# **Academic Matters**

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'OCUFA

#### FOLLOWING THE MONEY:

Examining the distribution of funding within the academy



### **Kimberly Ellis-Hale** and Glen Copplestone

Understanding the role of universities in the rise of contract academic work

#### **Felipe Nagata**

How the Student Choice Initiative seeks to silence student voices

#### **Janice Folk-Dawson**

The corporatization of the university budget and its consequences for academic support workers



# BA

#### **TIME FOR MY INTERESTS**

#### **TIME FOR MY DBA**

The online DBA supports leading edge research in management thinking and practice, bringing real world experience, knowledge, and workplace context to the table. Take your talent to the next level and foster new innovations and bring in a competitive advantage for business and government, worldwide.





#### **2** Editorial Matters

3 Trending towards inequality: Understanding the role of universities in the rise of contract academic work

#### **Kimberly Ellis-Hale and Glen Copplestone**

The 1990s are key to understanding how Ontario's postsecondary institutions have systematically entrenched economic inequality between contract and tenure-stream faculty. Even with the chronic underfunding of postsecondary education, our universities are financially well-positioned to address precarity on campus.

8 Healthy research ecosystem—healthy researchers? The researcher as an organism of focus within a research ecosystem

#### Michelle L.A. Nelson and Ross Upshur

The academic research environment is changing and researchers report struggling to adapt in order to be successful. Funding shortfalls are perennial, but what systemic shifts should occur to enable researchers at all career stages to be productive and successful?

14 The corporatization of the university budget and its consequences for academic support workers

#### Janice Folk-Dawson

As governments and administrators increasingly run universities like private corporations, academic support workers find their working conditions deteriorating and their jobs threatened. What are the roots of this ideological shift and how can we ensure that all work on campus is valued?

17 How the Student Choice Initiative seeks to silence student voices Felipe Nagata

For decades, students' unions have been raising concerns about skyrocketing tuition fees. Now, in an obscene twist, the Ford government is using high student fees as an excuse to attack these democratic organizations and their ability to advocate for lower fees and better universities.

21 As public postsecondary funding stagnates, the University of Toronto explores "alternative funding sources"

#### Mariana Valverde

Universities increasingly rely on student fees and other alternative funding sources to make up for falling levels of government support, but perhaps these other funding sources aren't all they're cracked up to be.

25 Identifying the gaps: Reflecting on a career pursuing understanding and equity in academia

#### **Donald C. Cole**

Upon retiring, Professor Donald C. Cole took some time to consider his career at the University of Toronto. In doing so, he asks how faculty might be better supported in understanding their role promoting equity within the academy.

#### **MORE ON ACADEMICMATTERS.CA**

This journal is produced in the *Dish With One Spoon Territory*, which extends from the Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe into the United States. The territory exists as the result of a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas, and Haudenosaunee that bound them to protect and share the land and creatures within it. Subsequent Indigenous nations and peoples, Europeans, and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. It is in this spirit that each issue of *Academic Matters* is produced.



#### **Academic Matters**

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION LA REVUE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'OCUE.

Academic Matters is published two times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 17,000 professors, academic librarians, and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful, thought-provoking, original, and engaging discussion of current trends in postsecondary education and consideration of academia's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Ben Lewis at edito@academicmatters.ca.

Reproduction of articles requires the permission of the author and publisher. Copyright in material accepted for publication remains with the author. The publisher may choose, however, to translate and/or reproduce material in print and electronic form. All published material expresses the view of the author(s) and not the publisher.

Academic Matters accepte volontiers des articles écrits en anglais ou en français.

#### Publisher:

OCUFA; Michael Conlon, Executive Director

#### Editor-in-Chief:

Ben Lewis

#### Associate Editors:

Mina Rajabi Paak, Hind Eideh, Jordyn Perreault-Laird

#### Art Direction:

Eva Kiss, Neglia Design Inc., www.NegliaDesign.com

#### Illustrations created by:

Design de Plume Inc., www.deplume.ca

#### Editorial Advisory Board:

Glen Jones, April Lindgren, Gilary Massa, Daniel Munro Stephanie Ross

#### National Advertising Sales:

DOVETAIL COMMUNICATIONS 30 East Beaver Creek Road, Ste. 202 Richmond Hill. ON L4B 112

#### Sales Manager:

Marlene Mignardi, mmignardi@dvtail.com

#### ISSN 1719-010X

For subscription information, please contact: OCUFA@ocufa.on.ca

#### Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations 17 Isabella Street, Toronto, ON M4Y 1M7

Phone (416) 979-2117 | Fax (416) 593-5607 www.ocufa.on.ca | www.academicmatters.ca







# **Editorial Matters**Ben Lewis



#### Economics and inequality

IT IS COMMONLY understood that postsecondary education ought to focus on fostering curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, and vigorous debate, with the goal of generating new knowledge and informed citizens. As it happens, cultivating a culture of learning that embraces these values also requires robust public funding and complex academic structures to determine how this money is distributed.

This funding is fundamental for universities to pursue their mission—through quality education, illuminating research, providing good jobs on campus, and ensuring that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, can pursue a degree and thrive.

As much as we might like to think that academic decisions are all made based on merit and the altruistic values of the academy, the question of money and how it is distributed permeates our universities and their decisionmaking structures.

In Ontario, institutional decisions about who gets money and who does not are being made with less and less consultation, transparency, and accountability. This has coincided with the stagnation of public funding for postsecondary education, increased reliance on private capital and tuition fees, and a shift towards corporatized university administrations.

As a result, small groups of administrators are making decisions that have far-reaching implications for higher education in Ontario, with little to no meaningful input from faculty, staff, or students. In some cases, these decisions have

substantially impacted equity on campus and systemically entrenched economic inequality.

While the erosion of collegial governance has garnered significant attention in recent years, in this issue of *Academic Matters* we tried to shift focus to specifically consider the economic and equity impacts of institutional funding allocation for students, faculty, and staff at Ontario's universities.

Kimberly Ellis-Hale and Glen Copplestone examine higher education's increasing dependence on precariously employed contract faculty, who face low pay and unfair working conditions. Meanwhile, Janice Folk-Dawson highlights the corporatization of the university and what it has meant for academic support staff whose working conditions are deteriorating and jobs are being outsourced. Both articles argue that, despite the steady erosion of public funding for postsecondary education, Ontario's universities are financially well-positioned to address precarity on campus and provide good jobs.

Michelle L.A. Nelson and Ross Upshur consider inequities in the distribution of research funding and the struggles faced by faculty at various stages of their careers. They propose that, with some changes to the existing research ecosystem, it is possible for researchers at all career stages to be productive while supporting, instead of competing with one another.

Felipe Nagata looks at the Ford government's *Student Choice Initiative*, a policy that threatens student organizations across Ontario and seeks to silence student voices already struggling to be heard. He argues that silencing the student movement might only be the first step towards silencing other voices that are critical of the government.

Mariana Valverde scrutinizes the University of Toronto's pursuit of alternative funding sources and questions whether the institution is benefiting from its real estate schemes and intellectual property policies. She suggests that, although Ontario's universities are trying to make up for falling levels of government support, perhaps these other funding sources aren't all they're cracked up to be.

Finally, following his recent retirement, Donald C. Cole reflects on his career as a faculty member and suggests different ways in which faculty might be better supported in understanding their role promoting equity on campus.

This issue of Academic Matters has been a fascinating opportunity to explore the decision-making structures that shape Ontario's universities. The challenges are clear. However, this issue's contributors all agree that Ontario universities need to become more consultative, transparent, and accountable by providing real opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in institutional decision-making. This is how more equitable universities can be realized in Ontario.

A reminder that all of the articles in this issue, and many more, are available on our website:
AcademicMatters.ca.

Thanks for reading. AM

Ben Lewis is the Editor-in-Chief of Academic Matters and Communications Lead for OCUFA. TRENDING TOWARDS INEQUALITY:

# Understanding the role of universities in the rise of contract academic work

**Kimberly Ellis-Hale and Glen Copplestone** 



The 1990s are key to understanding how Ontario's postsecondary institutions have systematically entrenched economic inequality between contract and tenure-stream faculty. Even with the chronic underfunding of postsecondary education, our universities are financially well-positioned to address precarity on campus.



#### Back in the nineties

At the risk of oversimplifying, the 1990s are key to understanding the current state of academic work at Ontario's universities. Four trends that emerged during this period have significantly reshaped academic work and led universities to systematically entrench economic inequality between faculty—fueling the growth of precarious academic work.

How do we know that? By following the money.

The first trend is the erosion of public funding for postsecondary education (expressed as government grants as a percentage of total university revenues) and the increasing share of postsecondary education costs paid by students. As a result, Ontario universities now trail the rest of Canada in public per-student funding and have the highest tuition fees in the country.

Dwindling public funding for postsecondary education gave rise to the second trend. To address anticipated declines in domestic student enrolment (particularly outside the Greater Toronto Area) universities began increasing their enrolment of international students—a trend that accelerated following the deregulation of international fees in 1996 under former Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris. Today, Ontario universities increasingly rely on international student tuition fees for revenue.

Although not as familiar, the third trend to emerge in the 1990s involved increasing university administrative costs and capital expenditures. Out of the Shadows, the 2018 report by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), shows that both have exceeded the increase in faculty salary from 1972 to 2016 by a significant margin.

More recently, an analysis of Ontario universities' audited financial statements showed that, between 2008 and 2014, the vast majority of universities were spending more than 10 per cent of total revenues on purchasing capital assets each year. Interestingly, the ratio of capital asset purchases to total revenue for Ontario universities has receded since 2014, coinciding with a substantial increase in surpluses from university operations. Between 2014 and 2017, the accumulated surpluses of all Ontario universities was in the range of \$509 million (2017) to \$788 million (2015) annually. Moreover, the accumulated surplus of all Ontario universities in 2018 jumped to an astounding \$1.2 billion. It appears that the slower rate of capital asset acquisition has manifested itself in larger surpluses for Ontario universities.

Universities are choosing to invest in their administrations, amass capital assets, and bank surpluses at the expense of faculty and students.

The final trend, which emerged in the 1990s and has grown alarmingly in the last decade, is the increasing reliance on precariously employed contract faculty by Ontario's universities. While early evidence of this is buried in data on student population growth and increasing student-to-faculty ratios, often the true ratio is obscured. However, recent national research shows that between 2005 and 2015, there was a 79 per cent rise in the hiring of contract faculty and a 10 per cent decline in secure tenure-stream faculty hiring.

In Ontario, estimates indicate that reliance on precariously employed contract faculty has more than doubled in the last decade, with contract faculty now teaching more than 50 per cent of all Ontario university courses. It is worth noting that faculty represent the only employee group on Ontario campuses that experienced a significant growth in part-time positions.

#### Painting a picture of precarity

A growing body of national, provincial, and local research clearly shows that the majority of contract faculty have been teaching in a university setting for more than five years, are not securely employed elsewhere, and desire secure academic employment. University administrators have lost traction in their efforts to paint contract-to-contract employment as a side-gig for those securely employed elsewhere.

Many university administrators have tried diverting responsibility for the rise in precarious academic work

by blaming government funding cuts. They argue that decreased government funding necessitates the reliance on precariously employed academics. While there may be some truth to this, universities are choosing to invest in their administrations, amass capital assets, and bank surpluses at the expense of faculty and students.

These trends paint a new image of postsecondary education in Ontario in which more than thirty years of government underfunding has resulted in Ontario universities becoming publicly assisted, not publicly funded; where universities are heavily reliant on skyrocketing international tuition fees; and where precariously employed, low paid contract faculty carry out the institution's academic mission and deliver most of its teaching. As a result, Ontario universities have supplanted their shared educational mandate with one that values bureaucratic, capital asset, and surplus accumulation. This new mandate costs us all.

Ontario universities now have a fully entrenched twotiered system of faculty hiring. Tenure-stream faculty are provided with job security, reasonable compensation, paid benefits, a pension, vacation, office space, support for research, and a voice in how their department and university are governed. Meanwhile, the substantially larger group of contract faculty on campus are provided virtually none of what the first group is offered. Many have to reapply for their jobs every term, are hired to teach courses for which they are paid less than their full-time tenure-stream colleagues, lack access to benefits, and are often not compensated for research and service work done outside of the classroom. To make matters worse, contract faculty are rarely acknowledged on campus—they fight to have their names on websites and office doors; are often excluded from decision-making structures, committees, and department events; and regularly have their needs overlooked in university training sessions and workshops. This two-tiered system of economic inequality fuels the growth of precarity within our ranks and diminishes us all.

The low level of compensation for contract faculty has further exasperated their precarious situation. CAUT's 2018 report on contract faculty estimates that almost half of contract faculty in Ontario have combined incomes of less than \$50,000, despite more than 90 per cent having completed graduate education at the Master's level or higher. In addition, contract faculty are likely to continue to lose ground to their tenure-stream colleagues as a result of the Ontario government's 2019 bill to cap academic salary increases at one per cent per year for three years.

Working conditions for precariously employed contract faculty affect their job performance and, more importantly, negatively impact their physical and mental health. Financial insecurity acts as a persistent barrier for contract faculty trying to plan for the future and contribute to their communities. Tenure-stream faculty are also negatively affected by this two-tiered system. Opportunities for collegiality and mentorship are reduced, potential research

partnerships are lost, accountable and transparent collegial university governance is undermined, and administrative loads become overwhelming.

#### Precarity and performance funding

If the present situation facing contract faculty on our campuses isn't enough cause for concern, the Ford government's newly proposed funding system should be. The government is moving from a funding system primarily based on student enrolment to one based on performance metrics and outcomes. As noted by OCUFA, performance funding rewards universities that meet arbitrary targets while penalizing those that do not, thus producing a system of "winners" and "losers." This new funding model will be introduced in 2020-2021 along with the third round of Strategic Mandate Agreements between the government and each university (SMA3). In its first year, 25 per cent of each university's government grant will be tied to their performance on five metrics, and by the 2024-2025 academic year, 60 per cent of government grants will be tied to performance measured on a total of ten metrics.

According to the government, university performance will be measured based on skills and job outcomes (graduate earnings, graduates in programs with experiential learning, skills and competencies, graduates employed fulltime in a related or partially related field, the proportion of students in identified areas of strength, and graduation rates), and economic and community impact (private research funding, federal research funding, community and local impact, and an institution-specific economic impact metric). It is worth noting that the governments' definition and operationalization of performance metrics were created without any consultation with key stakeholders in the postsecondary sector and, therefore, without a real understanding of how education is delivered or evaluated.

Even though this new funding model is to be introduced in the next academic year, there are important details that have, at the time of writing, yet to be disclosed by the government. For example, will there be a range within which a university's performance on a metric is deemed acceptable, or must they get a perfect score? What will happen to funding for universities that do not achieve their target performance? Will the money go to other universities that meet their performance goals, thus exacerbating inequities between universities, or will it flow back into government coffers, further cutting Ontario university funding?

Whether money is snatched from one university and given to another or cut from the system as a whole, neither outcome will strengthen postsecondary education in Ontario. Instead, it is likely that universities will face greater difficulty with long-term planning because of increased uncertainty over future finances. What can be said with a degree of certainty, however, is that a faculty renewal



strategy to hire more contract faculty into secure tenurestream positions will not be top of mind for universities.

At a minimum, performance funding will exacerbate the issues facing tenure-stream faculty, including increasing administrative loads. Under pressure to "perform" for funding, university administrations may also attempt to roll back collective agreement language around faculty workloads, responsibilities, compensation, research support, benefits, and pensions. For precariously employed contract faculty, the effects are more dire.

Contract faculty are already in challenging positions, and have little to no voice in how their institutions are run. The future for contract faculty will likely deteriorate as universities face greater financial uncertainty with the introduction of performance-based funding. Because contract faculty are precariously employed, often on a term-by-term basis, financial uncertainty would jeopardize their employment even further.

If universities begin to aggressively increase class sizes, eliminate course offerings, or succeed in imposing an increased workload on tenure-stream faculty, performance funding measures may lead to many contract faculty losing their jobs or having less work. However, as tenure-stream faculty retire and are not replaced, there will likely be an increased reliance on contract faculty. Neither scenario is favourable, especially given the latter will only further increase the percentage of faculty being hired into precarious contract positions.

#### Taking steps towards fairness

If the Ford government's performance funding model will make it more difficult to convert contract faculty posi-

tions into secure tenure-stream positions, then it is imperative to substantially narrow the gap between contract faculty and tenure-stream faculty salaries. With the introduction of SMA3, the government has asked universities to provide data on faculty workload and compensation. While this government likely has its own agenda for collecting this data, this is an opportunity to ensure the collected data is disaggregated by employment status and accounts for the disparity in compensation between full-time and contract faculty.

We would suggest that Ontario's universities need to significantly increase course stipends for contract faculty. While this would not eliminate all the challenges facing contract faculty, it would provide a significant first step in compensating them fairly and reduce the incentive for universities to replace tenure-stream faculty positions with contract positions. We recommend that the stipend per course be raised to at least \$25,000 per two-term course from the current stipend of roughly \$15,000 per two-term course. At this level of remuneration, a contract faculty member teaching three courses in each of two terms would earn \$75,000 per year (as opposed to roughly \$45,000 now). In this scenario, the compensation for a contract faculty member would rise from below the average industrial wage in Ontario to somewhere between the average industrial wage and a starting salary for tenurestream faculty members.

Is this proposal too expensive, as administrators will undoubtedly claim? The short answer is "no." Although data on the exact number of courses taught by contract faculty is not available, we do know that contract faculty teach a little more than half the courses at Ontario universities. A reasonable ballpark figure might be 30,000 two-term courses (or 60,000 one term courses). If the cost per course were to increase by \$10,000 for a two-term course (\$5,000 for one-term course), the total price of our proposal would be roughly \$300 million annually. Admittedly, this is a large number. However, as noted earlier, the accumulated surpluses at Ontario universities have been above \$500 million every year since 2014. There is money in the system already to finance our proposal.

If we narrow the gap between the cost of contract faculty and tenure-stream faculty, it may no longer be financially viable for universities to rely on contract faculty. In the long run, this may lead to more job stability for contract faculty and to more contract positions being converted into secure tenure-stream positions.

Kimberly Ellis-Hale is a contract instructor of sociology at Wilfrid Laurier University and Chair of OCUFA's Contract Faculty and Faculty Complement Committee.

Glen Copplestone is an associate professor (Economics) in the School of Management, Economics, and Mathematics at King's University College and Chair of OCUFA's University Finance Committee.

# SATET Senors

Smart video system alerts caregivers to falls in real-time so they can respond instantly.

#### TRUTH IS RARELY SIMPLE

What was true yesterday may not be true tomorrow.
Our researchers seek the truth, wherever it may lead...



#### HEALTHY RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM—HEALTHY RESEARCHERS?

## The researcher as an organism of focus within a research ecosystem

Michelle L.A. Nelson and Ross Upshur

The academic research environment is changing and researchers report struggling to adapt in order to be successful. Funding shortfalls are perennial, but what systemic shifts should occur to enable researchers at all career stages to be productive and successful? **Funding** and grants **Opportunities** Support for for new researchers researchers in their peak years Recognition

#### ATTENDING TO THE LIFE COURSE OF RESEARCHERS WITH THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

In 2017, Professor David Naylor released the *Investing* in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research report (hereafter referred to as the Naylor report). It represented the first major assessment of federally funded research in Canada, with an extensive and ambitious mandate:

A review of the federal system of supports for extramural research... We were expected to cover the full range of disciplines involving peer-reviewed science or inquiry, with either a basic or applied orientation. As well, our focus was to be on programs supporting knowledge generation, as contrasted with programs oriented primarily to fostering partnerships with industry or civil society, or promoting knowledge translation, innovation, and commercialization.

Throughout the Naylor report, the terms "research ecosystem" and "lifecycle approach" are applied as a framework to analyze the current research landscape in Canada. Although some language indicated components of a research ecosystem, the very structure of the ecosystem was left undescribed. The concept of a life course however, was presented as follows:

We believe the advantages of a lifecycle approach are obvious. A healthy and sustainable research ecosystem depends on ample opportunities for new researchers to break into the system and establish themselves, avoids gaps as they transition to mid-career, and provides strong support for researchers in their peak years of output and impact. It also makes fair and balanced appraisals of proposals by senior researchers without overweighting their history or undervaluing their potential for further contributions regardless of age.

As the two authors of this article compared our career experiences and perspectives (one early career, one late career) within the context of the Naylor Report, it dawned on us that there was little literature reflecting these perspectives, and we started thinking about how the research life course could be described within research ecosystems. In this article, we will employ the concept of a research ecosystem to frame a detailed discussion regarding the lifecycle of a researcher. Our goal is to stimulate debate around what sorts of resources should be provided in the research

ecosystem to researchers at different stages of their lifecycle.

### THE RESEARCHER IN THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM

The consensus in the Canadian research community is that the current research ecosystem is not in its healthiest state, and is unable to support itself. The modern scientific research environment has been characterized as hypercompetitive, with an increasing number of investigators and scientists competing for a flat or decreasing amount of available research funding. Secure research positions across the spectrum of academic disciplines are diminishing with a corresponding concern about the ability of younger researchers to commence and sustain careers. Data from grant competitions indicate that those with established track records are generally more successful than those without. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research noted in its President's Report that persistent inequalities and inequities exist, particularly with respect to gender, age, and opportunities for scientists representing disadvantaged populations (such as Indigenous Peoples).

It has been noted that many new investigators are dependent upon senior scientists for sustaining their careers. Younger researchers experience prolonged stays in post-doctoral fellowships as tenure—stream and research institute scientist positions become increasingly scarce. It has been reported that only 18.6 per cent of PhDs were

#### Many early career scientists report spending

#### a disproportionate amount of their time pursuing funding

to become self-supporting.

employed in full-time faculty positions (both tenure-stream and contract faculty), despite the majority of people entering doctoral degrees with the intention of becoming a university professor. In Ontario, senior colleagues are remaining in their faculty appointments into their seventies; a trend thought to be partly to blame for decreasing faculty positions for early career researchers. This is mentioned in the Naylor report:

 $The \,abolition \,of \,mand at ory \,retirement \,led \,to \,an$ increase in the number of faculty members still working full time past age 65. This situation has increased the need for a comprehensive lifecycle plan.

Many early career scientists report spending a disproportionate amount of their time pursuing funding to become self-supporting, but also report having limited access to the necessary administrative support to achieve these goals. There is significant pressure to publish and demonstrate the impact and importance of their research, even if it is in its infancy. The average age at which an investigator receives their first grant as a principle investigator is increasing.

This perilous state of affairs has led many young researchers to consider abandoning their research careers. A literature called "quit lit" has emerged, documenting the not-so-happy experiences of young researchers. In one report, when early career researchers were asked about the challenges for young scientists, one individual replied: "old

> scientists." Given the increasingly competitive nature of the research ecosystem, notions of a sustainable research ecosystem will need to grapple with how these resources can be managed.

It should be noted that mid- and late-career researchers report many of the same concerns. Salary support is difficult to obtain for those who have not secured tenure. The soft money economy that sustains research is

reliant on continuous funding, and disruptions caused by failing to get continuous funding imperils research programs that have not quite reached maturity.

Most research institutions cannot fully bridge-fund investigators while waiting for success in the next funding cycle, which may cause invaluable research team members to seek employment elsewhere. Senior investigators undergo periodic review with an expectation that they will meet performance metrics related to publications, citations, and the dollar values of grants. In university settings, merit pay is often tied to similar expectations of research performance. These standards are rarely tailored to the achievements and career stage of senior investigators, rather they are a one size fits all performance evaluation structure.

So we are faced with a seemingly unhealthy research ecosystem increasingly unable to provide and sustain the resource requirements for researchers and institutions to flourish. It should be emphasized, however, that a research environment need not be considered a structure or process that is shaped and formed by external forces. The current situation reflects choices (or adaptations), for the most part, that are made within the research ecosystem. The current metrics used to evaluate researchers' productivity reflect the values of the research community. If incentives are structured to foster competition and value certain processes and outputs over others, then the consequences will be clear and stark: predators will eat the prey, disequilibrium will occur, and the system will collapse.

#### ADOPTING A LIFECYCLE PERSPECTIVE TO RESEARCHERS

For the purposes of this discussion, we are framing a life course as the set of socially determined characteristic stages an individual would pass through during their research career, capturing inception (candidacy) through to their end stage (retirement). If moving toward a life course perspective is seen as one strategy to adjust the research ecosystem, we must address the questions: What is the current state? What changes would be required? How should we re-conceive the idea of a research career?

In our current research system, salary support usually comes from institutions such as universities and research institutes. Researchers are encouraged to seek prestigious

#### We are faced with a seemingly unhealthy research ecosystem

#### increasingly unable to provide and sustain the resource requirements

for researchers and institutions to flourish.

external funding for salary support, including new investigator awards and research chairs. There are also provincially supported career research awards and, in some instances, chairs associated with philanthropy. These awards typically reduce funding pressure on institutions and bring associated overhead costs with them. Researchers are expected to apply for external funding to support their research operating costs and support the training of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as post-doctoral fellows. Continued success in competitive funding cycles is required for research programs to grow and for careers to flourish.

Often, as researchers achieve success and a modicum of reputation, they will be asked to be co-applicants on the grants of colleagues and researchers they have trained. There is no cap or ceiling on how much funding any one researcher can hold at any given time in their career or over their career. This open-ended policy is intended to reflect the meritocratic spirit of research; the most successful have demonstrated their ability to acquire funding and produce high-quality results, and use these results to acquire ongoing funding. They have adapted well to the research ecosystem and its processes.

This may be true, and the general manner in which success breeds success would not be problematic, if there were corresponding increases in funding that would permit successful research programs to continue as newer researchers were establishing their careers, or entering the ecosystem. However, funding constraints make this problematic. Increasingly, the playing field is tilted in the direction of those with historical success. Senior investigators, well-schooled in the practice of grant writing, have a distinct competitive edge.

There are good arguments for apportioning resources to researchers according to which stage they are at in the research lifecycle. In the Naylor Report:

One approach, among others, would be to aim for higher success rates for [early career researchers], and gradually shift that balance through career stages with lower success rates for established researchers who will often be pursuing much larger grants that bear closer scrutiny.

To enact the proposed shift in resource allocation, several issues would have to be addressed. There is often a paradox in grant funding acquisition during the earliest stages of a research career. For most researchers, it is quite clear that they will not get funded if they do not have a track record; but track records are predicated on having resources, such as funding, to begin with.

We agree that protecting pools of resources for early career researchers would serve that purpose, as asking for the same productivity and outputs from a newly graduated PhD as from a very senior professor simply makes no sense. Placing them in research competitions for the same funds makes even less sense. It may be better to allocate funds in protected envelopes for various career stages and set career limits for investigators as suggested by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).

However, care must be taken not to discriminate against senior researchers. No doubt many continue to be driven by curiosity and have thriving and viable research programs. Would it not therefore harm the scientific process to curtail their activity? There are many good reasons to continue to support accomplished scientists, but perhaps further exploration of the motivations for continued grant writing and research activities is required. Are the most senior colleagues applying because they want to conduct research, or because the ecosystem has set the conditions and expectations of research outputs, regardless of career stage?

If it is the latter, perhaps it would be worth exploring the possibility of transforming expectations of senior researchers in the latter part of their careers to better match their career stage and goals.

#### RESEARCHERS AS CREATORS AND RECIPIENTS OF ECOSYSTEM RESOURCES

In the research ecosystem models that have been articulated, the researcher is mostly seen as a consumer of services (funds, infrastructure, etc.) rather than a contributor to the ecosystem (service provider). One way of

#### Care must be taken

#### not to discriminate against senior researchers.

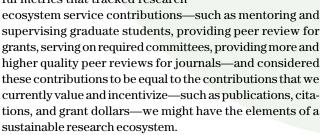
adapting lifecycle thinking into research ecosystems is to see researchers as both providers and consumers of ecosystem services and resources. The ways in which researchers provide services has been under-appreciated; existing models of research ecosystems have vastly underplayed an important dimension of functioning research systems—service to the ecosystem.

Thinking from a lifecycle approach, it may be wise to structure the ecosystem to protect younger faculty from over-engaging in service commitments such as committee membership, teaching, reviewing grants and manuscripts, while increasing incentives for senior faculty to be engaged and taking leadership in these areas. Given the noted competition between early-, mid-, and late-career applicants for research dollars, a corresponding effect in mentorship and collaboration follows. It is not in the interests of researchers in a hypercompetitive environment to dedicate their time and resources to activities that are not maximizing their chances of success according to the standards by which they are judged by their institutions and peers.

If the provisions of such research services were regarded on par with research outputs, would this sufficiently incentivize senior researchers to spend more of their time and energy in ensuring the sustainability of the research ecosystem itself? We posit that, if made part of the way we see research ecosystems function as a whole, service and mentorship would naturally be regarded as appropriate activities for the senior researcher to perform and devote an increased amount of time to.

We suggest, however, that both financial and other incentives would be required to entice senior scientists into these mentorship and service roles. The NIH attempted to address this issue by suggesting limits on grant funding held by investigators and by floating the idea of "emeritus grants"—essentially providing grants for senior colleagues to retire from research competitions, in the hopes of increasing the amount of grant money available to early career scientists. Neither of these plans have moved into implementation, as they were met with unanimous hostility, but signal that leadership is querying new approaches.

The lifecycle of a researcher could be, and should be, discussed and debated extensively, but it strikes us that the central issue comes down to performance metrics that are representative of norms and values. Given our metrics-driven competitive ecosystem, if we had meaningful metrics that tracked research



We are arguing that the highest value arising from a research ecosystem is not simply the production of a "knowledge product." The modern scientific world is a complex ecosystem that requires service in a variety of different processes, each of which requires support and nourishment. Overvaluing particular facets of this has led to a hypercompetitive environment with seriously perverse incentives for behaviors that are not in the collective good. If we understand research as a broadly social enterprise, being the most truth aspiring activity that humanity can engage in, then reconsidering all elements of the research ecosystem and directing resources to support and nourish it may well be in order. M

Michelle L.A. Nelson is at the Collaboratory for Research and Innovation at the Lunefeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute; The Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, and the Division of Clinical Public Health at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto.

Ross Upshur is at the Division of Clinical Public Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto and the Bridgepoint Collaboratory for Research and Innovation at the Lunefeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute. He would like to acknowledge the Brocher Foundation for support in incubating the ideas in this paper.



**BRIDGING** DIVIDES: CONFRONTING COLONIALISM AND ANTI-BLACK RACISM BÂTIR DES **PASSERELLES** : COMBATTRE LE COLONIALISME ET LE RACISME ANTI-NOIRS







# The corporatization of the university budget and its consequences for academic support workers

Janice Folk-Dawson

As governments and administrators increasingly run universities like private corporations, academic support workers find their working conditions deteriorating and their jobs threatened. What are the roots of this ideological shift and how can we ensure that all work on campus is valued?

#### The outsourcing of cleaning staff reduces compensation to minimum wage, while stripping workers of many of their benefits.



#### Shifting mandates

The current Ontario government likes to call our universities "publicly-assisted" institutions. This label may very well align with the long-term goal of both liberal and conservative governments to privatize Ontario's postsecondary education system. However, it is important to remember that a large portion of "private" revenue for universities is still heavily subsidized by the public purse. This indirect public funding is manifested through governmentsubsidized tuition fee payments, corporate research funded through tax cuts, and private gifts incentivized by tax benefits. It is through this slight of hand that the public subsidizes private capital instead of directly investing in postsecondary education and research. This shift undermines our universities' mission of generating new knowledge that advances the public good and instead focuses on the use of public resources for private profit.

The language of neoliberal governments—both liberal and conservative—that pretends our public services can be run like private corporations is ideologically oblivious. For these governments and their backers from private capital, the drive to change the way society views public institutions is rooted in a belief that the private market can both enrich shareholders through efficiencies and build effective organizations that serve the public. This has allowed senior university administrators to consolidate power, reduce their own workloads through outsourcing, and enrich themselves through higher than average pay increases.

The best way to see this is by looking at income inequality on our campuses and its growth over the past 30 years. Our highest paid administrators can now earn 10-15 times more than many campus workers. U of T's President makes approximately \$190 per hour while the President of the university's pension trust earns well over \$300 per hour. Meanwhile, a unionized in-house cleaner starts at only \$18 per hour. As if this weren't egregious enough, the outsourcing of cleaning staff reduces compensation to minimum wage, while stripping workers of many of their benefits.

Attempts to run universities like private corporations (with similar salaries for executives and senior administrators) and recruit corporate sector CEOs to university boards to replace community-based directors have reshaped our public postsecondary institutions. As these efforts have met resistance from campus workers, faculty, and students, the democratic and academic collegial structures within our universities have been undermined and supplanted. More and more power has been put into the hands of senior administrators, while government has used increasingly constraining funding models to push for more control over the form and function of university budgets. Taken together, this means that governing bodies are locked into self-constrained corporate-style budgets. Even if universities are awash with cash, they tuck some of it away in reserve funds and continue to push austerity budgets and cuts at the department level.

This reorganization of governance has resulted in growing inequality on campuses and made it easier for antiintellectual populists in government to shift the priorities of the university system to suit their self-serving political agendas. Most recently, this was illustrated by the government's insistence that universities serve short-term labour market commercialization and business needs at the expense of longer term goals to generate knowledge and serve the public interest.

#### Planned inequality

Most universities are large institutions with wellestablished practices that are comprised of complex and interconnected communities of academics, students, administrators, and support service staff. Even small changes to budgeting and management processes can have significant unintended consequences within these communities. Unfortunately, government and administrators' budget decisions have more recently been designed with intended consequences that negatively impact many campus communities (administrators excepted of course).

It is this value system that puts market-driven commodity production ahead of any other work and, as part of that process, fundamentally undermines the foundations of Ontario's university system.

The interdependence of academic, student, and academic support services may not be obvious at first glance. However, service workers are the sometimes invisible labour that keep a university functioning. They see themselves as an integral part of the academic community—so much so that most university service workers refer to themselves as "academic support" or "student support" workers.



#### The new corporate university is founded on the idea that only work that directly produces commodities is valued.

These support staff feed students, respond to crises, maintain a healthy campus environment, offer administrative support to students and faculty, ensure vital technologies remain operational, and keep the campus clean, both inside and outside. They also maintain hundreds of buildings across the province, many of which have deteriorated following decades of deferred maintenance (even while university administrations have spent millions of dollars on shiny new buildings). Support staff have been providing these services in a system that undervalues their work, seeks to push down their wages, and attempts to blame them for increased student fees. In previous rounds of bargaining with academic and non-academic staff, we have seen several universities try to pit students against support workers and academics, or publicly try to blame them for university budget crises.

The latest anti-worker management fad implemented by a number of universities is to abuse contracting-out language to replace retiring unionized workers with contractors for specific buildings on campuses. As a result, workers in different buildings end up being paid different wages for doing the same types of work. It also results in noticeable differences in the standards these contractors are held to and the lower quality of work that results.

These trends are not isolated to support workers. The continued rise in hiring contract faculty to replace retiring tenured academic positions is yet another example of this corporate and marketized approach to institutions of higher education. The problems we face across the sector are being driven by the same management ideology.

#### The corporate university

The new corporate university is founded on the idea that only work that directly produces commodities is valued. By undervaluing basic and curiosity-driven research to prioritize commercializable research, neoliberal governments and university administrations are undermining the purpose of the academy to produce new knowledge. This ideology also undervalues service work that does not generate revenue for the university. If it cannot be quantified as commercially positive, its costs are minimized through the suppression of wages and the outsourcing of work to the lowest bidder.

Department-level austerity and corporatization has driven contracting out, downsizing, reduced standards, and increased inequity on our campuses. Income inequality goes beyond comparisons between the president and the cleaner. The university now undervalues and underfunds any work that does not produce direct measurable revenue for the university.

For academic research, this means increasing the exploitation of post-doctoral students to meet research goals, growing the ranks of contract faculty to meet teaching goals, directing funding to commercialization and business relations offices, and eliminating tenure-stream faculty positions to reduce long-term salary and pension commitments.

For service employees, this means that food services may be supported if they generate revenue, but that cleaners, groundskeepers, and maintenance workers may get replaced by outsourced low-wage contract work. As a result, health and safety standards are lowered-moving risk to workers and students—and the amount of precarious work on campus increases.

Promoting a holistic view of the university as a complex community where all work is valued is challenging, especially given the current structure of the university funding model and the market-based performance rankings that will determine a significant portion of public funding. However, it is even more difficult given the shrinking levels of public funding and the ideology that has taken root in university administrations that only value commodity production.

#### University budgeting for the public good

The university community must engage and push for change that builds a more inclusive and equitable budgeting and funding process. Built into any university budget must be a respect for intellectual integrity, freedom of inquiry, and democratic space for discussion; promotion of equity and justice; recognition of the diversity of the university community; collegial governance that involves all parts of the community; and a system of fiscal responsibility and accountability that allows for the university community to debate and set priorities. AM

Janice Folk-Dawson is Chair of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario University Sector and President of CUPE Local 1334, representing the trades, maintenance, and service workers at the University of Guelph.

# How the Student Choice Initiative seeks to silence student voices

**Felipe Nagata** 

For decades, students' unions have been raising concerns about skyrocketing tuition fees. Now, in an obscene twist, the Ford government is using high student fees as an excuse to attack these democratic organizations and their ability to advocate for lower fees and better universities.

Student Choice Initative

#### Students' unions and collective advocacy

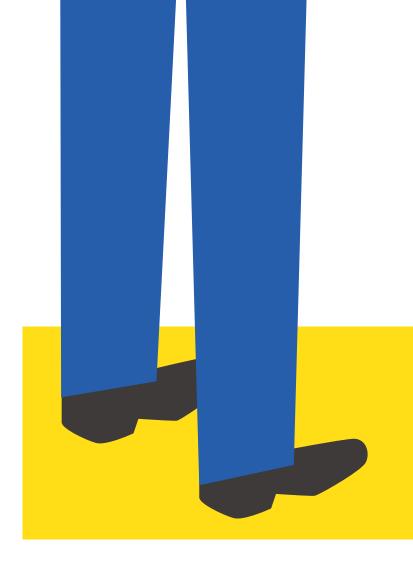
Due to years of declining government investment in postsecondary education, Ontario's universities are often described as being "publicly assisted" rather than "publicly funded." Meanwhile, the funding burden has largely fallen on the backs of students who now provide roughly 60 per cent of university operating revenues through tuition and ancillary fees. Year after year, students are forced to pay a greater share of the overall cost of keeping postsecondary institutions running, even as they continue to voice their opposition to this shift on university senates, on boards of governors, and at Queen's Park.

As major stakeholders in the postsecondary system, students have a vested interest in how institutions spend money and develop policies that affect academic quality, the cost of tuition, and other important services. However, students are often excluded from, or politely ignored at the highest levels of university decision-making, whether that means boards of governors or governing councils. While some institutions have student seats on these governing bodies, student representatives—the only members of these bodies struggling to pay tuition fees—are treated with condescension and find it difficult to influence the decisions these bodies make, often having simple motions demanding transparency and accountability overruled.

At the provincial and federal levels of government, it is also difficult for postsecondary students to have their voices heard. Given the close relationships university administrations have with Ministers and the deep pockets of many other lobbyists, legislators are likely to brush off the suggestions of individual students.

In light of these imbalances of power, students' unions play an invaluable role advocating for students' interests on campuses and to policy makers at all levels of government. Over the decades, these unions have proven to be effective representative bodies for students, capable of bringing about change both within individual institutions and, when united at the provincial and federal levels, throughout academia and society.

The key to this successful advocacy lies in each students' union's autonomy and their unique ability to operate outside the confines of institutional hierarchies, free from the undue influence of university administrators. Successful student-driven advocacy often involves putting pressure on decision-makers at institutional, provincial, and federal levels through campaigns, mobilization, and direct action. It



is through this organization that students are best able to hold administrators and politicians accountable.

#### Sabotaging student democracy

Understanding the vital role students' unions play both on campus and at Queen's Park, it is deeply concerning that the Ontario Government has recently targeted these organizations through its dishonest Student Choice Initiative, which regulates university ancillary fees. These are fees students pay in addition to tuition fees, including fees for services like gym access, technology support, walk-safe programs, student papers, and students' union membership dues.

This policy directive has divided all ancillary fees into two categories, essential and non-essential. While the government allowed universities to make many of their own fees essential, including gym access and technology charges, they were clear that many fees decided through democratic referenda, including those for students' union membership and campus media, would now be optional.

This initiative has major implications for students' unions to effectively represent student interests on campus. Since some students will inevitably opt out of paying union



#### Optional membership threatens to undermine the democratic systems

#### that have allowed students

to make collective decisions and leverage their unified strength.

dues to save money, students' unions will lose vital funding and the ability to speak on behalf of the entire student body. As a result, optional membership threatens to undermine the democratic systems that have allowed students to make collective decisions and leverage their unified strength.

Much of the work undertaken by students' unions focuses on providing support for marginalized students on campus. Food banks, sexual violence support lines, free legal aid services, tax clinics, centres for LGBTQ students, advocacy on behalf of Indigenous and racialized students, and peer-to-peer support, are just some examples of the work students' unions do to support vulnerable groups. The inevitable cuts to student-run services caused by the Student Choice Initiative will disproportionately impact those students who rely on this support the most.

The government of Ontario has argued that the Student Choice Initiative will save students money. In fact, this couldn't be farther from the truth. The majority of ancillary fees have been deemed essential and continue to be mandatory. Meanwhile, the total savings a student might realize by opting out of all non-essential fees might range anywhere from a few hundred dollars to less than the cost of a meal (depending on the institution), with the potential of preventing the student from accessing vital services and supports when they need them.

In effect, the Student Choice Initiative takes unfair advantage of the high cost of tuition imposed by successive governments and university administrations by proposing that students struggling to make ends meet might save money by opting out of the advocacy organizations that have fought to prevent high fees in the first place.

It is also important to point out that the fees being made optional were ones supported by students through democratic votes, while many still mandatory fees have been opposed by students. In introducing this directive, the government is forcing students to continue to pay fees they object to, while jeopardizing vital services they support. As this policy comes into force, it becomes clear that its main goal is to silence those student voices that would dare to criticize Doug Ford's government.

#### Implications for progressive organizing and the labour movement

In recent years, students' unions have successfully advocated for major changes at institutions across the province, including investments in mental health services, the implementation of mandatory sexual violence policies, and the elimination of flat fees at the University of Toronto

(an attempt to make students taking three or four courses pay the same tuition fees as students taking five). As was evidenced in recent strikes at York University in 2018 and across the college sector in 2017, students' unions also play an important role supporting the broader labour movement in the fight for equitable pay and better working conditions.

Students' unions don't just work for the benefit of students today, but also for the benefit of future generations who will reap the rewards of their advocacy. Looking back, it is evident that the broader student movement has played an important role fighting for social justice around the



#### Groups and individuals from across the political spectrum

are speaking out in defense of the importance of student organizations

for the future of our postsecondary institutions.

world. There is no doubt that the success or failure of the Student Choice Initiative's ability to undermine students' unions will be viewed as a test case for future attacks on progressive movements and labour unions, including those on our campuses.

As a result of the Student Choice Initiative, there have already been significant changes at institutions across Ontario that have affected both students and workers. Many services have been cut, staff laid off, and opportunities lost due to the uncertain nature of the opt-out process. Indeed, planning and resource allocation in an environment where year-to-year funding is in doubt threatens to become a major barrier for many impacted organizations.

However, there have also been tremendous displays of hope. Whereas the Student Choice Initiative was meant to divide and weaken students, many students' unions are going out of their way to be inclusive of both members and non-members, despite the costs.

In response to the government's attempt to defund services and campus media, many students' unions are working collaboratively to find new solutions to keep these operations running. In fact, groups and individuals from across the political spectrum are speaking out in defense of the importance of student organizations for the future of our postsecondary institutions.

#### Building solidarity on campus

Students cannot assume that their voices will be listened to and respected by decision-makers without effective external organizing that pressures university administrations and governments. Without strong students' unions, students stand to lose the political capital they have gained over the decades and be completely shut out from institutional and governmental decision-making structures.

Now, more than ever, it is important for all students to get involved and maintain their membership with their students' union. This represents the most effective way for us to shape the future of our education system.

Faculty, administrators, and workers on campus also have an important role to play, for this is about more than students' union autonomy. How we collectively respond to the Student Choice Initiative may not just define the direction of postsecondary education for years to come, it may determine whether this government decides to introduce a Workers Choice Initiative as a means to destabilize and undermine Ontario's labour movement. M

Felipe Nagata is Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario and a student at the University of  $To ron to \hbox{-} Miss is sauga.$ 

# AS PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY FUNDING STAGNATES, the University of Toronto explores "alternative funding sources"

#### **Mariana Valverde**

Universities increasingly rely on student fees and other alternative funding sources to make up for falling levels of government support, but perhaps these other funding sources aren't all they're cracked up to be.





#### While U of T talks a lot about being more entrepreneurial, the university is in fact not very good at making money.

#### University funding, a primer

In recent decades, many jurisdictions around the world have seen significant drops in government funding for higher education. In some countries, ministries of education impose measures, such as budget cuts and increases in faculty workload, across all institutions. However, in Canada, as in the US, UK, and several other commonwealth countries, the legal structure of public universities is such that each is an autonomous institution that makes budgetary decisions and develops priorities through a governing board.

In Canada, these institutions receive the bulk of their public funding from the provincial government, with additional research funding coming from Ottawa. In each province, the government has an established funding framework and, as part of their annual budget, determines how much money will be allocated to this framework. In Ontario, this funding framework has been largely based on university enrolment, with additional funding allocated to capital projects, strategic initiatives, and other discretionary funding (such as grants matching private donations, special purpose grants, or funding for furthering particular academic programs).

Unfortunately, government grants form an increasingly small share of total university revenue (24 per cent in Ontario, according to the University of Toronto, and likely to fall further under the current Ford government). This chronic underfunding has compelled public universities, as autonomous non-profit corporations, to make critical decisions about how to generate more revenue. At the University of Toronto, this exercise has been an ongoing priority, and the university's 2018 Alternative Funding Sources Advisory Group Report as well as the "four corners strategy" real estate plan paint a fascinating picture of the institution's growing focus on non-governmental funding sources.

The University of Toronto is not representative of most Canadian universities. This is not so much due to sheer size (there are other universities of similar size) but rather due to the unusual hegemony of large professionally oriented units within the institution—particularly medicine, engineering, and computer science, and even some of the smaller professional faculties, such as pharmacy, public health, and architecture.

#### Understanding universities AS FINANCIAL ACTORS

The University of Toronto, where I have been employed for over 25 years, is the site for a collective research project, Understanding university worlds, led by noted anthropologist Tania Li, and recently funded by an SSHRC Insight Development Grant. In this project—which we hope inspires colleagues elsewhere—I am leading the "university as financial actor" component. Other components include the experiences of international students and the university as a site of political struggle, especially student resistance. This project has just begun.

The working hypothesis for my research on the university as a financial actor—developed from earlier research on U of T's real estate activity—is that, while U of T talks a lot about being more entrepreneurial, the university is in fact not very good at making money. Though much will have to be confirmed with a close reading of financial records, it would seem that the university has mostly offset falling government revenues, not with brilliant business ventures but by raising tuition fees and increasing the enrolment of international students and those in professional programs who are not covered by the provincial tuition fee cap. The Alternative Funding Sources report notes that in early 2018 no less than 63 per cent of U of T's revenue consisted of "tuition and fees"—this figure was only 40 per cent ten years ago.

The report does not break down the "Other sources of revenue" category—which seems rather negligent, since recommendations should be based on evidence. However, it does mention Canada Research Chairs (CRC) as a category under "Other income." U of T always does well securing CRCs, especially in the technical and medical fields prioritized by the administration. However, because CRC revenue only goes to a particular professor, plus maybe a research assistant or post-doctoral student, there is no net financial gain for the collective. There may even be a net loss. When

I was a low-level administrator, I heard plenty of complaints from department chairs about CRC's not paying for themselves. Therefore, a large number of CRC's may not be very helpful for the overall bottom line.

#### INVESTMENT SCHEMES AND REAL ESTATE DEALS

Another dubious recommendation in the report is to invest the university's large endowment fund in private start-up businesses. The advisory group responsible for the report seem to have forgotten the 2008 financial crisis. The zero payout from the endowment in 2008 meant that departmental piggy banks were raided to pay the salaries of endowed chairs, and to ensure that some of the endowed scholarships were still awarded.

Endowed funds are donated for very specific purposes and with strings attached. When those purposes are not discretional, but have been integrated into the university's regular offerings (as is the case with endowed chairs' teaching and research), U of T can't just say, "Sorry, it was a bad  $year in the \, stock \, market, "and \, not \, pay \, certain \, people.$ 

There are many reasons why the endowment fund, as well as the much larger pension fund, are not currently invested in start-ups (as far as we know at least—there is a concerning lack of transparency around the university's investments). It is worrisome that the "revenue" advisory group would not recognize the difference between a venture capital fund and an endowment fund.

Another alternative funding source the report mentions is real estate. The downtown U of T campus is particularly well suited for lucrative real estate deals. However, U of T, unlike York and UBC, has not hived off an entrepreneurial real estate subsidiary to sell campus land. Indeed, the university has a strong policy never to sell land. On real estate, the most entrepreneurial U of T gets is the recent "four corners strategy." This contemplates leasing land "on the edge" of campus to for-profit businesses and potentially building some new non-academic buildings for this purpose. However, as enrolment numbers continue to grow, U of T is already busy filling up many of the campus' green spaces with new academic buildings, including the construction of several profitable student residences.

I, for one, would be surprised if U of T becomes a successful landlord for anyone other than the ready-made captive audiences of new and international students. The report also intimates that new faculty and staff (who currently get somewhat below-market housing in nice but run-down late Victorian brick houses) should start to pay market rent. However, given the current stratospheric rents in downtown Toronto, a shift to full market rent even for fixed-up apartments-would be decried by faculty, as well as deans and chairs who would worry about faculty recruitment.

#### WHOSE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IS IT ANYWAY?

The third "alternative funding source" mentioned in the report is far more promising. Inventions and intellectual property (IP) could be a huge boon for U of T. Computer science and engineering researchers have produced a large number of patents and inventions in recent years, and U of T and its affiliated hospitals have been generating a stream of pharmaceutical inventions since insulin was discovered in 1921.

Currently, faculty are given complete ownership over intellectual property developed at U of T. If the university were to amend its policies and require a share of future revenues, this could add a substantial new revenue stream. In return for providing faculty with facilities and graduate student assistants, U of T would further benefit from its strengths in medical, pharmaceutical, and computerrelated sciences.

When probing this issue, I was given the university's policy on inventions and commercialization—tellingly entitled "inventor's choice." This financially irrational U of T policy is likely the reason why world-famous young engineer Raquel Urtasun is currently an engineering professor at U of T while simultaneously serving as Uber's chief engineer for driverless vehicles. It is her choice whether to let the university license the patents and inventions developed with university and government funding or whether to sell her work directly to a US behemoth and pocket the money. One might as well tell people that it is their choice whether to pay taxes or not.

My working hypothesis about why the university leaves so much money on the intellectual property table is that administrators prioritize hiring and retaining top inventors for the sake of tech-heavy university rankings like the Shanghai Ranking of world universities (which reportedly plays a major role in bringing in large numbers of foreign, especially Chinese, students). U of T's rankings seem to get more publicity in the university's internal communications than any other single issue.

Outside the pharmaceutical field, which I have yet to seriously probe, Google seems to have been the main recent beneficiary of U of T's inventor's choice policy. A tech expert told me that a patent sold to Google by a U of T professor a few years ago for \$2 million is now worth about \$3 billion. Whether this figure is correct or not, a recent large donation of \$100 million by Gerry Schwartz and Heather Reisman is not going into U of T's coffers, but to an independent artificial intelligence (AI) institute to which Google will contribute—wait for it—a measly \$5 million. No doubt, university computer specialists will benefit from research and career opportunities at the new Vector Institute, but a close look at Vector's own website and the considerable media coverage of U of T's AI developments suggest that the university's finances will not.



#### There is a concerning lack of transparency around the university's investments.

The inventor's choice approach may not last: Doug Ford's government has recently put Google enemy and ardent tech nationalist Jim Balsillie in charge of developing a policy to ensure the province and its universities get more financial benefits from inventions. If that happens, it won't be because U of T finally realized that shovelling intellectual property into the maw of Silicon Valley companies is an irrational way to manage the university's resources.

#### HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER?

Given the continued erosion of public funding for Ontario's universities and the likely cuts coming under the Ford government, faculty should focus attention on the alternative revenue sources our universities are pursuing and demand more transparency and accountability. We should research our institutions and find out how money is made and spent on an everyday basis and not just in the case of particular scandals. It helps to have a SSHRC grant, as I and my colleagues do, and I recommend others apply for funding to study their institutions. Having acquired information on how money flows in and out of our institution, we can then collectively work on developing alternatives.

To do this, campus groups would need to elect representatives to a broad-based coalition including staff (unionized and not), students (including international students), and faculty. Once formed, this coalition could, for example, strike a small committee on real estate, one on medical and drug patents, and so on. Another committee could find out how investment decisions are made and suggest ethical investment alternatives that are also financially wise.

Given the lack of transparency on matters you would think we have a legal right to know about, such as how our pension fund is invested, the research needed to suggest equity-enhancing alternatives to the current financial system will not be easy. However, academics are particularly good at making a fuss about access to data.

Will our U of T research project be useful elsewhere? Yes and no. In Ontario and throughout Canada, each university has a distinct financial ecosystem. Some issues recur across institutions, but do not affect all: for example, it is likely that the wasted opportunities in intellectual property revenues are more relevant to Waterloo and U of T than to less research-intensive institutions. But, that is not to say that intellectual property policies are irrelevant elsewhere.

My proposal for campus-wide representative coalitions with working subcommittees may be greeted with a nod followed by a tired yawn. In recent years, faculty and staff have been assigned piles of new administrative tasks, even as vice-deans, assistant deans, and special advisors proliferate. For their part, students are working far too many hours off campus to pay their increasingly burdensome tuition bills. There is definitely an energy deficit. But, as happens in the broader civic arena and as Plato warned, if we don't make our voices heard the "rulers" will continue to wield their power as they see fit.

As a final motivator, I will end with an excerpt from the Alternative Funding Sources Advisory Group Report mentioned at the outset. I assure you the quote is not a parody.

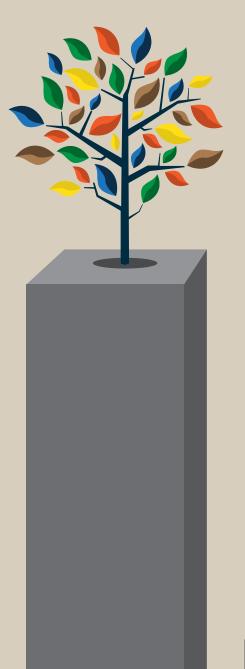
The ability to seize opportunities in the rapidly changing global and local environment requires a constantly refreshed pipeline of ideas. U of T must actively create these pipelines, continually renewing and assessing their relevancy. This is consistent with the University's core mission and at the same time will maximize opportunities for investment by industry, donors and governments. U of T's ... excellence ... and world-class reputation provide an ideal platform for sustaining the pipeline. Divisions should be encouraged to contribute to the pipeline through the appropriate alignment of incentives and assignment of risk. Pipelines should be overseen and promoted through a cohort of expertly trained staff such as industrial liaison officers or business development professionals... [Emphases added]

Who knew U of T was so in favour of pipelines? And, if there is one "pipeline of ideas," what are all the other pipelines for? And what would industrial liaison officers do in a history or philosophy department? M

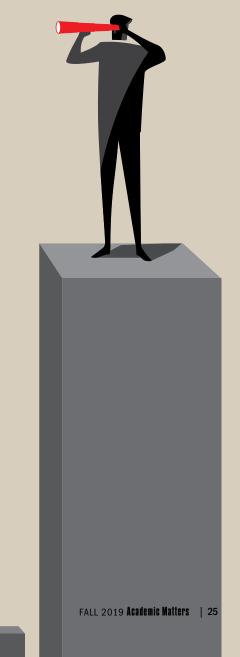
Mariana Valverde is a Professor in the Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies at the University of Toronto.

# Reflecting on a career pursuing understanding and equity in academia

**Donald C. Cole** 



Upon retiring, Professor
Donald C. Cole took some
time to consider his career
at the University of Toronto.
In doing so, he asks how
faculty might be better
supported in understanding
their role promoting equity
within the academy.



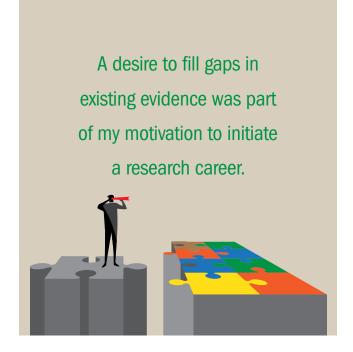
My recent retirement was an occasion to reflect on the challenges faculty face, both those who are beginning their careers and those who have been in their roles for many years. Prior to joining the University of Toronto (U of T), I had been a work, environment, and health practitioner and researcher, with a longstanding interest in promoting equity in my communities, workplaces with which I worked, and in broader society. When I joined U of T in 2001, I was eager to see how my colleagues and the institution would embody equity in the academic mission of the university.

Principles detailing how equity should be encompassed in the academy's work have been set out in Universities Canada's Inclusive Excellence Principles, U of T's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, and U of T's commitment to "transparency of its governance and decision making." Though I have learned much during my university career, I continue to struggle with how to better apply these principles and commitments in light of the four challenges I explore in this article: the complexity of higher education; gaps in the application of relevant evidence on teaching; inadequate responses to social-ecological actors; and the problematic relationships our universities and university communities have to the land. I end with some of my thoughts about how universities, departments, and faculty might better help individual professors promote equity within the academy.

#### The complexity of higher education

As a post-doctoral fellow, I asked my supervisor for literature on how universities are organized. He suggested the campus trilogy of academic novels by David Lodge, which were highly engaging in their descriptions of the interpersonal, inter-departmental, and inter-faculty tensions that arise within the academy. When I became a tenure-stream faculty member, I received some orientation to specific procedures and departments at the university, but the main focus was on the requirements for securing tenure. During an academic leadership session, I asked whether any training on the organization of higher education and how to navigate universities as institutions was available to us. I was pointed to a series of one-week sessions organized for new administrators by Universities Canada and only provided to those taking on deanships and higher-level positions. As I took on leadership within our faculty, I watched a former dean use his own discretion to arrange contracts and appointments for numerous colleagues and, in a rather arbitrary, non-consultative way, rapidly run through a large external donation.

I started reading literature on higher education, discovering multiple journals that examined the history, politics, governance, and international reach of universities. I discovered that scholars at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) were among those who had



researched these topics, that the Open University of the UK co-published a book series on higher education, and that the Carnegie Foundation in the USA had funded programs of research on higher education, with books published by the American Association for Higher Education. In workshops organized by our university faculty association, I learned about the history and dynamics of tenure and contract staffing in universities. In my sabbaticals, I attended conferences on higher education in Canada and the UK, where themes including the ascendancy of managerialism and neoliberalism at universities were openly discussed.

There was relevant research literature, systematized experience, and thoughtful analysis to draw upon to support me in program development and faculty governance roles. Why was it not part of my orientation? It would have assisted me in navigating the complexities, contradictions, tensions, and dynamics of academia.

#### Gaps in the application of relevant evidence on teaching

In public health, we pride ourselves on informing our practice with evidence. In fact, a desire to fill gaps in existing evidence was part of my motivation to initiate a research career and include both primary evidence and systematic reviews in my teaching as much as possible. Yet I received no orientation to the evidence behind higher education teaching—nothing about areas such as course design, assessment, or graduate student mentoring. I watched as colleagues on selection committees argued for recruiting only faculty who had the highest ranks in traditional qualifications, such as grades, scholarships, and publications. They showed no sense or interest in the challenges applicants from other, traditionally marginalized backgrounds might have had to overcome, and no value for the diversity

of experience and training these individuals might bring to the classroom.

During periodic quality assurance reviews of our programs, I noted how few equity indicators were included. Sometimes gender, occasionally origin (such as international versus Canadian), but rarely ethnicity and never socio-economic strata. Similarly, when it came to training highly qualified personnel to increase research capacity, I was stunned by how many proposals for this training repeated past and inadequate patterns so that, even when we obtained funding for training, we did not have frameworks for analyzing the equity impacts of our programs.

I started searching the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) literature, attended seminars and conferences, and joined a community of faculty and staff colleagues to put into practice what we had learned. I engaged in collaborative assessments of the competencies needed in areas of public health practice and evaluated one of our masters' programs with a colleague with a mind to evidence-based teaching practices. I went on to do a Certificate in Research on Health Professions Education, with a focus on mentorship. I led teams that obtained grants and contracts to examine teaching-capacity strengthening and published contributions to the SoTL literature. I worked with others to implement a more evidence-based process of assessment of contributions to teaching and led seminars for faculty (tenured, status, and adjunct) on ways to seek out and apply evidence in their teaching, and to document this process. Yet how can the SoTL be more fully cultivated and made central to our academic endeavours, including as an essential part of the orientation for new faculty?

#### Inadequate responses to social-ecological actors

Our department's periodic strategic planning exercises usually involve reconnecting with our university's longer-term strategic plan, scans of our departmental or faculty environments for key threats and opportunities, and consultation with key stakeholders. The latter two components have been particularly challenging given the tumultuous financial, political, social, and environmental changes in which we find ourselves.

My colleagues and I have found responding to stakeholders and informing positive changes in workplace, farming, or health provider practices to be daunting work. It is much more involved than the service work described by our provost's office, and it is incommensurate with how service work is usually evaluated in performance review and promotion. As noted many years ago by Ernest Boyer, there are different kinds of scholarship, including integration, application, discovery, and teaching.

Faculty are often reminded that scholarship in service to the community is an asset and the involvement of students through service benefits all parties involved, but neither are key to a faculty member's advancement within their institution. Isn't the commitment to tackle societal challenges part of our social contract with the public and governments that fund us? Despite my engagement with colleagues in applied research within multiple organizational contexts, I have often felt that I have yet to meet the demands, opportunities, and overall challenges associated with this part of our university and school's social accountability mission. I certainly learned from my colleagues in the Community Engaged Scholarship movement and the growing literature on how to engage more effectively with community partners in combined research, teaching, and service. Yet none of this work was flagged as important or included in orientations for new faculty at my university. In fact, one of my divisional leads once said that she does not do knowledge translation or exchange, that is someone else's job.

Working in the field of ecological public health during this era of severe climate change, I feel a responsibility to other social and ecological actors (the ecosystems we inhabit along with other species). Before us are fundamental inequities both among humans in the form of environmental injustice and among species in the form of ecological injustice. When an energetic student and I jointly made a submission to the President's Advisory Committee on Divestment from Fossil Fuels at U of T, I was reminded how entrenched the commitment to the status quo is among the backroom financiers of our university, its investment managers, and our pension funds. How do we take part in addressing the massive social-ecological changes in our university's watershed, the Great Lakes region, the North American continent, and globally? How can we prompt such questions for ourselves, our programs, our departments, and our universities?

#### Ambiguous relationship to the land

Grappling with my university's relationship to this land has been a much bigger task than I could have contemplated when I first started as a faculty member. Early on, I was fortunate to receive a copy of Martin Friedland's 2002 book The University of Toronto: A History. It gave me a sense of the relationships, social compacts, movements, and political changes that shaped the university, as well as the important influence of faculty, students, and staff. Except for a discussion of real estate and some reference to the settings of the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses in the Rouge and Credit River watersheds, the book says little about the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and, most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River that the university occupies.

An Ecological Public Health course I led was on universities in watersheds, deepening my understanding of the academy's relationship to the land, water, non-human species, and Indigenous Peoples. Taking a political ecology perspective, it highlighted the role of extractive industries working across Canada and around the world. They heavily finance my university and its affiliated health institutions and, in turn, the university invests in those industries.

Stuart Tannock also explores these dynamics in his article Learning to Plunder: Global Education, Global Inequality and the Global City. The intentionality and extent of U of T's involvement with extractive industrial corporations may be greater than some other universities; nevertheless, it was new to most students and faculty, including myself. Little of this appeared in the official history of the university, nor was this analysis of the university's colonial and neo-colonial modus operandi part of my or any of my colleagues' orientation to the institution.

Indigenous scholars have brought to the fore concerns about the historically exploitative orientation of universities towards Indigenous people and their territories. In the Spring 2019 issue of *Academic Matters*, Anishinaabe legal scholar Ashley Courchene called for a fresh look at the options for conciliation. Unlike reconciliation, this is not a return to prior mythical harmonious relationships between settlers and indigenous peoples—it is active work to build better relationships. He encourages us "to frame our discussions and research around the conciliation of poor Indigenous-Canadian relations," to which I would add poor settler-territory relationships. How can we make learning, questioning, and responding to our universities' problematic relationships to the land part of both the orientation of newcomers to our university communities, and the ongoing work of our departments and faculty?

#### A call to universities, departments, and faculty

None of these challenges have easy solutions, as they have been woven into the fabric of our universities to varying extents. We can take notice of them, learn about them, discuss them among ourselves, and continue to craft innovative responses to them, which will naturally change over time. Nevertheless, as intimated by the questions at the end of each section in this article, some key steps could be taken towards explicitly acknowledging these challenges and helping faculty address them.

It could start with the orientation of new faculty. In addition to learning about teaching assignments, research programs, and administrative procedures, new faculty should be alerted to the challenges I have described and provided access to resources to explore them further. Among the resources could be faculty help sites, similar to those that have been developed to support teaching at many universities. In my view, these should prioritize the history, organizational complexity, and problematic relationships to the land of each university.

Working in the field of ecological public health during this era of severe climate change, I feel a responsibility to other social and ecological actors.



Another support would be **mentoring**, the same way this has been developed for teaching and for research progression towards tenure in many of our universities. Existing mentors could be trained or newer mentors developed, perhaps by faculty associations, who could help faculty better navigate the contradictions, tensions, and dynamics of our complex organizations. This would include how to respond to social-ecological actors, both those currently involved in our universities and those whose voices are less often heard. At crucial points during faculty careers, such mentors would be particularly helpful and mentoring could be recognized as part of university service.

Re-visiting the criteria for performance review and advancement to better recognize mentoring and engagement with social-ecological actors as important. Departments, faculty, and university administrations currently vary in the extent to which they recognize the latter, but this needs to move up in priority if our universities are going to effectively partner with others to address the challenges of climate change.

Finally, as a better human resource practice, systematic exit interviews of retiring faculty around the challenges they faced in their careers might be an enlightening activity that faculty associations could lead. With their careers no longer in the balance, faculty would be more likely to speak freely and critically.

These modest suggestions will likely need faculty champions prodding faculty associations to take them up and prompting university administrators to implement them. The effort could be separate or joint, whichever promotes more authentic engagement with the questions these challenges pose to equity—both within our universities and in our institutions' relationships with their local communities.

Donald C. Cole is an Emeritus Professor in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.



### **Academic Matters**

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR L'OCUFA

### YOUR OPINION MATTERS

2019 READER SURVEY

Take a few minutes to help us create an even better magazine.

You could **WIN** 1 of 2 Kobo Clara HD e-readers

OCTOBER 18 - NOVEMBER 22, 2019

Go to www.academicmatters.ca/survey to have your say





## Enter today: OTIP.com/Dream





