



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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16 October 2019

April Nowell, PhD
Chair, Department of Anthropology
Cornett Building, B228
University of Victoria
PO Box 1700 STN CSC
Victoria BC V8W 2Y2

Dear Dr Nowell,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), an organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and the merit principle in higher education. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

A disturbing article appeared in the *Financial Post* today, an article that reported that last May, your department, under its previous chair, Dr Ann Stahl, withdrew Adjunct Professor status from Dr Susan Crockford. Dr Crockford had been an Adjunct Professor in Anthropology for fifteen years. (<https://business.financialpost.com/opinion/was-this-zoologist-punished-for-telling-school-kids-politically-incorrect-facts-about-polar-bears>)

The article alleges that Dr Crockford's affiliation with Anthropology was not renewed because of Dr Crockford's contention that polar bears are thriving and their populations are not at risk.

I am sure you agree that this is a serious allegation. In order to ensure the integrity of research and to promote truth-seeking through rigorous debate, universities must protect the freedom of all members of their communities to disseminate the results of their research. Denying a member of a university community reappointment as an adjunct professor because of her views or because of her desire to make them known is a fundamental betrayal of the university's mission.

A university that disassociates itself from a researcher because of her conclusions forsakes the trust of the wider community. People will not look to a university for information on the problems of the day if they believe that researchers at that university must conform to an official line.

The article also reports that in 2017, the UVic Speakers Bureau withdrew its support for Dr Susan Crockford. After nearly a decade with the Speakers Bureau, the Bureau would no longer arrange venues for Dr Crockford to speak to the public. The change was due to the Anthropology Department's refusal to confirm that Dr Crockford was "able to represent the university" when speaking to the public, again because of her views.

This is shocking. A university must not monitor members of its community to see whether they have the correct views. A university cannot endorse any views without thereby creating a party line and stifling research and discussion.

The article says that the University of Victoria has not been forthcoming about the decision not to renew Dr Crockford's status because of privacy concerns. The university and your department should, though, be able at least to reassure members of the UVic community and the wider public that the decision had nothing to do with the content of Dr Crocker's research or her conclusions.

Will your department and the University of Victoria clarify that the allegations made in the *Financial Post* are false and that that Dr Crockford lost her adjunct status for reasons unrelated to speaking publicly about her research? Will your department and the University clarify that the Speakers Bureau serves all professors and students and that none must conform to a UVic orthodoxy in order to represent the university as scholars?

We respectfully request that you respond to our letter. With your permission, we will post your response along with this letter on our website.

Sincerely,



Mark Mercer, PhD
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