



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

June 9, 2020

BY EMAIL: president@brocku.ca

Dr. Gervan Fearon
President and Vice-Chancellor
Brock University
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way
St. Catharines, Ontario
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Dear President Fearon:

I am writing to you concerning your administration's public response to an article written by a Brock University professor.

Professor Tomáš Hudlický published an article in *Angewandte Chemie* in which he reflected upon what he considers to be the major drivers of change in the profession over the past 30 years. In his opinion, these include new scientific technologies, the emergence of on-line journals, the corporatization of universities, the diversity of the workforce, and the training and mentoring of new professionals. In statements issued on June 5 and June 7, the University administration is critical of Professor Hudlický's opinions on the latter two topics.

In the June 7 statement, Professor Hudlický is specifically named and accused of expressing views about employment equity that are "hurtful and alienating". The administration also claims that comments he made in the article about graduate students "connote disrespect and subservience". The University states that Professor Hudlický's opinions do not reflect the values of Brock and that the administration has "strong opposition to the views expressed in the article".

As you are well aware, universities have an obligation to respect and protect the academic freedom of their academic staff, including their right to pursue scholarly activities, publish the results thereof, and to discuss and criticize the institution and the system in which one works. I fully appreciate that many find some of the opinions expressed by Professor Hudlický in his article to be provocative. However, an institution of higher learning fails to fulfill its mission if it asserts the power to proscribe ideas, no matter how controversial. This would create an environment inimical to the free and vigorous exchange of ideas necessary for research, teaching, and learning.

The statements issued by the Brock University administration are a clear violation of its obligation to uphold academic freedom. By publicly attacking Professor Hudlický, without even the courtesy of consulting with him beforehand, the University administration has failed to respect and defend his academic freedom. This threatens to have a chilling effect across the institution.

June 9, 2020

I urge your administration to withdraw its statements on this matter, and to respect and uphold the academic freedom of Professor Hudlický and all academic staff at Brock. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



David Robinson
Executive Director

cc: Dr. Michelle Webber, President, Brock University Faculty Association (mwebber@brocku.ca)
Dr. Brenda Austin-Smith, President, CAUT (president@caut.ca)
Dr. Alison Hearn, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee (Chair-AF&T@caut.ca)