



June 19, 2019

Joey Hansen, Executive Director
Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC
Room 208, 6190 Agronomy Road
Vancouver BC Canada V6T 1Z3
joey.hansen@ubc.ca

Dear Joey:

Thank you for your e-mail outlining AAPs' concerns regarding the June 23 talk booked and presented by Jenn Smith. To be clear, this is not an event sponsored by anyone at UBC, but is a booking by an external party.

UBC is deeply committed to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and maintaining a respectful environment, both among students, faculty and staff and in our commitment to educating future leaders. Indeed, Inclusion is a key theme called out in our strategic plan: Shaping UBC's Next Century. Given the expectations for the June 23rd event, it is important to state unequivocally that the university values and celebrates our transgender and non-binary students, faculty and staff, and stands behind their work, both scholarly and supportive, including their efforts in advancing safety and inclusion.

UBC, through its strategic commitment to inclusion, is also working to build the capacity of faculty, students and staff through opportunities for dialogue and education so that we all respect the rights and dignities of others, while we exercise our freedom of expression. Some of the programming and resources available are detailed below:

- <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/gender-diversity/>
- <https://equity.ubc.ca/resources/resources-for-respectful-debate/>
- <https://equity.ubc.ca/how-we-can-help/training-and-education/programming/>

In addition, the Faculty of Education is leading an initiative dedicated to sexual orientation and gender-identity (SOGI) inclusive education. More information can be found on the Faculty of Education's website.



This work is balanced with UBC's commitment to free speech. As a public academic institution, UBC is also committed to the free and lawful expression of ideas and viewpoints. UBC follows policy approved by the Senate of UBC in 1976. That statement reads as follows:

The members of the University enjoy certain rights and privileges essential to the fulfilment of its primary functions: instruction and the pursuit of knowledge. Central among these rights is the freedom, within the law, to pursue what seems to them as fruitful avenues of inquiry, to teach and to learn unhindered by external or non-academic constraints, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion. This freedom extends not only to the regular members of the University, but to all who are invited to participate in its forum. Suppression of this freedom, whether by institutions of the state, the officers of the University, or the actions of private individuals, would prevent the University from carrying out its primary functions. All members of the University must recognize this fundamental principle and must share responsibility for supporting, safeguarding and preserving this central freedom. Behaviour that obstructs free and full discussion, not only of ideas that are safe and accepted, but of those which may be unpopular or even abhorrent, vitally threatens the integrity of the University's forum. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated.

In addition, UBC Board of Governor's Policy 107: Booking and Rental of UBC Space states that UBC's commitment to freedom of expression includes speakers who book UBC space for events independently, as is the case in this instance. This policy is followed even where some members of the university community may consider a guest speaker's ideas, or the way in which they are expressed, to be controversial or offensive.

For more about UBC's approach to freedom of speech on campus, see this article - <https://news.ubc.ca/2019/02/27/free-speech-on-campus/>.

With respect to concerns regarding hate speech, any concerns should be directed to the RCMP, as hate speech is governed by the Criminal Code of Canada. Similarly, any concerns that the speaker will incite hatred contrary to the British Columbia Human Rights Code should be directed to the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal, which has jurisdiction to deal with such matters.



Finally, with respect to any concerns about safety, UBC Campus Security advises the administration on best practices to follow regarding events on campus to ensure the safety of students, staff, faculty, and members of the public. I understand that they are collaborating with the RCMP and other campus service providers, as they would be doing for any event with a controversial speaker, to ensure that measures are in place.

If any of your members are negatively impacted by this event, UBC has a number of resources available to students, faculty, and staff if support is needed. Support services are available for students at UBC Counselling Services and UBC Health Services and to faculty and staff through the UBC Employee & Family Assistance Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Meens Thistle". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light gray rectangular background.

Barbara Meens Thistle
Vice-President, Human Resources