

NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ

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Stand-alone college degrees will not be credible without academic freedom

TORONTO – The credibility of stand-alone college degrees relies on college faculty having the same guaranteed right to academic freedom as their university colleagues, says the union that represents 12,000 college faculty in Ontario.

“Academic freedom protects the right of the teacher to teach and the student to learn,” said OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas. “If colleges want to provide university-level degrees, they have to provide a university-level academic environment.”

Ontario’s colleges want the provincial government to allow them to offer nursing degree programs on a stand-alone basis, rather than requiring them to partner with universities.

College faculty agree their institutions offer high-quality nursing education. However, they say colleges must implement academic freedom for faculty if they have any hope of being allowed to grant degrees.

Experts in post-secondary education cite scholarship capacity and academic freedom as two necessary criteria for college degree programs to be accredited at a university level, say faculty in a written response to the colleges’ proposal.

While colleges have significantly improved their research capacity with the creation of Centres of Applied Research, they have refused to implement academic freedom.

“The provincial government’s own research shows that college students face significant forms of degree discrimination,” said JP Hornick, the chair of OPSEU’s College Faculty Division in a letter to Training, Colleges and Universities Minister Dr. Reza Moridi. “Your government must tie the colleges’ right to grant degrees to the implementation of a robust academic freedom and academic decision-making framework.”

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