equity, diversity, and inclusion. Rather, they cannot exist without freedom of expression. Identities are, to some degree, constituted by expression. I do not believe that a Christian person (or Jewish person, Muslim person, Hindu person, etc.) can fully have that identity without engaging in the expression that partly constitutes the identity - in this case catechism, confession of faith, reciting confessions of faith, and spoken prayer. I believe that this is true of all deep social identities. If this is the case then equity, diversity, and inclusion cannot exist without freedom of expression. That does not mean that it trumps all rights (or even all social conditions), but I would not frame the relationship such that freedom of expression, in a one-directional manner, relies upon equity, diversity, and inclusion.</p> |
| 163 | <p>Thank you Professor Santa Ono. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are one of the most important elements a society, without which we shall all suffer. UBC's stance on freedom make it stand out against amongst other universities.</p> |
| 164 | <p>I like the statement, good work. Two thoughts: 1) could you change the word Deliberate in the third last paragraph to Intentional. Deliberate has other meanings that are of value i.e. deliberating or deliberative democracy. 2) In this paragraph, it might be useful to add another example of what might not be tolerated and perhaps back it up with a statement around how hate speech for instance might be breaking the law.</p> |
| 165 | <p>Who determines what is equitable, what is diverse and what is inclusive? Approving this statement as it is will impede freedom of speech and not promote it. To claim a black man's equality to a white man was once considered to "taint or stain the reputations and authority of others". Dissenting varies from dehumanizing, the proper working conditions of the academic community must give reign to the freedom of expression. I think the committee should take a look at Yale's and Chicago's statements.</p> |
| 166 | <p>As much as possible the default position should be that you can say what you want on the understanding that others can criticize you, rather than shouting you down. Restrictions should be based on safety only, meaning real danger to life, rather than feeling a bit uncomfortable. Shouting fire in a crowded room should not be allowed unless there is one. In the absence of smoke you could claim your belief that there is a fire, in a context where that belief could be tested. The draft statement is 1048 words long. Let's try for something considerably shorter and more pithy.</p> |
| 167 | <p>As a UBC graduate in Arts '71 and Law '78, I recommend to you the statement of the University of Chicago on Freedom of Expression quoted below.</p> <p>Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression</p> <p>The Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago was appointed in July 2014 by President Robert J. Zimmer and Provost Eric D. Isaacs "in light of recent events nationwide that have tested institutional commitments to free and open discourse." The Committee's charge was to draft a statement "articulating the University's overarching commitment to free, robust, and uninhibited debate and deliberation among all members of the University's community."</p> <p>The Committee has carefully reviewed the University's history, examined events at other institutions, and consulted a broad range of individuals both inside and outside the University. This statement reflects the long-standing and distinctive values of the University of Chicago and affirms the importance of maintaining and, indeed, celebrating those values for the future.</p> <p>From its very founding, the University of Chicago has dedicated itself to the preservation and celebration of the freedom of expression as an essential element of the University's culture. In 1902, in his address marking the University's decennial, President William Rainey Harper declared that "the principle of complete freedom of speech</p> |



on all subjects has from the beginning been regarded as fundamental in the University of Chicago" and that "this principle can neither now nor at any future time be called in question."

Thirty years later, a student organization invited William Z. Foster, the Communist Party's candidate for President, to lecture on campus. This triggered a storm of protest from critics both on and off campus. To those who condemned the University for allowing the event, President Robert M. Hutchins responded that "our students . . . should have freedom to discuss any problem that presents itself." He insisted that the "cure" for ideas we oppose "lies through open discussion rather than through inhibition." On a later occasion, Hutchins added that "free inquiry is indispensable to the good life, that universities exist for the sake of such inquiry, [and] that without it they cease to be universities."

In 1968, at another time of great turmoil in universities, President Edward H. Levi, in his inaugural address, celebrated "those virtues which from the beginning and until now have characterized our institution." Central to the values of the University of Chicago, Levi explained, is a profound commitment to "freedom of inquiry." This freedom, he proclaimed, "is our inheritance."

More recently, President Hanna Holborn Gray observed that "education should not be intended to make people comfortable, it is meant to make them think. Universities should be expected to provide the conditions within which hard thought, and therefore strong disagreement, independent judgment, and the questioning of stubborn assumptions, can flourish in an environment of the greatest freedom."

The words of Harper, Hutchins, Levi, and Gray capture both the spirit and the promise of the University of Chicago. Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, the University of Chicago fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the University community "to discuss any problem that presents itself."

Of course, the ideas of different members of the University community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the University greatly values civility, and although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The University may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the University. In addition, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

In a word, the University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.



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| | <p>As a corollary to the University’s commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the University community must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the University community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.</p> <p>As Robert M. Hutchins observed, without a vibrant commitment to free and open inquiry, a university ceases to be a university. The University of Chicago’s longstanding commitment to this principle lies at the very core of our University’s greatness. That is our inheritance, and it is our promise to the future.</p> <p>Geoffrey R. Stone, Edward H. Levi Distinguished Service Professor of Law, Chair</p> <p>Marianne Bertrand, Chris P. Dialynas Distinguished Service Professor of Economics, Booth School of Business</p> <p>Angela Olinto, Homer J. Livingston Professor, Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Enrico Fermi Institute, and the College</p> <p>Mark Siegler, Lindy Bergman Distinguished Service Professor of Medicine and Surgery</p> <p>David A. Strauss, Gerald Ratner Distinguished Service Professor of Law</p> <p>Kenneth W. Warren, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor, Department of English and the College</p> <p>Amanda Woodward, William S. Gray Professor, Department of Psychology and the College</p> |
| 168 | <p>Neil Guppy and his team have attempted to draft a statement that reflects not only the benefits and necessity of free expression at a university, but also the importance of responding to expression that threatens the expression of others at the university. There are evident internal tensions within the document due to the difficulty in reconciling these ideas. And yet, it is clear that the ideas are not entirely irreconcilable. The document clears a good starting path, but could be improved by specifying and defining harmful types of speech in light of the end goal of freedom of expression, which is facilitating the robust exchange of ideas in order to better our society.</p> <p>The statement can be broken up into two sections. The first section, consisting of paragraphs 1-7, articulate the importance of free expression and its necessity at the university. Here, the statement should be commended for connecting free expression to the core purpose of the university in paragraphs three and four. It should also be commended for affirming that although people can have stubborn assumptions or have different values, persuasion is possible. It also affirms that feeling intellectually uncomfortable and even offended is an unavoidable and beneficial part of the university experience. All of these elements make the first section a strong defence of free expression.</p> <p>The second section examines the benefits of free expression in light of certain types of expression that can hinder the expression or rights of others. It recognizes that expression such as hate speech, dehumanization, or ad hominem attacks actually undermine the purpose of free expression articulated in the first section. These types of speech, the statement says, can also violate rights of others, such as equality rights.</p> <p>There are undoubtedly many people that would say that the entire second section should be struck. I do not agree with this position. Freedom of expression is not an end in itself. It is more accurately described as a means to an end, as is articulated in the first section of the statement. At a university, free expression exists not simply so that one can say anything one wants with impunity, but for a higher purpose: so that we as a community may bring all of our ideas together, no matter how offensive and unpopular, and share them with each other; in doing so, we will then find the best ideas through reason and argument (as the statement affirms) and use those best ideas to make our society better.</p> <p>It is beneficial for this exchange to be as free and open as possible. The more that this exchange is restricted, the more likely it is that ideas which are initially unpopular but nonetheless true could be precluded from ever seeing</p> |



the light of day. The ideas that change the world are often unpopular or offensive at first, such as the idea of racial equality, or the idea that the earth revolves around the sun.

I believe that protecting this robust exchange of ideas that we use to better society should be the measure by which we create and judge all of our policies on freedom of expression. If we accept this premise, then some limits on expression must be accepted, because some types of expression do exist to hinder that exchange. The question is what those limits should be.

Here, the statement shows a shortcoming. It fails to define the terms it uses to identify harmful expression, including the terms "hate" (paragraphs 8 and 9)," "wellbeing" (paragraph 2), and speech that "harms the proper working conditions of the academic community" (paragraph 9). What types of expression could be captured by these terms? An ambiguous term is the ally of any party wishing to suppress the expression of those they do not like, because the term can easily be stretched and abused to suit their ends. For example, could it be said that pointing out the privilege of white men is "hateful" to said group? Or could a group state that arguing that abortion is immoral injures the wellbeing of people on campus? And surely someone could say that an argument that men and women have biological personality differences compromises the proper working conditions of the academic community. And yet, all of these arguments are ones that the university must allow to take place if it is to fulfil its role so accurately expressed in the first section of the statement.

So, how should the terms be defined? Here, I cannot state a definitive position on behalf of the club because there is a great diversity of opinion on the matter. The most libertarian defenders of free expression would argue that only expression intending to incite violence against any person or group should be censored. Others might draw the line more conservatively and say that expression that is likely to cause violence against any person should also be censored. There are other types of expression, such as speech intended to defame a person and his/her reputation, which should undoubtedly be considered as well. I cannot say where the precise line should be drawn, only that the line drawn should be precise. As suggested above, the line should also be measured against the end goal of protecting our robust exchange of ideas that we use to make our society better. Furthermore, we should aim to allow as much expression as possible to ensure that no unpopular but potentially true ideas are precluded from being heard.

The discussion on the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion mentioned in paragraph 10 should be subjected to the same analysis. The club has no issue with affirming the right to equality. But again, we must carefully consider any restriction of speech in light of the university's goal of protecting our robust exchange of ideas in an effort to better society. Speech that makes individuals or groups feel uncomfortable or offended must, as paragraph 7 of the statement affirms, be protected in the university setting. And if we truly believe that reason and truth will prevail in the free exchange of ideas, then we should believe that equality will be the product of free expression, not a casualty of it.

The prospect of such a policy of free expression is certainly uncomfortable. In the process of attempting to admit as many ideas as we can, we may find that some of those ideas are incorrect and anathema to our society. But we must still examine them in the belief that we will be able to reach that conclusion through argument instead of through censorship. We must trust, as stated in paragraph 6 of the statement, that "persuasion is still possible, that thought and evidence and reason can lead to solutions for the many grand challenges we face."

The university has trusted in this idea for centuries, and it has brought us remarkably far. We must trust that it will continue to drive us forward.

169 I serve in the campus community as a pastor to a student group and church that gathers at UBC. And I serve as the Coordinating Chaplain for the University Multifaith Chaplains Association at UBC. I take a keen interest in freedom of expression. Not only is freedom of expression explicitly tied to academic freedom it is also explicitly tied to religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

I tried my hand at writing my own statement on Freedom of Expression. Its tough work. Thanks to the committee for following through and releasing the proposed statement. Here are my thoughts on what I hope would be true



at UBC:

As a University made up of diverse people and perspectives, we intend to protect and promote freedom of expression as an essential right of individuals and groups in a healthy society.

Freedom of expression is required for the pursuit of truth and scientific inquiry.

Freedom of expression is required for the pursuit of the common good.

Freedom of expression is required for the pursuit of growth in character and leadership.

We recognize freedom of expression in a healthy society has boundaries.

We will not condone the promotion of violence or hatred against a particular person or group. (hate speech)

We will not condone libel.

When our value for freedom of expression allows for the promotion of that which is known to be false or highly distasteful in common society we will also give space for a counter position to be expressed; and may also call for dialogue and conversation so groups may gain understanding of the other's perspective.

We will not condone the use of violence to suppress unpopular opinions or positions.

We recognize freedom of expression requires us to differentiate.

We will allow others to hold positions of opinion, belief, and preference different from our own without demonizing them.

We will submit our beliefs and preferences to the common dialogue and debate available to us as a university.

We will acknowledge the competition of ideas in society and the possibility that the majority and even the minority view could be wrong.

We will develop organizational clarity in our values so we can continue to work well alongside people who may hold different political, social, or religious views.

We recognize freedom of expression creates tension.

Tension is necessary for learning.

Tension is sometimes experienced as personal offence.

Tension is required in order to address inequities and injustices.

Tension must be entered into, not avoided, in order for individuals and for societies to change.

Tension management internally and externally requires a whole set of skills and moral competencies that we must continue honing and practicing.

It seems to me that a robust protection of freedom of expression is going to require courage and humility, a thick skin and a tender heart. Freedom of expression will require us to have what others may scorn -- empathy for the enemy.

But I hope in the protection of freedom of expression we will also create the space where enemies become friends.

170 Freedom of expression, yes, it is up to us, but who dares to practice it!?

A big thanks to the President and for the members of the working group for having drafted such a clear statement and for inviting us to this important discussion. It is encouraging to see that the upper-level University



administration makes freedom of expression such a top priority.

However, to implement the ideas in the draft, the University needs to ensure that the governance structure of individual Departments is established on a more democratic model. Otherwise, no matter how well the statement is written, freedom of expression will be crushed and aborted at the very bottom of the hierarchical structure of this institution, and UBC members, especially the contract faculty members, who lack job security to begin with, will be punished and victimized for engaging in freedom of expression. Here is one example.

The current UBC XXX Department, just as all the former Heads, was not elected by the general members of the work unit through an open and democratic process. He was in power for yyyy years during which period many issues arose, and now he will continue with his xxxx term.

So before practicing freedom of expression, it would be better to know how much power the Department Head has. The following is just an incomplete list, based on what has happened:

[third party personal information has been removed here]

In such a governance structure, who dares to safeguard/practice freedom of expression? Certainly, not that many.

The working group's draft states: "Scholarly dialogue should help us make progress on difficult and complex problems like this. The intellectual richness of the university comes in recognizing alternatives, having contentious conversations, tackling stubborn assumptions, making brash conjectures, discussing uncomfortable facts, and engaging with sharp differences in values and visions." I cannot agree more with this. But as we were trying to establish a scholarly dialogue on the new curriculum, the Department Head suddenly turned it into a Department "policy", a "policy" which every lecturer was called on to obey without question. It turned out that this "policy" was formed without the assistance of an executive committee and without consulting the regular and contract faculty members who have expertise in the area.

Is an administrative practice like this in line with what is stated in the draft, that is, "thought and evidence and reason can lead to solutions for the many grand challenges we face"? In our case, an autocratic method was used to demand our total subordination to administrative power.

My conclusion:

Yes, freedom of expression matters. My colleagues and I totally agree with it since we share the same belief that "it fuels what good universities do." That is why we engaged ourselves in various committee services, in the Department's external review process, in the meetings with upper-level administration, in the search of a so-called "new" Department Head.

Regardless of our insecure job status as contract faculty members, we were also brave enough to express our different opinions directly to the Department Head regarding policy making and curriculum change. We were hoping that our reasonable and constructive expressions, through both words and actions, would have brought in a more collegial and more respectful working environment, which, in turn, would fuel the intellectual diversity and academic richness of the XXXX Department, ultimately, making UBC an even better place to teach and to learn.

Our case shows another significant example of why freedom of expression matters at UBC. To continue the great mission to search for truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, freedom of expression is truly indispensable. "In a spirit of free and open dialogue and respect", a mission to tackle the power imbalances



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| | <p>between the powerful and the vulnerable, which is flagrant in individual departments, all across campus, and in other institutions of higher education, can also be envisioned, initiated and achieved by the UBC administration. A more democratic model is much needed in the individual departments, the vital cells of the organism of this institution.</p> <p>If freedom of expression really matters, please protect us and any other UBC members from being the victims. Otherwise, who dares to speak out? Especially for the contract faculty members, who have already been characterized by voiceless invisibility, and for non-tenured faculty for whom silence seems to be the best shield?</p> <p>Freedom of expression, it is up to us, but it is also up to you, the President, and this working group!</p> <p>Thanks a lot for spending time on listening to what I would like to express.</p> |
| 171 | <p>I take issue with the use of the word "wellbeing" in the first paragraph, because it is too vague. People often argue that speech should be suppressed because it upsets their 'mental health' (by which they really mean that they find the ideas being discussed offensive). It could easily be argued that wellbeing extends to their so-called 'mental health', and therefore speech should be suppressed.</p> <p>I also have some feedback with the part of the second to last paragraph which suggests that Freedom of Expression does not trump all other rights. FoE may not trump other rights, but it is certainly the most important right. This is because true FoE is the only way to bring about equality, diversity, and inclusion. Without open dialogue, these other goals become impossible. None of the progress we have made with regards to civil rights in the last century would have happened without FoE.</p> |
| 172 | <p>I am extremely disappointed with this statement. It purports to pledge to protect freedom of expression, but what it really looks like is a statement that pledges to protect equality rights like equity, diversity, and inclusion. In other words, it is a statement that pledges to protect freedom of expression only to the point where it doesn't conflict with equity, diversity, and inclusion. The statement doesn't give the slightest hint about what kinds of speech would violate those other rights or harm those interests. It says, in effect, that "Individuals can speak freely at UBC, but don't offend anyone because if you do, we'll make an exception."</p> <p>To me, this means that any form of expression, debate, or line of inquiry that a particular individual subjectively perceives as offending equity, diversity, and inclusion could be seen as violating this so-called freedom of expression policy and accordingly suppressed. Anecdotally, I can advise that during my time at UBC it became quickly apparent to me that there were certain topics that were completely off-limits, and taboo, for example a debate about whether or why phenomena like the "wage gap" or "white privilege" exists. I was a law student, and I once witnessed a student in a criminal law class insist upon trigger warnings for topics like sexual assault. These are but two examples of an unfortunate, hyper-sensitive ethos of offence and victimization increasingly spreading across not just UBC but many Canadian universities. By my observation, this ethos is largely informed by intersectional "critical" theories of feminism, race, gender, and sexuality. In my respectful submission, these are hardly critical theories. Rather, they are more akin to ideologies, which are not taught critically but rather as absolute truths that are not to be approached critically. This is the very reason why some students become so offended and enraged when their ideas are questioned. In my experience at UBC, both in and out of the classroom, even merely questioning or critiquing of these theories or their ideas, even when done respectfully and without ill-intent and out of genuine intellectual curiosity, is often deemed as offensive, "toxic," and commonly labeled as something that ends with an "-ist" or an "-ic" (e.g., racist, transphobic). Critical inquiry on these kinds of topics is seen as "excluding" and "unsafe." Don't ask me how.</p> <p>On my reading, the UBC's draft statement on freedom of expression only serves to shield certain ideas and ideologies like these from truly critical study. The statement undermines the UBC's very mission to promote the freest possible exchange of information, ideas, beliefs, and opinions in diverse forms. The only kind of expression that any statement on freedom of expression should seek to curb is legally-defined and intentional (1) hate-speech and (2) defamation. This is the only kind of free-expression policy that would truly foster the freest possible</p> |



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| | <p>exchange of information, ideas, beliefs, and opinions in diverse forms.</p> <p>As a proud UBC alumni, I am reaching a point where I am interested in donating and giving back to my alma matter. I am reluctant to donate to a University that increasingly shields its students from certain ideas.</p> |
| 173 | <p>I am extremely disappointed with this statement. It purports to pledge to protect freedom of expression, but what it really looks like is a statement that pledges to protect equality rights like equity, diversity, and inclusion. In other words, it is a statement that pledges to protect freedom of expression only to the point where it doesn't conflict with equity, diversity, and inclusion. The statement doesn't give the slightest hint about what kinds of speech would violate those other rights or harm those interests. It says, in effect, that "Individuals can speak freely at UBC, but don't offend anyone because if you do, we'll make an exception."</p> <p>To me, this means that any form of expression, debate, or line of inquiry that a particular individual subjectively perceives as offending equity, diversity, and inclusion could be seen as violating this so-called freedom of expression policy and accordingly suppressed. Anecdotally, I can advise that during my time at UBC it became quickly apparent to me that there were certain topics that were completely off-limits, and taboo, for example a debate about whether or why phenomena like the "wage gap" or "white privilege" exists. I was a law student, and I once witnessed a student in a criminal law class insist upon trigger warnings for topics like sexual assault.</p> <p>These are but two examples of an unfortunate, hyper-sensitive ethos of offence and victimization increasingly spreading across not just UBC but many Canadian universities. By my observation, this ethos is largely informed by intersectional "critical" theories of feminism, race, gender, and sexuality. In my respectful submission, these are hardly critical theories. Rather, they are more akin to ideologies, which are not taught critically but rather as absolute truths that are not to be approached critically. This is the very reason why some students become so offended and enraged when their ideas are questioned.</p> <p>In my experience at UBC, both in and out of the classroom, even merely questioning or critiquing of these theories or their ideas, even when done respectfully and without ill-intent and out of genuine intellectual curiosity, is often deemed as offensive, "toxic," and commonly labeled as something that ends with an "-ist" or an "-ic" (e.g., racist, transphobic). Critical inquiry on these kinds of topics is seen as "excluding" and "unsafe." Don't ask me how.</p> <p>On my reading, the UBC's draft statement on freedom of expression only serves to shield certain ideas and ideologies like these from truly critical study. The statement undermines the UBC's very mission to promote the freest possible exchange of information, ideas, beliefs, and opinions in diverse forms. The only kind of expression that any statement on freedom of expression should seek to curb is legally-defined and intentional (1) hate-speech and (2) defamation. This is the only kind of free-expression policy that would truly foster the freest possible exchange of information, ideas, beliefs, and opinions in diverse forms.</p> <p>As a proud UBC alumni, I am reaching a point where I am interested in donating and giving back to my alma matter, but I am reluctant to donate to a University that increasingly shields its students from certain ideas.</p> |
| 174 | <p>Please define "toxic"</p> <p>"Deliberate attempts to create a toxic environment must remain anathema to the practices of the university community."</p> |
| 175 | <p>Dear President and the members of this working group:</p> <p>Thanks for inviting us to the conversation on such an important issue. Since your final draft document is meant to "serve as focal point of a community discussion around freedom of expression", I am wondering whether and how I can see the views shared by the other UBC members on this topic. Thank you!</p> |